

# Exodus 1-2:

## *Setting the Scene for Israel's Deliverance*

### I. How to Approach Exodus

- Exodus is the second book of the Torah (“law,” “instruction” in Hebrew) or “Pentateuch” (“five-volumed” in Greek).
- The English title “Exodus” is taken from the Septuagint and the Greek noun *exodus*, “a going out” or “departure.” The Hebrew title of the book is *Shemot*, meaning “Names,” coming out of the first verse of the book (1:1).
- As with the other 5 books of the Torah/Pentateuch, Exodus was primarily composed by Moses.
- Exodus is a historical narrative. The narrator describes the events in the book as having literally taken place. The literary techniques used to convey this historical narrative are consistent with that of an adventure story or epic. The book includes: a nation in crisis, cruel villain, unlikely hero, cosmic confrontations, national disasters, mighty acts of rescue, long journey, unexpected setbacks, and a grand finale.
- Key themes in the book: Offspring, Covenant Promises (related: remembrance, faithfulness, loyal love), Liberation/Deliverance/Salvation, Presence/Worship, Mediation/Blessing, Provision, and Obedience.

### II. The Sons of Jacob Become the People of Israel (Exodus 1:1-7)

1. Who is Israel in 1:1?
2. Recalling the story of Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29-30), what do you notice about the way the sons of Jacob are grouped in 1:2-4?
3. Where else in Scripture have you heard the language in 1:7 used?

### III. New Pharaoh Oppresses Israel (Exodus 1:8-22)

4. Why did the new king of Egypt instruct his people to deal shrewdly with the people of Israel?

5. What is the first specified task the people of Israel did for Egypt?
6. Why might the king of Egypt have commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the sons of Hebrew women?
  - The Hebrew midwives are introduced in the narrative as prototypes of characters to come later in the book. Opposing the order of the king of Egypt, these women demonstrate they feared (reverenced) God (YHWH) more than Pharaoh. Notably, their names are given in verse 15 while the king of Egypt's name is not. This small addition is unnecessary for the telling of the story and displays the narrator's approval of the women's actions.
7. What follows the midwives defiance of the king of Egypt (and allegiance to God)?
8. Following the midwives actions, how did Pharaoh command his people?

#### **IV. The Birth of Moses (Exodus 2:1-10)**

- This chapter narrates two different moments in which Moses' life is preserved: as an infant and a 40-year-old man (Acts 7:23).
9. Identify the irony in 2:1-10.
  10. In Hebrew, the name Moses sounds like the verb *mashah*, which means "to draw out." How does the naming of the baby in the basket prefigure the later events of his life?

## **V. Moses Flees to Midian (Exodus 2:11-22)**

11. In Acts 7:23, Stephen states Moses was 40-years-old when “it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel.” Take a moment to acknowledge the significant time leap from 2:10 to 2:11. In 2:10, Moses is a child growing older; in 2:11, he is 40-years-old. What is missing between these verses? (state the obvious)
12. Who are Moses’ people (2:11)?
13. What does “he looked this way and that, and seeing no one” communicate to the reader about the ethics of Moses’ decision?
14. What does Moses do with the body of the killed Egyptian?
15. What is ironic about the Hebrew’s response, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?” to Moses?
16. Why is Moses surprised in 2:14?
17. Where does Moses flee from Pharaoh?
18. What does Moses do in 2:17? Considering his actions earlier in the chapter, what is being unveiled by the narrator about Moses’ character?
19. How do Midian’s daughters identify Moses in 2:19?
20. Who does the priest of Midian give to Moses?

## VI. God Hears Israel's Groaning (Exodus 2:23-25)

- Acts 7:30 identifies “those many days” as 40 years.

21. Who dies in 2:23?

22. How is God described in 2:24-25?

- “These verses function with 1:1-7 to frame the opening section with the reminder that the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not be defined by their years of slavery, but by their covenant relationship with the God who has heard their cries (and who saw and knew their affliction) and remembered his promises” (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 147).