

EXODUS - LET MY PEOPLE GO!!!

Exodus is probably one of the most familiar books of the Bible. Epic movies have been made about it. Unfortunately the on screen version is all that many people know about this great book. To many, Charlton Heston IS Moses. While I am glad Hollywood made the movie, and I might add that they did it respectfully; I am afraid you just can't capture the scale of what really happened even on the big screen.

As you may recall, the book of Genesis ended with the death of Joseph at the ripe old age of 110. He was embalmed, as was the custom in Egypt, especially of royalty. There is a gap of at least a couple hundred years between Joseph and the Exodus.

*The bigger picture: A land from which they will be brought out, to the Promised Land; Sacred space and Eden; The deliverer cryptically mentioned in Genesis 3.

The Hebrew text of Exodus begins with a word that can mean either "and" or "now." That may seem strange to us, but it has a purpose. The book of Exodus is a continuation of the story we left off with in Genesis. The word "and" or "now" is simply a segue from one book to another.

The Jewish rabbis called the book of Exodus, "Names" or "The Book of Names" because it starts out with a list of the names of the sons of the sons of Jacob who brought their families to Egypt to escape the famine in Canaan. We take our title from the Greek word meaning "exit" because that is what the book is about. It is a book of deliverance and you cannot have be delivered without a deliverer. Hence the beginning chapters concern the birth of Moses

and all his preparation for the exodus. The balance of the book deals with Israel's journey to the Promised Land and their transition from a family/ tribe into a nation. And that is where we will begin today.

1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; 4 Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. 5 All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already). 6 And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. 7 But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

The first seven verses are the transition from Genesis to the birth of Moses.

When Jacob and his family first came to Egypt Joseph was the second in command of all Egypt. They were given the land of Goshen by the Pharaoh of the time because it was a land suited for grazing their flocks, as they were a family of shepherds, even though shepherds were seen as unclean and generally shunned in Egyptian society. This shows just how well esteemed Joseph was by Pharaoh. They were treated well and were allowed to prosper. Their numbers grew for a little over 200 years and then we read of an event that would change the course of the lives of both the Israelites and the Egyptians.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; 10 come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us,

and so go up out of the land.” 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. 13 So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.

The kingdom of Egypt was in decline at this time and the Israelites had come to outnumber the Egyptians to the point that it worried the Pharaoh great deal. He was afraid that the children of Jacob would side with an invading army if one were to decide to invade. Therefore he forced the Hebrews into hard labor making slaves of them. They were forced to serve with rigor - that is harshness. However, the more they were afflicted the more they grew in number.

Every summer when I was a kid our pasture would become infested with dandelions. They would grow to 3 or 4 feet high. To the adults they were but a nuisance but to us kids they were enemy barbarians that had to be beheaded. So we would ferociously attack them, chopping them down with our swords. This of course would send all the seeds of the dandelions flying which in turn exacerbated the problem; just making for more dandelions.

The point is that the more we persecuted the dandelions, the more they multiplied. The same happened with the Hebrews and the same has happened with the Church over the centuries. Whenever the Church was scattered it just multiplied elsewhere. Every time I read about it I think of the dandelion seeds looking like little paratroopers, blowing in the wind until they would land and eventually germinate into more plants. My Dad is still fighting the

descendants of those dandelions.

But we must understand that persecution is a time to grow. Trials and tribulations in our lives are a time to grow. This is because it is at times such as these that we find ourselves leaning on God more and more. And that always brings about growth.

15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiprah and the name of the other Puah; 16 and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” 17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?”

19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.”

20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. 21 And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

22 So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

- Birthing stools and potter’s wheels
- Egyptian divining practices when it came to determining the sex of a child.

While the Church has generally grown under persecution, we have to see that the purpose of the persecution has always been to eliminate the Church and its effect. In Exodus we have another 1500 years until the birth of the church but these two events are

related.

Pharaoh told the Hebrew midwives to kill any baby boy upon its birth but the midwives chose to honor God and not Pharaoh. They believed in the sanctity of life. This can be said to be the first act of civil disobedience in the Bible. These ladies chose to disobey an evil law for a higher good.

Romans 13:1,2

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

1 Peter 2:11-15

11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—

We are told to obey earthly authority but not to disobey our consciences. That does not mean that you don't have to obey the law if you don't like the president. It doesn't mean you can cheat on your taxes either. Render unto Caesar...

Acts 5:27-29

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!”

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Daniel had to disobey the King when he was commanded to bow down and worship his statute, but in all other things he was obedient.

Some will say that the midwives lied and were honored by God because of that. I say that I don't think that they lied. They could have just gotten there late. There are other ancient accounts of women giving birth this way and then continuing on with their daily work. So it's not out of the question.

What I would really like you to notice is that there are really two different stories going on at the same time. While Pharaoh is worried about being outnumbered and overrun by enemies, Satan is attempting to end the genealogy that links Adam to Jesus.

Genesis 12:1

1 Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father's house,

To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

**And you shall be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**

This is a Messianic prophecy showing that Jesus would come from the line of Abram; more importantly the line of his children that would go to Egypt. He had other children such as Ishmael and other sons by Keturah but they remained in Canaan. The chosen people would be the ones that were in Egypt.

Satan knew this. If all the baby boys were killed then the Hebrew girls would all eventually be married into slavery where they would be dissolved into the Egyptian people and their culture. This seed line would cease to exist; lost to antiquity. Satan knew what he was doing but was outwitted by two Hebrew midwives.

You cannot begin to imagine how important your role is in carrying out the will of God. You may think you don't have a major part but you do. Two midwives risked their lives in order to preserve the lives of babies. In doing that they preserved the lineage that would eventually produce Jesus. Satan would try again, but wouldn't succeed.

We all need to play our parts no matter how insignificant we see ourselves. Get off the bench or the pew and get busy. God has work for all of us to do. Who knows, you may play a part as significant as the midwives.

When Pharaoh realized that baby boys were still being born to the Hebrews he commanded that all Egyptians were to kill all baby boys seen being born to the Hebrew women. Many of them were killed this way, but not all of them. God's promised deliverer slipped through the cracks.

All God needs is one willing vessel and He can bring an entire nation to its knees. Are you that vessel? Is your child that vessel? Is there someone in your immediate circle that you could disciple to help them reach their purpose and calling? Everyone and every place are in need of some sort of deliverance at any given point in time. You or someone with whom you are in contact may be that person. Get off the pew and into the game. All God needs is one and that may be you.