

Exodus Chapter One

Exodus 1:1-7

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

- Exodus is built on the story that is the last to appear in Genesis 38-50—the story of the Hebrews in Egypt.
- Three and a half centuries have passed. The Hebrews have been in the land long enough to have greatly multiplied. This multiplication happens quickly under such adverse conditions. It fulfills the promises made to Abraham (Gen 12:2, 15:5, 17:4-22) and begins to cause problems for them there.
- The response of Pharaoh to this multiplication—will begin to put into effect the circumstances that will bring Israel back to Canaan.
- Prophecy is Genesis 15:13—Abrahams' seed would be strangers in a foreign land, they would be servants/slaves there, and it would last 400 years.

Exodus 1:8-14

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land." So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 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. And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 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.

- Hyksos—shepherd kings who were Semites had been deposed—former dynasty of Egyptian kings ruled again.
- The multiplication of Israel within Egypt leads to resentment and rouses fear—leading to persecution.
- Pharaoh's first attempt to control the Hebrews—enslavement and oppressive toil—taking Hebrews captive after decades of living with them as allies.
- Slaves built two supply cities—Pithom (Heliopolis) and Ramses.
- This oppression had no effect on a diminishing birth rate.
- Egyptians began to be in dread at the presence of the sons of Israel.

Exodus 1:15-19

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiprah, and the other was named Puah; 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." But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous, and they give birth before the midwife can get to them."

- Three evil rulers in scripture ordered the death of innocent children—Pharaoh, Athaliah (II Kings 11—names means 'due season for Yah'), and Herod (Matt 2). It is a satan inspired scheme to destroy the Messianic line.
- This is Pharaoh's second action against the Hebrews—amounts to genocide (similar progression of war against the Jews under Hitler during WW2).
- First method of genocide—involved Hebrew midwives. Had they been willing partners—the disruption of births could have been accomplished quickly.
- Shiprah=beauty
- Puah=splendor
- These women occupied official positions in Egypt.

- Midwives are able to resist command due to the circumstances of privacy that accompany birth.
- The term 'Hebrew' is used as an Egyptian term—not one Israel had used for themselves.

Exodus 1:20-22

So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. And it came about because the midwives feared God, that He established households for them. 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."

- Pharaoh turns from a hidden attempt at genocide to a blatant demand for it.
- Chapter 1 makes it clear that God is behind the growth of Israel—so protection over this increase is superintended by Him.
- Women had to choose whether to obey God or man. They feared the Lord and were rewarded.
- Had the order been carried out—Israel would have been exterminated.

Exodus Chapter One Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

What other instance of infanticide occurs in the scriptures? What reason is given?

Dig:

- 1) What facts are established in the genealogy/history given in the first six verses of chapter one?
- 2) What prophecy to Abraham is fulfilled in verse 7?
- 3) What fears are expressed by the king of Egypt concerning Israel?
- 4) What is the first strategy Pharaoh takes to establish authority over the Hebrews?
- 5) What is the second strategy?
- 6) Though the ten commandments come in chapter 20, what commands do these schemes violate?
- 7) How does God act on behalf of His people in this chapter?
- 8) What building materials are introduced in this chapter?
- 9) What two titles are used for the leader of Egypt?
- 10) What circumstances allowed the midwives' defense to succeed?

- 11) What is the third strategy used by Pharaoh?
- 12) Why is the story to Pharaoh's rule over Israel tied to the story of Joseph's rule over Egypt?

Discuss:

- 1) Are there other times/peoples in history where one nation brought another people into subjugation? How was this accomplished?
- 2) Consider Genesis 3:16 and Exodus 1:19. How do these inform us about birth in these ancient times?
- 3) What role does fear play in racism? In sexism?
- 4) What role does pride play in racism? In sexism?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for a people group that is currently enduring oppression.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) What working conditions make a job miserable for you?
- 2) Have you ever participated in a rescue? Have you ever helped in a 'life and death' situation?
- 3) When have you ever felt threatened?

- 4) Is there someone who exercises some measure of control in your life that is a cause for distress?
- 5) Exodus is a story of redemption. Where have you seen the Lord redeem you and deliver you from oppression?
- 6) How do you distinguish 'good' from 'bad' fear in your life?
- 7) Have you ever taken a righteous stand while under an unrighteous authority?