

## Deliverance in Chaos: *Moses & His Birth* (Exodus 2:1-10)

“The character of God is today, and always will be, exactly what it was in Bible times. God is forever *what* at that moment, three thousand years ago, He told Moses that He was.”

~ J. I. Packer

### I. Investigation: An Examination of Exodus 2:1-10

#### A. Introduction

Mentioned over 700 times in the Old Testament and about 80 times in the New Testament, Moses is unquestionably one of the most significant characters in the Bible. The Scriptures depict Moses as a prophet, priest, leader of Israel, poet, miracle worker, and mediator. He was also seen as the founder of Israel’s law, religious practice, and political administration. Most significantly, the Bible describes Moses as a “man of God” (cf. Neh 10:29).

Despite his amazing accomplishments and the time frame in which he lived, this servant of the Lord still has much to relay to men living in this day and age. While we will probably never be asked to confront a world leader or part a sea, we are asked to follow after the Lord no matter the circumstance. Moses certainly possessed his own set of shortcomings, moments of fear and doubt, weaknesses, and even sin; however, the Lord worked in and through him. Moses provides hope, encouragement, and, even exhortation, as we attempt to live as godly men in this plagued world.

#### B. The Birth of Moses

v. 1 - The birth of Moses is unlike the birth stories of Jacob, Samuel, or Samson. There is no supernatural phenomena, angelic visitation, or divine announcement.

While the tribe of Levi is mentioned, Moses’ parents are not named in the birth account. Only later do we learn that Moses descended from the clan of Kohath, the family of Amram, and that his mother’s name was Jochebed, Amram’s aunt (Exod 6:16-25). Interestingly, “Jochebed has the distinction of being the first person in Scripture with a name part of which includes a portion of one of God’s names. For other Jo- names, think of Jo-el, Jo-nathan, Jo-ab and the like” (Hamilton, *Exodus*, 19). Jochedbed’s name means “Yahweh is glorious!”

Why are the names of Moses’ parents not mentioned?

v. 2 - Jochebed puts her and her family at risk by disobeying Pharaoh. Similar to Rahab, she risks her life for others. In fact, both women “hide” an individual/individuals despite the law of the land.

The text mentions that Moses is “beautiful” or “good”. Stephen stated that Moses “was no ordinary child” (cf. Acts 7:20; also, Heb 11:23). The text seems to suggest that the Lord’s hand was upon Moses, even as an infant.

vv. 3-4 - After three months, Jochebed can no longer conceal her son. She is left with little option but to trust the Lord to provide for her son as she strategically places him in the Nile.

The Hebrew word for “basket” is also used of the ark in Genesis 6-9. As aptly noted by one commentator, “putting her son into the Nile, was in one sense obeying the Pharaoh’s edict to ‘throw’ baby boys into the Nile river! (Ex. 1:22) (Hannah, *Exodus*, 109). As Moses was saved from the waters, so he would deliver the Lord’s people through the waters.

In addition to the Pharaoh’s edict of throwing all Hebrew boys into the river (1:22), disposing of one’s child in the river was a common practice in the ancient world. James Hoffmeier writes that “the reason for the multitude of stories from across the Near East and Mediterranean of casting a child into the waters is that it may reflect the ancient practice of committing an unwanted child, or one needing protection, into the hands of providence. A modern parallel would be leaving a baby on the steps of an orphanage or at the door of a church.” (“The Legend of Argon” in *ANET*, 119).

vv. 5-6 - If this is the time of Thutmose I, then this princess may be none other than Hatshepsut. She later would serve as Pharaoh for 22 years. And yet, Exodus never identifies the Pharaoh or his daughter. As aptly noted by one commentator: “In the biblical text, the greatest work ever done by a member of the Egyptian royal family was a singular act of kindness toward an apparently abandoned baby” (Garrett, *Exodus*, 172).

“to have compassion” - The term is normally used of divine compassion (cf. Mal 3:17). As princess, she would have been fully aware of the “problems” associated with the Hebrews, the Egyptians’ disdain for this people group (cf. 1:12), and the laws her father had established.

vv. 7-9 - Note that Mariam never identifies herself as Moses’ sister. However, the Egyptian princess surely is not naive. As observed by scholars: “Is she so simple to think that this young Hebrew girl’s appearance is coincidental? Is she so slow to be unable to connect the woman who instantly materializes, her breasts filled with milk, with the child’s mother?” (Gunn and Fewell, *Gender Power and Promise*, 93).

Not only does the Lord grant safety to Jochebed’s son, the Lord also grants financial provisions to Jochebed. The Pharaoh paid for Jochebed to nurse her own son!

“Ironically, this child, once doomed to death by Pharaoh’s decree will become the very instrument of Pharaoh’s destruction and the means through which *all* Israel escapes not only Pharaoh’s decree, but Egypt itself” (Enns, *Exodus*, 62).

v. 10 - Further provisions are made for Moses as he is educated in the finest school in the world at that time. Acts 7:22 states that Moses “was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.”

The meaning of the name “Moses” has been heavily debated by scholars. A popular view observes that “numerous names of the pharaohs end with *-mose* (Ah-mose, Thut-mose, Ra-meses), in which the first part of the name is the name of an Egyptian god, and the “mose” part reflects either the verb *msy*, ‘to be born,’ or the noun *ms*, ‘child, son.’” (Hamilton, *Exodus*, 23). Some scholars point out that “Mose”

also served as a typical personal name in Egypt at the time. Other scholars argue the name is Hebraic, not Egyptian in nature. Moses' name is explained by the fact that he was "drawn out" (Heb *masâ*) of the water. The vagueness could be associated with his double identification. In many ways, Moses is both an Egyptian (2:15b-22) and a Hebrew (2:11-15a).

Not only did Pharaoh's daughter save this Jewish boy from her father's edict, she eventually raises the son in her father's estate! In the opening chapters of Exodus, we find God's plan overriding Pharaoh's plan. "Yahweh had promised that the descendants of Abraham would be a great nation. But Pharaoh intended to keep them a small, controllable tribe." (D. Wicke, "The Literary Structure of Exodus 1:2-2:10," 103).

## II. Intersect

- A. One of the major themes found in the Book of Exodus is God's great act of deliverance for His people. Even in the darkest moments—when evil is rampant and the wicked appear to be triumphant—God's plan will not be thwarted.

Genesis 50:20 (also, cf. Prov 21:1) -

- B. Even in the midst of desperation, we cannot lose sight that God seeks our best for His glory. Do you believe that God is doing what is best—not only for his people generally, but for you personally?

Romans 8:28-30 -

- C. Trusting in the Lord calls for a working faith. Idleness, worry, and apathy are cancerous cells within the soul—given time, there will be metastasis and ultimate destruction of the host!

Romans 12:1-2 -

"Be not dismayed whatever betide,  
 God will take care of you;  
 Beneath His wings of love abide,  
 God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,  
 Through every day, o'er all the way;  
 He will take care of you,  
 God will take care of you."

~ C. D. Martin