

EXODUS

Lesson 3 - Chapters 2 and 3

Last week, the stage was set for us, and the actors were introduced. We were given the condition of the Israelites in Egypt.....as oppressed slave laborers.....and why they were in that condition.....because the NEWEST King of Egypt didn't honor Joseph's memory or promises.

Further, we learned that this new king was an Egyptian, and not part of the line of now defeated Semite kings that had ruled beginning a short time before Joseph came to Egypt, and for about 150 years after he arrived.

This new Pharaoh was quite concerned, naturally, that foreigners.....meaning those of non-Egyptian heritage.....would never again have an opportunity to rule over Egypt causing such great humiliation. And, as Egyptians were of the line of Ham, as opposed to Hebrews who were of the line of Shem, there were very visible and obvious racial differences between the two groups. And, the evidence is that while a few Hebrews assimilated into everyday traditional Egyptian culture, the bulk of them hung on to, and further developed, a somewhat different looking Israelite culture.

What with the recent bitter taste of subjugation that natural-born Egyptians suffered at the hand of Semite Kings, the prosperity that these Hebrews had enjoyed, and the desire of the Egyptian rulers to put Egypt back onto the world stage as a powerful nation, Pharaoh decided that the Hebrew population had to be controlled. And, this he tried to accomplish by both keeping their numbers from growing further, and by enslaving them for purposes of being the nation's construction workers.

READ EXODUS 2 all

Verse 1 gives us some important information; it is that a man from the house of Levi married a woman from the same "house". In other words, both the husband and wife were of the same tribe, Levi. But, don't get too concerned about this. By this time, there were probably around 100,000 Levites living in Egypt, so the gene pool was large. That said, we'll find out that Moses parents were apparently closely related. For now, the future parents of Moses will be anonymous. Later we will find out that her name is Jochobed, and his Amram. Before Moses was born, his parents had produced two other children: Miriam and Aaron. Keep in your minds throughout the remainder of our study of Torah, that Moses was of the tribe of Levi. It will help to explain much of what happens concerning Moses. And, by the way, as of this moment, the Bible has not yet indicated that Levi was going to be a tribe divided away and set apart for God.....a tribe of priests. So, at this moment, by any way the Israelites would have viewed

themselves, there were **13 tribes** of Israel because Joseph had received the double-portion by having his two sons included as full-fledged Israelite tribes. Just a reminder that when we speak of the “12 tribes of Israel”, it is a rather sloppy statement, because the number of tribes, and WHO was included among that number, varied over hundreds and hundreds of years.

So, we see that Moses is born under Pharaoh’s decree of instant death to all male Hebrew newborns, and that his parents were able to hide him for about 3 months; but then it seemed, to them, impossible to keep his existence secret any further. Did they think that they needed to go to some extraordinary measure to try and save him because they somehow KNEW that this infant would, one day, become the deliverer of Israel? There is NO indication of that at all. When they put Moses into that waterproofed basket and set it in the Nile, it was with a faith that had not come about because of special revelation; it was, but simple, daily trust in God that this child’s fate.....no matter what it be, death or life.....was in HIS Holy hands.

Hidden within the Hebrew language of the original text are several ironies and connections between the circumstances surrounding Moses’ birth, and some earlier benchmark Biblical events. Naturally, the early Sages and Rabbis didn’t miss these connections. The first is that in verse 2, it says that Moses’ mother saw “how beautiful” he was and so she hid him for 3 months. Actually, what the original Hebrew says was that she saw how “**tov**” Moses was. **Tov**, as anyone who knows the slightest Hebrew understands, means “good”. Saying “beautiful” isn’t necessarily wrong, but it masks the association that starts to be made between Moses and these earlier Biblical acts of God.

Remember, in Genesis 1, that after each part of the Creation effort, God pronounced it to be “good”.....tov. And, right off, it is being made clear that Moses’ very birth was under divine influence, and would have a great purpose.

Moses’ mother built a floating cradle out of the same exact material that the typical Nile River Boats were made: papyrus reed. She seals it with a natural tar.....again the same way the Nile River Boats were waterproofed..... then places Moses within it. Some Bibles call this little lifeboat a basket, others an ark. The Hebrew word used here is “Tevah”, and it is used in only two contexts in the entire Bible: the first refers to the enormous vessel Noah built, and the second is this tiny one here in Exodus. The correct English translation of “Tevah” is “ark”. Basket or any other word misses the mark because we are meant to see the connection between Noah’s Ark, and Moses’ Ark.

Notice the parallel purposes of these two arks: In Genesis, mankind was to be done in by a worldwide flood of water, and God saw to it that Noah and his family would be the saviors of mankind by placing them safely in a “Tevah” to ride atop the flood waters. In Egypt, all Israelite male babies were to be done in by drowning in the Nile, but God saw to it that Moses would be the deliverer of Israel by placing him in a “Tevah”, to ride atop the water. No allegory here. Rather, a pattern, and a type, is set down by God. Here we have God using water and an ark as the main elements of early types of salvation; the first kind used for saving mankind in general, the second kind for saving the Hebrews.

Now, a good question at this point is, what about yet **another ark** that is shortly going to

become prominent in Exodus; the Ark of the Covenant? Shouldn't that be connected to the Ark of Moses and the Ark of Noah? Decidedly NO! Indeed THAT would be allegory and but a nice story. First of all, the Hebrew word used for ark in Ark of the Covenant, is **'aron**. And, it means a chest, a place to store something valuable. Interestingly, the word **'aron** is used in only one other way, and **only one other time** in the Bible: it is used to mean, "coffin". And, it refers ONLY to when Joseph died, was embalmed, and put into an 'aron.....a coffin. Somehow, I think we are supposed to see something symbolic, here, that the same exact term, 'aron, is used to describe BOTH the container into which Joseph was laid to rest, as well as the container built specially to hold the original stone tablets (written on by the finger of God) of the Ten Commandments. Frankly, I'm not sure if the symbolism has something to do with, perhaps, the immense value of Joseph to God being equated with the immense value of the 10 Commandments; or, if it symbolizes something of a prophetic nature.....something that will become apparent in a time still future. It is interesting to note that in Revelation, at about the same time the Ark of the Covenant is found and placed into the new Temple, the tribe of Joseph also suddenly reappears. Could it be that these two future events are connected, and we're given a hint of that by use of the word 'aron in both contexts? Time will tell.

No doubt, the location where the little Tevah, the ark, that held the infant Moses was deposited amongst the tall reeds along the bank of the Nile, was carefully chosen so that the Egyptian Princess, who bathed regularly at that same spot, would likely discover it. Upon finding and inspecting the vessel, and discovering the crying infant within, the Princess's womanly instincts took over....and she determined to save this baby from his otherwise certain fate. She knew instantly that this was a Hebrew child, but it made no difference to her, apparently.

We have quite an irony building here, don't we? The daughter of the very man who ordered that these Hebrew male babies were to be destroyed is the one to save this Hebrew who had been selected by God to liberate Israel. Even more, Israel's savior would be raised in the Pharaoh's own house.

Now, Miriam, Moses' older sister who had watched this scene unfold, rushed to the Pharaoh's daughter to offer her a Hebrew woman to be a wet-nurse for the baby; the princess did the only practical thing she could have done, she accepted.

Now, in another irony that only God could have worked out, the infant Moses is RETURNED to his own mother, carried in the arms of his own sister.....and now Mom is PAID by the princess to do nothing more than suckle and raise this child who was her own, in the first place. And, the money to pay this Hebrew mother is coming from the treasury of the Pharaoh who has ordered the death of this selfsame infant.....and thousands more like him. Oh how I love the way the Lord works!

Now, V10 explains that "the child grew", and then was returned to the Princess as her child. That had to be a bittersweet moment for Jochobed, as she was giving up her child; but with her, his lot would have been slavery. With the princess, it would be a life of royalty.

The Bible doesn't give us an age, but, in general it is thought that in those days an infant was nursed until at LEAST 3 years of age, though probably 5 years is more realistic.....and there is

ample proof it was significantly more. In fact, in tribal societies today, the **average** age of weaning is closer to 6 or 7! So, Moses was in the childhood development stage of a Kindergartener when he went to the Royal Palace to live; this means he knew his family well, and undoubtedly had a fair grasp of his native Hebrew language by the time he was returned to the Princess. Being taken from his family and given to the Princess must have been a traumatic event for little Moses. He would have become bonded not only with his mother, but also to the Hebrew way of life. One can only imagine the psychological tension that was caused as this young child was torn from a life now fully imprinted on his soul, and taken into a new one that was altogether different...really, in direct OPPOSITION, to what he came from. It would eventually overflow into frustration and rage.

As it turns out, Moses received his name AFTER his return to the princess; and that name was not at first a Hebrew name, but Egyptian. But, as happens in mixed populations, the Egyptian name Mose was eventually co-opted by the Hebrews and made a part of their Hebrew vocabulary; in Hebrew it means “drawn out”. However in Egyptian it is a common word with a different meaning: “child” or “son”. So, while in English we say Moses, in Hebrew the word is Mosheh, and in Egyptian it is Mose. Therefore, we’ll see many Pharaohs’ names incorporating the same word, Mose, along with the long held ancient world tradition of adding a god’s name to the name of a son as a form of gratitude to one god or another. When we look at the reigns of Pharaohs we’ll see ones like Ra-mose (which is more typically written Rameses).....meaning “son of the god Ra”, or Thot-mose.....meaning “son of the god Thot” (which we’ll often see written Tutmose, or as we know it better, King Tut).....or Ptah-mose.....meaning “son of the god Ptah”.

Between Vs 10 and 11, as happens a lot in Scripture, we take another sudden leap forward in time....in this case about 35 years. Nothing is said about Moses’ upbringing, but it’s fairly easy to extrapolate from the vast amount of Egyptian records that have been discovered concerning royal life. While he would have been given all the finest in education, military training, the best food and drink, and made familiar with royal court protocol, it would have been given to him grudgingly. Because, unlike for Charlton Heston there would have been no way whatsoever for Moses to have his Hebrew beginnings kept secret. The Egyptians knew he was a lowly Hebrew just by looking at him; and more importantly, HE knew he was Hebrew. Just as critical, the general Israelite population knew who Moses was..... and to them, regardless of his Hebrew blood, he was now an Egyptian..... a HATED Egyptian. Moses would not have been fully welcomed in either camp. Rejected by Israelite and Egyptian alike, trapped and frustrated, Moses finally strikes out in violence.

One day, he sees what must have been an altogether familiar sight: an Egyptian striking a Hebrew slave. This is an event Moses must surely have witnessed hundreds of times by now. But, this time, he erupts. Taking matters into his own hands he kills the Egyptian and buries him. A little time later, he spots two Hebrews quarreling, and again takes matters into his own hands as he tries to separate them and play referee. The aggressor turns to Moses and asks him what businesses it is of his to interfere...and, oh, BTW, are you going to kill me like you did that Egyptian?

Uh-oh. Moses blanched. His murderous act had witnesses, and it was only a matter of time

before the Egyptian authorities found out. Murder of an Egyptian by anyone, Egyptian or foreigner, carried with it a death sentence. And, Moses knew he had no choice but to run. And, run he did.....across the Egyptian border frontier of Goshen, into and across the Sinai; then across the Gulf of Aqaba, and into the land of Midian. Why Midian? Probably because they had no political ties to Egypt. The Sinai was primarily Egyptian controlled territory; they had built military outposts all along the normal trade routes that criss-crossed that vast desert peninsula, and had established treaties with several nations that bordered the Sinai area. Moses' choices of refuge were actually quite limited.

What a seemingly lonely, dreadful place Moses' life had come to: pursued by the Pharaoh, rejected by the Hebrews. His royal palace life exchanged for that of a desert dweller.....a FUGITIVE desert dweller. Moses would have a wilderness experience long before the one he would lead Israel to have. Like his forefathers, Moses.....divided away and separated from his own people.....Moses would now be molded and prepared by the divine, unseen hand of God, in a foreign land, on God's timetable.

The inhabitants of his new home, Midian, were the descendants of Abraham's concubine Keturah.....so Moses and the Midianites were relatives. As we'll run into the Midianites at several points in the Bible, let me briefly explain that the Midianites were not actually a nation of people, but a confederation of 5 tribes. They lived not in a sovereign state called Midian, but it was simply a region that identified the general whereabouts of these 5 tribes; and therefore, all of the 5 tribes were on the one hand called Midianites.....meaning they were from the region of Median; but on the other hand, each would have had their own tribal name, some of which we'll eventually stumble across in the Bible, and others that appear to have been lost to antiquity. So, like so many places and people in the Word, we get different names for the same place or person, which makes following it all a little confusing.

Upon arrival in the region of Midian Moses immediately has an encounter at a water well with these Midianites.

If we watch closely in the Bible, many meetings of importance, particularly between men and women, happen at desert water wells. The number of places it was considered proper and acceptable for a woman to be seen apart from her father or husband, alone or with other women, were few; a well was one such place. And, here, at this well in Midian, some women shepherds show up, and begin to draw water for their sheep, only to have some local bullies show up and drive the women's sheep away, presumably to water their own flocks. Moses witnesses the altercation, and driven by his underlying anger and a crusader mentality that we have seen develop, utilizes the fighting skills he would have learned as a standard part of his royal training, and shoos the men away. Impressed by the skill and courage of this "Egyptian" (as they call Moses), Moses suddenly finds himself with 7 girlfriends, who promptly take him home to daddy. Why would they think this Semitic man, Moses, was an Egyptian? It would have been his lack of a beard, which characterized Egyptians (but a beard was required of Hebrew males), and his dress.

Daddy is introduced as a fellow named Reu'el. He'll also, later, be called Yitro.....Jethro. Reu'el, this "priest of Midian" as the Bible calls him, has spawned a lot of discussion among

Bible scholars as to just who he was and what role he might have played in Moses' life. First, understand that the land of Midian held a lot of Midianites. Reu'el is called "the priest" of Midian. We'll see this same kind of designation (THE priest) in the Bible when it means to indicate the HIGH priest of Israel. So, Reu'el was the chief priest, or high priest, of the Midianites.

The name, Reu'el, is thought to mean "friend of El".....El being the name God is called before He announced His actual name. So, in one form or another, Reu'el knew the true God.....the one generally known as El. Now, remembering that it was MOSES himself that wrote down Exodus and all the other books of the Torah, it must have seemed unimportant to him to give much in the way of detail about Reu'el or his own life in Midian. Because, about all we know for sure is that Reu'el invited Moses to live with the family, gave Moses his daughter Tziphora for a wife, and then Tziphora gave Moses two children, the first one named Gershom. Tziphora is a traditional Bedouin name to this day; it means "bird", as Bedouins tend to give their children animal names. As we'll soon discover, though, "bird" hardly fit Tziphora's demeanor. Tiger, or maybe Tasmanian Devil was more like it. But, we'll save that for a later lesson.

Interestingly, take note of the name of Moses' first child, Gershom. Back when we studied what the Hebrews' meant by the term "foreigner" or "stranger", we learned that the Hebrew word was Ger. So, this child of Moses, named Ger-shom, means literally "a stranger there".

In V23 we're informed that during Moses' long stay in Midian, the Pharaoh that was in power when Moses fled, had died. But, back in Egypt, if the Israelites who had lived for so many years under the thumb of that Pharaoh who hated them so, had any thoughts of the new Pharaoh perhaps being more favorable towards them, it was wiped out immediately. But, now, as the time was ripe, the cake that was Israel was ready to be pulled from the oven; for, the groan of the Israelites had reached the ear of God, and it says that God "remembered" Israel. The Hebrew used here for "remember" is **zakar**. And, **zakar** doesn't mean remember like we think of it today. In our era, remember is an act of our minds calling something up from memory; it's no more than a passive thought process. But, the Hebrew **zakar** is a much more active term; it adds the element of involvement. So, while we think of "remember" as a kind of intellectual exercises, that may or may not lead to some kind of action on our part, in Hebrew it is an action word that means paying very close attention to someone or something **and** being involved in the outcome.

And, what is key is to catch just what it was that God's action and reaction would revolve around: it was the covenant that He had made to Abraham, then transferred to Isaac, and then transferred yet again to Jacob, called Israel. And, that covenant was that Abraham's descendants.....in time, refined to mean Jacob and his sons and all their descendants.....would be given a land of their own, that El Shaddai would be their God, that God would protect them and consider them His very own set-apart people; and that through this, eventually the entire world would be blessed. The process that had begun more than half a millennia earlier, and that had seemed dormant for nearly 400 years as Israel languished away in Egypt, is about to burst into visible action.

Let's move on to Exodus chapter 3.

READ EXODUS 3 all

Let me warn you that we're going to be in Exodus 3 for a while. This chapter is just brimming with things we need to know and understand as preparation for what comes later.

Verse one tells us that Moses had settled into the life of a Shepherd. Since there is no indication that Moses EVER had any training in BEING a Shepherd before he fled to Midian, one has to assume that he received on-the-job-training from his wife and her sisters over a substantial period of time after he arrived in Midian. Interestingly, Moses apparently did NOT own animals of his own. These were his father-in-law's sheep he was tending. Unlike the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it does not appear that Moses became prosperous.

He moved the flock to another pasture, at a place identified as Mt. Horeb. Now, it's kind of important to ascertain the best we can just WHERE this flock was moved to, because it was this location where Moses had the Burning Bush Experience, and later he would receive the Torah. In other words, wherever it was that he moved those sheep to was where the Mountain of God was located. But, it's also important to understand WHY he moved the flocks: it was to find fresh pastures. Flocks were not moved just because the Shepherd got itchy feet. Nor were they moved any farther than absolutely necessary. They were moved as short a distance as possible, to KNOWN and established places.

Let me explain once again where Midian is: it is on the Arabian Peninsula, with its western border being the Gulf of Aqaba. Now, I did some research on the location of ancient Midian, and nowhere...not a textbook, not a map, not a reference book from ANY source... could I find anything that put the region of Midian ANYWHERE except on the Arabian Peninsula. Some have tried to locate a mythical part of western Midian in the eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula. But, there is absolutely nothing to indicate that, and it flies in the face of logic and simple geography. In fact, Sinai at almost all times was Egyptian territory, which is why Moses fled through the Sinai, then across the Gulf of Aqaba, and into Midian....he was not about to flee Pharaoh and REMAIN in Egyptian territory, near Egyptian military outposts, where he could be easily apprehended. Many archeological finds have confirmed the unique Midianite culture and everything of Midianite origin ever found was found ONLY on the Arabian Peninsula. There is not one shred of evidence that Midianites ever inhabited the Sinai.

Now without intent on trashing anyone, it's pretty obvious from my study that the people who argue that Midian spilled over into the Sinai Peninsula have an agenda: to prove that it was in the Sinai where Moses drove his sheep. And, this is for no other reason than to try and establish the Christian Mt. Sinai tradition as reality. As we'll soon see, the Bible itself doesn't confirm the standard Christian traditional site of Mt. Sinai either.

But, it gets **all the more** unlikely that Moses drove his sheep to a mountain on the tip of the Sinai Peninsula, because it would have required him to drive his sheep some 50 or more miles northwards along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba, then do a U-turn and drive the sheep

another 75 miles or more down the OTHER side of the Gulf of Aqaba to get to the site that has been designated as the place of the receiving of the Law, Mt. Sinai. Not only that, this route would have taken Moses and his flocks through barren desert, with little or no pasture, and even fewer available watering holes. No Shepherd in his right mind would drive sheep, which are very delicate creatures, through 125 miles of parched land, just to move them along to new pasture.

No, Moses remained on the Arabian Peninsula and drove them to the “far side”, or “behind” the desert wilderness of MIDIAN, just as the Bible says. You see Vs 1 has some translators saying that Moses drove the sheep **west**. Others say only “behind”, or “far side” or some other undefined, general direction. Well, the only way to come up with **west** is if someone works backwards; that is, IF you begin with the idea that Mt. Horeb is on the Sinai Peninsula, then from where Moses actually started out (in Midian) he would have to go west to get there. Right? The problem is that of the 69 times the word “WEST” is used in the OT, 68 of those times the original Hebrew word is “Yam”.....Yam is the traditional Hebrew word to indicate the direction of west. The 69th time “west” is used, is right here in Exodus 1, and guess what, the word Yam is NOT the Hebrew word used. Instead, we find the word “ACHAR” is used. And, of the 74 times that “ACHAR” is used in the OT, 73 times it is translated as “behind”, or “at the rear”. ONLY here in Exodus 1 have some translators chosen to make “Achar” become “west”. Get the picture? It is a gross mistranslation. All we know about the direction Moses took the flocks is that it was somewhere behind the wilderness.....behind the desert, which could have been just about any direction.

But, in V2, we do see that wherever it was they went, they went to where there were mountains that rimmed the desert wilderness. And, it would not have been very far.....probably no more than 10-20 miles at the MOST. We'll get back into this at a later date after the Israelites are released from Egypt. But, for now, just know that where Moses had the Burning Bush Experience was in Midian, on the EAST side of the Gulf of Aqaba, on the Arabian Peninsula.....not in the Sinai desert.