

SHE NAMED HIM MOSES EXODUS 1 & 2

The consecutive way translated “now,” as in “Now these are the names of...” serves to connect Exodus with the account of the Patriarchs in Genesis. Exodus is the logical continuation of the history of Israel begun in Genesis.

Exodus 1:1–5 ¹Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; ³Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; ⁴Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt.

All of Jacob's sons and their families traveled with him to Egypt with the exception of Joseph who obviously was already living there.

There are some textual variants concerning the number of people who travelled to Egypt. The number of people enumerated in the text involves only those who were direct descendants of Jacob. Because Jacob's clan had taken some women and children from Shechem (Gen. 34:29) and because they had servants, the total number of people going into Egypt was much higher. One theologian estimated three hundred people or more probably went into Egypt with Jacob.

Genesis 46:26-27 ²⁶All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all, ²⁷and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.

The fact that the number reflects specifically the people who physical descendants of Jacob is interpreted in several different ways throughout the various English translations:

Direct descendants	(NASB, NET, NCSB).
Came from his body	(NKJV).
Came out of his loins	(KJV, ASV) [most accurate translation].
His own offspring	(RSV).
His own descendants	(ESV).
His own issue	(Hebrew-English TANAKH).

“Direct descendants” is referring to his actual, physical descendants. Wives, servants, and other people associated with the family are excluded in the count. The King James translation is the most accurate literal rendering of the Hebrew, “came out of his loins.”

Our English Bibles have seventy as the number of Jacob's family going into Egypt in Gen. 46:27, Ex. 1:5, and Dt. 10:22, but seventy-five in Acts 7:14. The Septuagint has seventy-five in two of the Old Testament verses (Gen. 46:27; Ex. 1:5) and seventy in one (Dt. 10:22). The Septuagint apparently adds five grandsons of Joseph to Genesis 46:20: the son and grandson of Manasseh and two sons of Ephraim and his grandson that are not recorded in our Genesis 46:20 text. The Masoretic Text has seventy in all three verses. One thing is clear: whatever the number of direct descendants of Jacob that traveled with him into Egypt, the total number of people accompanying the clan was much greater. The actual number going into Egypt, give or take a few, makes no significant theological difference. What matters is the rapid population growth that will eventually take Israel from a family clan to a nation.

In his commentary on Genesis, Fruchtenbaum developed a table identifying Jacob's sons, grandsons, and great grandsons by name revealing a total of

seventy. The Genesis 46:26 number of sixty-six excluded Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim but when taken into consideration, the number is seventy.¹ Based on Fruchtenbaum's actual count of Jacob's direct descendants, seventy seems to be the correct number. The important fact is the entire family went into Egypt.

As time went on, the Patriarchs died and passed from the scene, but the Israelites continued to grow and prosper in Egypt.

Exodus 1:6–7 ⁶Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷But the sons of Israel were fruitful [פָּרָא] and increased [שָׁרַץ] greatly, and multiplied [הִרְבָּה], and became exceedingly [מְאֹד] mighty [עָצָם], so that the land was filled with them.

In Hebrew, fruitful, [פָּרָא], means to thrive and to flourish in fruitfulness. The rest of these words, increased, multiplied, exceedingly, and mighty, all refer in various ways to an incredible population increase accompanied by the capability to be a mighty, powerful people which apparently had frightening implications for Pharaoh. The word increase, שָׁרַץ, refers to swarming creatures such as insects implying a teeming horde of people filling the land. From the use of these words, we know that they were not only numerically increasing, but their quality of life was exceptional as well. It should be obvious that God was greatly blessing the Israelites in Egypt. Goshen in the Nile River delta must have been an amazingly productive place to live. They were living the good life in Egypt, but that couldn't last because God had a purpose for their presence in Egypt and it

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: Exposition from a Messianic Jewish Perspective: The Book of Genesis* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2009), 612.

didn't involve staying in that country. God was forming them into a nation and He would need to bring them to a place where they would want to leave rather than stay. Involuntary servitude, slavery in other words, accompanied by infanticide employed as means of attempting to inhibit their population growth would instill in them the desire to leave and live free. From our vantage point, we know that living the good life in Egypt pales in comparison to living free in a land where God is King, but that is lesson the Israelites never fully, completely understood and embraced and haven't learned to this day.

When God changed Jacob's name to Israel, He promised the Patriarch a nation would come from Him and the sojourn in Egypt was the place that Israel began to be formed into that nation.

Genesis 35:11–12 ¹¹God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you. ¹²“The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you.”

The singular nation is Israel. God gave the command to be fruitful and multiply and it is obvious He was going to see to it that happened in Egypt. They couldn't inherit the land until they had the people to populate the land to the extent they could sustain and defend a nation.

A king came to power in Egypt who “did not know Joseph.”

Exodus 1:8–10 ⁸Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹He said to his people, “Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. ¹⁰“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.”

This doesn't necessarily mean he didn't know Joseph's identity or what he did in Egypt years before although it could mean that because a century or so had passed. It probably meant it no longer mattered who Joseph was; it was not an important factor to this king in terms of dealing with the Israelites. It could also indicate a hostile mindset on his part. Joseph and his exploits were all in the past; the present and the immediate future was the king's only concern. What Joseph accomplished was extremely significant at the time and his work was surely recorded in the Egyptian historical records. Not to mention that by the end of the famine, Pharaoh had all the money and livestock in Egypt and owned all the land and that had to be well known (Gen. 47:13-19) and it had to have ramifications for a considerable period of time afterwards. Pharaoh Amosis founded the 18th dynasty by defeating the Hyksos Semitic people who had ruled Egypt for some time and he drove them out of Egypt. The Hyksos rule in Egypt began sometime after the death of Joseph and they may have established friendly relations with the Hebrews they found there. At the time the Hyksos conquered the Nile delta region, the Israelites would have been much fewer in number than Amosis later encountered when he drove them out. The Israelites, the Hebrews, were also a Semitic people and Amosis or his successors, Amenhotep I or Thutmose I, apparently feared they would join forces with the Hyksos if they returned to make war with Egypt. Hence his fear as expressed in verse 10 was "they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from

the land.” There is one confusing element in that statement. At that point, the Israelites were not yet slaves so why he feared their departure from the land is uncertain, but the only reason that makes sense would be his desire to enslave them in order to have a work force. It literally means “ascend from the land/country.” According to the JPS *Hebrew-English TANAKH*, there is an alternate interpretation of this meaning which is “gain ascendancy over the country” which makes more sense in context. The TANAKH reads “rise from the ground” which they say means arising from their wretched condition. The problem with that is the Scriptures say they were thriving and flourishing; they were not yet living in wretched conditions. We do know Pharaoh was quite alarmed at the number of the Israelites living in Goshen. Perhaps, given the history of the Semitic Hyksos, Pharaoh was afraid the Hebrews would subjugate the Egyptians as the Hyksos had done or join forces with the Hyksos if they returned to attack Egypt.

Because of their fear of them and perhaps because slave labor was the way things were done then, the Israelites were subjected to slavery. The Egyptians didn't do hard labor when they could force others to do it for them.

Exodus 1:11–14 ¹¹So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹²But 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. ¹³The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; ¹⁴and 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.

Several issues are presented here. The Israelites were enslaved. The labor was organized, taskmasters were assigned, and work quotas established (Ex. 5:8).

They built storehouse cities which was common in ancient cultures. David built them (1 Chron. 27:25), Solomon's Temple had storehouses built into it (1 Chron. 28:11-12) and he built storehouse cities (1 Kings 9:25), Nehemiah had them built in the walls around Jerusalem's gate after the return from Babylon (Neh. 12:25), Hezekiah built them (2 Chron. 32:27-29), and Joseph built them in Egypt in preparation for the coming famine (Gen. 41:48-49, 56). The Israelites labor was hard and their lives were made difficult. Not only were they laboring for the Egyptians, but they still had to provide for their families after their work for the Egyptians was finished for the day. In the midst of this, the Israelites continued to increase in population. Apparently, part of the purpose of the enslavement was to limit the Israelite population growth. If so, that failed and more homicidal efforts would be instituted to do that. As the efforts to limit the population growth failed, the affliction of the hard labor increased.

The Israelites kept increasing in number so Pharaoh turned to infanticide as the solution to the increasing population.

Exodus 1:15–16 ¹⁵Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew [עִבְרָיִ] midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah [שִׁפְרָה] and the other was named Puah [פּוּעָה]; ¹⁶and 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.”

These two midwives were ordered to appear before Pharaoh and commanded to murder Hebrew boys at birth. The question is, were there only two midwives or were those two in charge of other midwives? The text doesn't say and some commentators, in an effort to uphold literal hermeneutics, insist there must have been only two midwives. Given the population and the high birth rate, it seems more likely these two had some sort of midwife leadership role and that understanding does no violence to the text. Two women couldn't possibly have attended all the Hebrew births. There is one textual clue, however. In Exodus 1:19, the midwives told Pharaoh the babies were born before "the midwife can get to them." That implies other midwives besides themselves. It is noteworthy they did not say, "before we can get to them."

If simply limiting population was the king's intent, then killing the baby girls would have been more to the point. One man can father a lot of babies with a lot of women if there is a shortage of men, but a shortage of women means less opportunity for babies to be born in the first place. Given Pharaoh's concern over warfare, it seems likely he was trying to prevent future warriors who could attack him as well as restricting to some degree the Israelite's population growth. He also could have taken the Hebrew girls and sold them into servitude in Egyptian households where they could have been absorbed into the population thereby eliminating the Israelites as a people group. Further, it isn't unheard of for men to use women for their own illicit purposes after killing their men. Abraham, in Egypt, (Gen. 12:12) and Isaac, at Gerar among the Philistines,

(Gen. 26:7) both feared that situation and claimed their wives were their sisters. Finally, national identity is usually passed through the father and Pharaoh may have been attempting to eradicate any Israelite identity as a people. All of these theories have been advanced as reasons why the boys were killed instead of the girls, but we do know Pharaoh was certainly afraid of the Israelites in terms of their significant, powerful numbers so there were reasons for his decisions and the text gives some basis for these considerations.

But the midwives feared God and therefore disobeyed the king and let the baby boys live.

Exodus 1:17–19 ¹⁷But the midwives feared [יִרְאוּ] God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. ¹⁸So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?” ¹⁹The 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.”

At great personal risk, these women defied one of the most powerful men on earth, a man who could order their death for any or for no reason at all, and instead let the babies live. They may have been truthful or they may not have been truthful when called before the king and said the babies were born before the midwife could attend to the birth. They did the right thing; they recognized the greater good, preserving life, which is the godly good and they did it by disobeying an ungodly order to take those innocent lives. Some theologians believe the midwives may have made it known to the Hebrews not to call for them until they were certain they could not arrive until after the birth. What we are re-

ally seeing here is Pharaoh's impotence in the face of God's plan for Israel. One of the mightiest men on earth has no might in a contest with the Creator God.

Christians are told today that engaging in civil disobedience, that is, disobeying the government when its laws contradict the Word of God, is a biblical act, but they must be willing to accept the consequences. We can only assume the midwives knew exactly the dangers they faced by disobeying Pharaoh's command and they were willing to pay the price.

Some theologians suggest the midwives may have been Egyptian women, but that seems to be untenable and the grammar in verse 15 argues against it. It specifically refers to Hebrews. That's why the NASB reads "Hebrew midwives" and the *JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH* also reads "The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives...". The names of these women are Hebrew names, Shiphrah meaning "beauty" and Puah meaning "girl." Every society in those times had midwives and the Hebrews would not have been an exception. It is very unlikely Egyptian midwives would have feared the God of the Bible; they were pagans immersed in a thoroughly and extensively pagan culture.

The godly actions and characters of these women was recognized and rewarded by God. These women did not have any personal encounter with the living God; He didn't appear to them and He didn't speak to them. They simply knew Him and wanted to honor Him and glorify Him with their obedience to the higher law that is His whether Pharaoh liked it or not. These women did not disobey Pharaoh for personal gain; in fact, the truth is just the opposite; they placed

their lives in jeopardy. They acted as they did because it was the right, godly thing to do. They feared Him. Fear, *יָרָא*, in this context means to revere or venerate; it is to hold in honor. The fear of God should cause one to conduct oneself with the appropriate moral, ethical conduct and that is what happened here.

Exodus 1:20–21 ²⁰So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. ²¹Because the midwives feared [*יָרָא*] God, He established households [*בָּיִת*] for them.

Despite Pharaoh's efforts, the Israelites continued to multiply and gain strength. The midwives were instrumental in allowing that to continue therefore advancing God's agenda to form Israel into a nation, and He rewarded them for their courageous actions. God established households for these women; just as they helped the Israelites establish families, God established families for them. Household, *בַּיִת*, refers to the family unit, parents and children making a home together, a family.

Probably exasperated at his failure to destroy the Israelites by means of the midwives, Pharaoh commanded his people to kill the male Hebrew children.

Exodus 1:22 ²²Then 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."

This, of course, sets up the introduction of Moses.

In light of subsequent history, there is a glaring truth presented here which needs to be understood by Christian people. As God was forming the nation of Israel, Satan was trying to destroy Israel. This was a frontal assault by Satanic forces attacking God and His plan for history. If Satan can destroy Israel, he wins.

If he could destroy them in Egypt, the Messiah would never be born. If he can destroy them now, the Messiah will not return. From Egypt to the attacks on Israel by their pagan enemies as a nation prior to the time of Christ, to the Greek and Roman conquerors of Israel, to the persecutions of the Diaspora around the world including the Holocaust, to the Islamic hatred of the Jews, and to anti-Semitism today, Satan has not given up his quest to destroy the Jewish people. Far too many Christians do not understand this and, in fact, unwittingly aid and abet his program due to the consequences flowing from Replacement Theology. Replacing Israel with the church, whether people recognize it or not, is one part of Satan's strategy to destroy Israel and the Jews.

Moses is born.

Exodus 2:1–5 ¹Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful [טוב], she hid him for three months. ³But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker [גִּמְזָא] basket [תִּבְיָה] and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. ⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her.

Until Moses left Egypt and fled to Midian, no names are mentioned in this chapter except Moses. Only later do we find the names of his other family members, Amram, Jochebed, Aaron, and Miriam. Without going deeply into the issue, there is a problem with understanding Amram and Jochebed to be his birth parents. If they are his birth parents, then the 400-year timeline is hopelessly incorrect. We know that Jewish genealogies as presented in the Bible are not

necessarily always in strict chronological order as we would arrange them today; they are frequently arranged in such a way to serve a purpose other than strictly genealogy. For example, in Genesis genealogies, it is common to say a man begat a son who is actually a grandson several generations later which is possibly the situation with Moses and his parentage in these verses. Biblical genealogies are, however, true genealogies no matter how they are arranged, and whether or not they are complete in the way we would do them today is another issue altogether. Moses' purpose here could be to move himself closer to Levi where Amram and Jochebed are found. She was Levi's daughter and Amram was Levi's grandson. Moses is in the line of Levi, the priestly line, beyond doubt and that is the important truth presented here. In terms of literal hermeneutics, this is not a problem; it is simply the recognition of how they arranged these things and recorded them.

When Moses was born, his mother hid him for three months. This may not have been unusual for the Jewish women of that time and place; a lot of them may have devised ways to try to save their babies and given the fact their population kept increasing, that may have been successful. For whatever reason, she could no longer hide him in the home and came up with a plan to try to save him or at least prolong his life. She essentially turned his fate over to God and we cannot minimize the providential work of God in this situation. God had a plan and a purpose for Moses and he was going to see to it that plan was car-

ried out. It was going to begin with three women: Moses' mother, sister, and an Egyptian princess.

It is probably reasonable to assume this plan to kill all the Hebrew male babies was not any more successful than the midwife plot to kill them was. Eighty years after Moses' birth, he came back to redeem a very large number of Jewish people so they must not have been able to murder the boys in large numbers over that period of time.

The word translated "beautiful" in Exodus 2:2, is טוב, meaning good, well-pleasing. The KJV translates the word "goodly," and "good" is the most used translation of the word. It indicates a state or function appropriate to genre, purpose, or situation and it may include the concepts of superior quality or relative worth which is the meaning concerning Moses. How she recognized that, we don't know.

Wicker, גִּמְזָא, means papyrus and it is variously translated in this verse as wicker, bulrushes, or papyrus. The Nile River delta is an area where papyrus grows in abundance and it is well suited for the purpose of constructing a little floating basket. I would have thought bulrushes or papyrus were more accurate translations but besides the NASB the JPS TANAKH also translates it "wicker." If the Jews think "wicker" is acceptable, then it must be a perfectly fine translation. "Basket" is an accurate translation of תִּבְרָה meaning a basket water-proofed to float. In this case, she water-proofed it with tar and pitch both of which are sticky petroleum products that would keep the water out of the basket. It can

also mean a boat and it is the word used for the ark in Genesis six in connection with the flood; these occurrences of the word are the only two in the Bible. The KJV translates this basket as an “ark of bulrushes.” There seems to be an obvious connection between the two stories. Men, Noah and Moses, who are to do great things for God are saved from drowning by means of these vessels. One will save mankind by repopulating the earth and the other will save the Israelites and preserve them as the choice nation of God. In a sense, saving the Israelites also pertains to the salvation of mankind because through them the Savior will come: no survival for the Israelites means no Messiah for mankind.

After placing the basket in the water, Moses' sister stood watch to see what was going to happen. An Egyptian princess with her entourage of female servants came down to the Nile to bathe, and the basket was spotted floating in the water. It was retrieved and brought back to the daughter of Pharaoh. The Nile mentioned here may have been a delta tributary but whatever it was, it was part of the Nile River system and properly referred to as the Nile.

Exodus 2:6 ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity [רַחֲמִים] on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews' children.”

Presumably this princess was the daughter of the very king who ordered the murder of the Hebrew children. For whatever reason, she had the power to defy the king's edict and save this Hebrew baby boy. Obviously, she hadn't lost her sense of humanity. Pity, רַחֲמִים, means to have mercy on, to spare. It refers to showing kindness to one who is in unfavorable, difficult, or dangerous circumstances

and so help or deliver them in some manner. As I mentioned in the introduction, it is very likely this princess was the future queen Hatshepsut who, according to secular accounts, was a successful ruler over Egypt in her own right.

Whether the princess had come to the river to cleanse herself or to engage in some religious ritual in the sacred river is unknown, but this must have been a common place for her to visit this body of water. There are a lot of tributaries flowing in this area and Moses' mother would not have placed Moses in one of them in just any place at random. She stationed his sister nearby to see what would happen, so she must have known he would be discovered there. It was a dangerous location; there were venomous snakes and crocodiles around there. This must have been a place she knew this princess would visit. She placed her trust in Yahweh that he was going to protect the child and see to it that he was cared for. I surmised that it is possible this princess had a reputation among the Hebrews for her compassion and that's why Jochebed sought this specific place out but the text doesn't say that. It is obvious that she had a reason for this particular location. Or perhaps unbeknownst to her, God was simply leading her to the spot He needed Moses to be, and, conversely, he led the princess to the spot He needed her to be. We cannot forget about the superintending providence of God in this situation.

Moses' sister was right there when the baby was discovered and she immediately offered to procure a wet nurse for the boy.

Exodus 2:7–9 ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

It could not have been lost on the princess it was no coincidence this young girl just happened to be there and she just happened to know a woman who could immediately respond to the call to nurse the boy. Moses' mother took the child to raise him for the princess at least until the child was weaned and perhaps longer. Not only did she get to raise her son for some period of time, but she was paid to do so!

Once Moses reached a certain age or stage of development, his mother took him to the princess and relinquished her son to the care of the princess and the royal court.

Exodus 2:10 ¹⁰The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses [מֹשֶׁה], and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

There is a great deal of discussion concerning the etymology of the name "Moses." It is grammatically complicated and no one really has a good explanation. The consensus seems to be that "Moses" is from the Egyptian root *ms* (child), *mss* (to be born) and is used in many royal names [cf. Amosis (born of

Am), Thutmose (born of Thot).² One lexicon believes the name is based on the Hebrew word [מִצְחָה] “to draw out,” meaning the “one who draws out.”³

We do know that Moses realized at some point he was to be the deliverer of the Israelites, but his first attempt at leadership was a failure. It was a failure because he was getting ahead of God.

Acts 7:25 ²⁵“And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

We also know that at some point, Moses developed an understanding of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the eternal significance of knowing and serving Him. Whether that happened during the time he spent in his father’s home or later, we don’t know. Perhaps God specifically communicated that to Him. However it happened, he knew what he was destined to do. He understood the temporal rewards of life in the royal court of Egypt paled in significance compared to the eternal rewards in the royal court of Christ.

Hebrews 11:24–27 ²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

Some theologians believe this refers to the time of the Exodus, but that cannot be; it has to be a decision he reached before his first attempt to establish himself as the leader of the Israelites. Moses reached this decision by faith. He gave up

² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce L. Waltke, s.v. “מִצְחָה,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, Moody Publishers, 1980), 529.

³ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, s.v. “מִצְחָה,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 677.

worldly things, all things the world thinks to be the ultimate goal of life, to identify with the people of God who were lowly slaves at that time.

Moses described his first failed attempt to lead the Israelites out of bondage.

Exodus 2:11–14 ¹¹Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren [אָרְבָּנָי] and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren [אָרְבָּנָי]. ¹²So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, “Why are you striking your companion?” ¹⁴But he said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and said, “Surely the matter has become known.”

By the time he was about forty years old, Moses was apparently informed by God he was to deliver the Israelites out of bondage. What Moses knew about his heritage we are not told, but it seems clear he began identifying with the Israelites, the people of God, his brothers. Depending on the age his mother gave him up, he may have known and remembered a great deal, or he may have known little to nothing. Did the princess hide information from him, or did she tell him about his birth family? Was he allowed to visit his birth family? That is likely because Aaron and Moses knew one another when they met in the wilderness (Ex. 4:27). We do know that at some point, he considered the Israelites to be his “brethren” and he felt compassion for them over their status as slaves and the onerous labor they were being forced to do for the Egyptians. At the same time he decided to forfeit an ungodly, but opulent, Egyptian life for a life of serving God in order to obtain the rewards that come with serving Him.

When he observed one of the Egyptian taskmasters beating an Israelite slave, he killed the Egyptian and hid his body. By looking around to see whether or not anyone was watching, he thought he was unobserved and no one would know what he had done. That fact, coupled with the fact he hid the body, shows this killing was premeditated. Perhaps he thought such a display of loyalty to the Israelites would cause them to look to him for leadership and deliverance. What he probably didn't count on, was the Israelites themselves not only talking about the murder but also rejecting him as leader and deliverer. His deed was immediately exposed and as the events of the next day proved, the Israelites didn't think Moses was their deliverer even though he thought he was.

The next day Moses attempted to mediate a physical confrontation between two Israelites. Once again, this appears to be an assertion of leadership and once again Moses was rejected. He was even accused of possibly wanting to kill the Israelite who was the aggressor in the fight. Thus Moses, who will one day be the prince and judge *par excellence* over Israel, was rejected as their prince and judge at that time. It simply wasn't God's plan that Moses would lead Israel out of slavery at that time. God had a plan to mold Israel into a nation and He had a plan to mold Moses into the leader God desired him to be. Moses seems to have gotten ahead of those plans a bit.

At that point, Moses became afraid and with good reason. Once his crime was exposed, he was in jeopardy of suffering the death penalty for his crime since it was obvious he had sided with some slaves over an Egyptian

taskmaster. However, it may have simply been an opportunity for this Pharaoh to rid himself of a rival to the throne. Either way, Moses figured he was a dead man if stayed in Egypt.

Exodus 2:15 ¹⁵When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Moses was not only fleeing for his life, but he had to have been discouraged by the fact his overtures to the Israelites in terms of asserting his leadership to deliver them was rejected. As Stephen revealed in Acts 7, Moses knew he was supposed to deliver the Israelites, but he obviously didn't know God's timing and he didn't know God's method for delivering them. With his life in jeopardy and with his leadership rejected he reached the conclusion that the solution to this predicament was to flee Egypt and he went to Midian.

Exodus 2:16–17 ¹⁶Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped [יָצַח] them and watered their flock.

Moses put on display the godly character he possessed when he came to the assistance of these women who were being bullied by some male shepherds who forced them to relinquish the water they had just drawn for their own flock. Not only did his actions allow them access to the water, he watered their flock for them. The word for help, יָצַח, means to rescue, deliver, or save. Here it is used in the temporal sense of saving these girls from some ruthless men.

Some theologians assume the priest of Midian must have been priest of Yahweh, but the Midianites were a confederation of peoples who were pagans. Exactly what it meant to be a “priest of Midian,” I couldn't discover. Nevertheless, it is much more likely Moses introduced Reuel to the one true God and he became a believer at some point in time in the future. He possibly expressed a confession of faith in Exodus 18:10-12. Reuel means friend of God (El). This was a generic Semitic name for God and it does not imply he was a believer in Yahweh at the time Moses came into his life.

Exodus 18:10–12 ¹⁰So Jethro [Reuel] said, “Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, *and* who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹“Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people.” ¹²Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God.

The daughters of Reuel reported back to their father the good deed Moses had done for them, and he told them to find Moses and invite him back to their home. Even though Moses had turned his back on the things of Egypt, it was still obvious he was from Egypt.

Exodus 2:18–20 ¹⁸When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “Why have you come *back* so soon today?” ¹⁹So they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock.” ²⁰He said to his daughters, “Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat.”

Moses was willing to live with Reuel and his clan so he was given one of the man's daughters in marriage and had a son.

Exodus 2:21–22 ²¹Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. ²²Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”

Gershom means something like, “I have become an alien in a foreign land.” The Hebrew noun *ger* refers to someone who has settled as a foreigner in another country. Perhaps Moses thought God had decided not to use him after all and he would be a permanent resident in Midian. He certainly was reluctant to go back when the time came.

This chapter ends with a reminder that our God is a faithful God, a God who keeps covenant, and a God who cares for His people.

Exodus 2:23–25 ²³Now it came about in *the course of* those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. ²⁴So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of *them*.

This Scripture does not imply that God had only just then decided to deliver the Israelites because they were crying out to Him. He told Abraham nearly 400 years before how long the Israelites would be subjected to bondage in a strange land. It is suggesting the time had now become ripe to deliver them. God had prepared the people by increasing their population to the extent they could be formed into a viable nation. God was preparing Moses to be the instrument through whom He would work in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham to bring the Israelites back to Canaan as that nation. God was also preparing

Moses to be the leader of this people from the Exodus to the very brink of entering the land about 80 years still in the future.

The king who sought Moses' life was dead. Either this is a look 40 years into the future, or chapter 3 should have started here at Exodus 2:23. The latter option seems to me to make more sense since chapter 3 is set at the end of Moses' 40 year period of time in Midian and the proclamation of this king's death belongs to that moment in time.

Dennis Waltemeyer
Fredericksburg Bible Church