

## Exodus: Lesson 1 – Chapter 1

### Exodus 1:1 - 22 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household:

<sup>2</sup>Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah;

<sup>3</sup>Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin;

<sup>4</sup>Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

<sup>5</sup>All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was *already* in Egypt.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.

<sup>7</sup>But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

<sup>8</sup>Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

<sup>9</sup>He said to his people, “Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we.

<sup>10</sup>“Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.”

<sup>11</sup>So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.

<sup>12</sup>But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.

<sup>13</sup>The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously;

<sup>14</sup>and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all *kinds* of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

<sup>15</sup>Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah;

<sup>16</sup>and he said, “When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see *them* upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.”

<sup>17</sup>But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.

<sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?”

<sup>19</sup>The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them.”

<sup>20</sup>So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty.

<sup>21</sup>Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.

<sup>22</sup>Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.” Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.”

## **2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup>But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

## **Exodus 1 – WHR notes: Wanted: A Deliverer**

- The Old Testament is God’s “continued story” of His great program of salvation that He announced to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15) and to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). That explains why the Hebrew text of Exodus begins with the word “and,” for God is continuing the story He started in Genesis.<sup>1-1</sup> God’s wonderful story finally led to the coming of Jesus to earth and His death on the cross, and it won’t end until God’s people go to heaven and see Jesus on the throne. What a story!

The theme of Exodus is *deliverance*, and you can't have deliverance without a deliverer. That's where Moses comes in, the great liberator, legislator, and mediator.

### 1. THE DELIVERER NEEDED (EX. 1:1-22)

The Jewish rabbis call Exodus “the Book of Names” (or “These Are the Names”) because it opens with a list of the names of the sons of Jacob (Israel) who brought their families to Egypt to escape the famine in Canaan (Gen. 46). God used Israel's experiences in Egypt to prepare them for the special tasks He gave them to accomplish on earth: bearing witness to the true and living God, writing the Holy Scriptures and bringing the Savior into the world.

### **Blessing (Ex. 1:1-7)**

- During the years Joseph served as second ruler in Egypt, his family was greatly respected; and even after Joseph died, his memory was honored in the way the Egyptians treated the Hebrews. God kept His covenant promise to Abraham by blessing his descendants and causing them to multiply greatly (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:2, 6; 22:17).
- By the time of the Exodus, there were more than 600,000 men who were twenty years and older (Ex. 12:37; 38:26); and when you add the women and children, the total could well be nearly 3 million people, all of whom descended from the original family of Jacob. God certainly kept His promise!

But a new Pharaoh wasn't happy with the rapid multiplication of the Jewish people, so he took steps to control it:

### **Step 1—Afflicting the adults (Ex. 1:8-14)**

God had told Abraham that his descendants would go to a strange country and there be enslaved and mistreated, but He had promised that He would set them free by His power at the right time (Gen. 15:12-14). God compared Egypt to a smoking furnace (Gen. 15:17; see Deut. 4:20) where His people would suffer, but

their experience in that furnace would transform the Israelites into a mighty nation (Gen. 46:3).

During the centuries the Jews had been in Egypt (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40-41), they had seen many Egyptian dynasties come and go; but who was the new king who was ignorant of Joseph and his family and tried to destroy “the people of the children of Israel”?<sup>1-3</sup> The 17th Dynasty, the Hyksos were foreigners and “strangers” in the land as were the Jews, so they were probably sympathetic with Israel; but the 18th Dynasty was Egyptian and their rulers expelled foreigners from the land. This may have been the dynasty that began the persecution of the people of Israel.

Why would the Egyptians want to make life miserable for the Jews? Israel was a source of blessing in the land, as Joseph had been before them (Gen. 39:1-6), and they weren't causing trouble. Pharaoh's stated reason was that the presence of so many Jews was a security risk: since the Jews were outsiders, if there were an invasion, they would no doubt ally themselves with the enemy. However, whether Pharaoh realized it or not, the real cause was the conflict announced in Gen. 3:15, the enmity between the people of God and the children of Satan, a conflict that still goes on in the world today.

- God's promise to Abraham was, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Gen. 12:3, NKJV).

The Egyptian taskmasters “worked them ruthlessly” (Ex. 1:13, NIV), forcing the Jewish slaves to build cities and work in the fields. But the blessing of God caused the Israelites to continue to multiply, and this frightened and enraged their captors even more. Something else had to be done to keep Israel under control.

### **Step 2—Killing the Jewish boys at birth (Ex. 1:15-21)**

If this plan had succeeded, Pharaoh would have wiped out the Hebrew people. The future generation of men would be dead and the girls would eventually be married to Egyptian slaves and absorbed into the Egyptian race. But Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 said that God would not permit such a thing to happen, and He used two Jewish midwives to outwit Pharaoh.<sup>1-5</sup>

This is the first instance in Scripture of what today we call “civil disobedience,” refusing to obey an evil law because of a higher good. Scriptures like Matthew 20:21-25; Romans 13; and 1 Peter 2:11 admonish Christians to obey human

authorities; but Romans 13:5 reminds us that our obedience must not violate our conscience. When the laws of God are contrary to the laws of man, then “[w]e ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). You see this exemplified not only in the midwives but also in Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1; 3; 6) and the apostles (Acts 4–5).<sup>1-6</sup>

Were the midwives lying to Pharaoh? Probably not.<sup>1-7</sup> The babies were born before the midwives arrived because Shiphrah and Puah had told their assistants to be late! God blessed the two leading midwives for putting their own lives on the line in order to save the Jewish nation from extinction. However, He honored these two women in a strange way: He gave them children at a time when it was dangerous to have children! Perhaps all their children were daughters, or perhaps God protected their sons as He protected Moses. However, this blessing from God shows how precious children are to the Lord: He wanted to give these two women His very best reward, so He sent them children (Ps. 127:3).

### **Step 3—Drowning the male babies (Ex. 1:22)**

When Pharaoh discovered he’d been deceived, he changed his plan and commanded all his people to see to it that the Jewish male babies were drowned in the sacred Nile River. Pharaoh’s police couldn’t check up on every Jewish midwife, but the Egyptian people could keep their eyes on the Jewish slaves and report when a boy was born. But one boy would be born that Pharaoh couldn’t kill.