

# The Book of Exodus

## Lesson 1

### *Chapters 1 – 2:10*

#### **Introduction**

The book of Exodus was written by the author of Genesis, Moses. Although this book focuses on the departure of the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt, it begins with a short synopsis of the original participants of that nation who first arrived in Egypt 2281 years after the creation of Adam.<sup>1</sup> The eventual bondage of the nation is addressed followed by the birth of Moses, the author of this book. He was born 2631 years after the creation of Adam;<sup>2</sup> 80 years later, in 2711,<sup>3</sup> he led the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness where they would remain for 40 years.<sup>4</sup> However, the books of Genesis and Exodus were completed by the second year in the wilderness; therefore, the book of Exodus ends 2713 years after the creation of Adam.<sup>5</sup> Before this book ends, this freed nation will have a leader, a law, a place of worship, a priesthood and an army prepared to take possession of the land promised to them by the LORD since the days of Abraham.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Sons of Israel**

**Exodus 1:1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household:** <sup>2</sup> Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; <sup>3</sup> Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; <sup>4</sup> Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. <sup>5</sup> And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. <sup>6</sup> And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. <sup>7</sup> But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

For those who have studied the book of Genesis, these names are extremely familiar. The only new information in this passage is the confirmation that in spite of the deaths of all the sons of Israel, their descendants flourished and multiplied in Egypt beyond imagination. All the Egyptians were blessed, in the beginning at least, by the presence and fruitfulness of Jacob's children and grandchildren.

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<sup>1</sup> 1880 BC

<sup>2</sup> 1541 BC

<sup>3</sup> 1464 BC

<sup>4</sup> Until 1425 BC

<sup>5</sup> 1462 BC

<sup>6</sup> When studying the books of the Bible in chronological order, the book of Job should be studied between the books of Genesis and Exodus. The participants in the book of Job were descendants of Abraham, Ishmael and Esau who lived to the east and southeast of Canaan. The context of the book of Job includes information consistent with that found in the book of Genesis but not the new instructions given in the book of Exodus and the following books of the Bible.

## Freedom Turns to Forced Labor

**Exodus 1:8** Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.<sup>9</sup> And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we.<sup>10</sup> "Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land."<sup>11</sup> So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.<sup>12</sup> But 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.<sup>13</sup> And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously;<sup>14</sup> and 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.

We wonder, "How in the world did a Pharaoh come to the throne in Egypt who had not heard the story of Joseph or even a faint rumor of his successes?" It could occur only as a result of a dynasty change in the country; it had to be a complete takeover of the country by another nation.

As indicated in the last pages of the companion study of these lessons in the book of Genesis, a dynasty change did take place; in fact, six dynasty changes took place after Joseph died and before the nation of Israel's departure from Egypt during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

In review, Senusret III served his 37 years as Pharaoh and died 2314 years after the creation of Adam.<sup>7</sup> His son, Amenemhet III took the throne and ruled for 45 years. He was followed by Amenemhet IV who served as Pharaoh for 12 years and then Queen Sobeknefru controlled the nation for almost three years.

Amenenhet III was the Pharaoh at the time of Joseph's death. He served seven more years before his death and the ascension of Amenemhet IV to the throne. Twenty-one years after the death of Joseph, Queen Soberknefru lost the kingdom and the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of the Pharaohs of Egypt came to an end.

During the following 70 years, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty ruled by 10 unstable kings who placed their capital in Itj-tawy near Faiyum. The 10 kings were contemporaries. The actual length of their individual reigns is difficult to determine. The 13<sup>th</sup>



Picture 1: Amenemhet III, reigned for 45 years. The Pharaoh at the time of Joseph's death.



Picture 2: Amenemhet IV reigned for 12 years



Picture 1: Queen Sobeknefru ruled Egypt for 2 years



Picture 2: Two of the ten kings of the 13th Dynasty in Egypt. Hor (left) and Sobekhotep IV (right).

<sup>7</sup> 1848 BC

Dynasty is the beginning of what is often called the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt. However, these 10 kings of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty definitely knew Joseph, or at least had heard the rumors of his rule because they were all Egyptians, most likely born while he was still serving as the second in command of the kingdom. See the footnote for the names of these 10 Pharaohs.<sup>8</sup>

The 14<sup>th</sup> Dynasty arose during the last few years of the 13<sup>th</sup> with only one leader, Nehesy (Aasehre), for 47 years. No known statues of Nehesy exist.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty brought in the desert princes known as the Hyksos as the Pharaohs of Egypt. Most commentators name the first Hyksos Pharaoh as the one who did not know Joseph. Interestingly, these Hyksos were Semites who began to assume control of the eastern desert and delta of Egypt. For clarity, this is the region of Egypt that contained the Land of Goshen. The Hyksos were descendants of Shem, the same line as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the nation of Israel. See the names of the Hyksos kings of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the footnotes.<sup>9</sup>



Picture 5: Pharaoh Yakobaam, 2nd ruler of the 16th Dynasty

The 16<sup>th</sup> Dynasty followed with but two kings, Anather and Yakobaam. This dynasty reigned parallel to the 15<sup>th</sup> and therefore the land must have been ruled with the permission of the Hyksos. Their names are found only on scarabs in northern Egypt and the western part of Canaan.

To the south in Egypt, the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty was forming toward the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Dynasties. Near Thebes, rulers were gaining power. Five kings ruled and their names are in the footnotes.<sup>10</sup> Pharaoh Seqenenre was the fourth Pharaoh of the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and he battled with the Hyksos continually. Fearful of the growing tribes of Israel and the threat of the



Map 1: Goshen, controlled by the Hyksos; Elephantine, home of the southern Pharaoh's of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty

Hyksos, it is reasonable that in the last years of his life, he ordered all the male Hebrew children killed at birth. Kamose, Seqenenre's son, was the last of the southern kings who ruled from Elephantine. He was a Cushite king determined to overtake the Hyksos in the north. With his brother and general, Ahmose I, the Hyksos were subdued and Kamose ruled all of Egypt in a united kingdom, but the Hyksos were not completely gone. However, within three years, Kamose died and Ahmose I became Pharaoh and a new dynasty, the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, began free of the 13<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty rulers.



Picture 6: Pharaoh Kamose, fifth ruler of the 17th Dynasty. Ahmose I was his brother and general.



Picture 7: Pharaoh Ahmose I, founder of the 18th Dynasty

<sup>8</sup> Wegaf (Khutawyre), Ameny Intef IV (Amenemhet V / Sankhibre), Hor (Auyibre), Sobekhotep II (Amenemhet VI / Sekhemre Khutawy), Khendjer (Userkare), Soberhotep III (Sekhemre Sewadjetawy), Neferhotep I (Khasekhemre), Soberhotep IV (Khaneferre), Ay (Merneferre), Neferhotep II (Sekemre Sankhtawy).

<sup>9</sup> Sheshi (Mayebre), Yakubher (Meruserre), Khyan (Seuserenre), Apepi I (Auserre), Apepi II (Aqenre).

<sup>10</sup> Sobekemsaf II (Sekhemre Shedtawy), Intef VII (Nubkheperre), Tao I (Sanakhtenre), Tao II (Seqenenre), Kamose (Wadjkheperre).

About 12 years into Ahmose's 24 year reign, he had to deal with the Hyksos again. At last, the Hyksos were expelled and the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt was over.

Even though the Hyksos were distant cousins of the nation of Israel, they were more than likely not descendants of Abraham and therefore they knew nothing of the promise of the LORD to him or the history of his descendants. They were the ones who put the Israelites in bondage and caused them such grief and pain, forcing them to build cities such as Pithom and Rameses with mud and straw bricks. The use of the word "Rameses" has caused a world of confusion in the dating of Jacob's family's departure from Egypt 430 years after this time in the Scripture. Most commentators immediately jump to the Pharaohs who were called Rameses in dating the exodus. Rameses I reigned two years from 1293 – 1291 BC. Rameses II reigned 67 years from 1279–1212 BC. This second Rameses was called the builder because of his additions to many of the complexes in Egypt, all of which would bear his name once he ordered a building project. Herculean in scale, his projects included additions to the temples in Karnak and Luxor, his father's temple at Thebes, his Abydos temple and the Ramesseum. Others included temples in Nubia and as far as Napata. His carvings in the mountainside at Abu Simbel cannot be overlooked and the four 60-foot seated kings flanking the entrance are spectacular. All of these projects were completed with forced labor. The cities were rebuilt with the newly discovered formula for concrete bricks that would last through the centuries but the forced laborers who completed those projects in the 1200s BC were not Israelites because they had made the exodus from Egypt 200 years before. The problem comes by automatically associating the land of Rameses as well as the city of Rameses mentioned in Exodus 12:37 with the Pharaoh of 1279-1212 BC. Archeologists have discovered beyond a shadow of a doubt that the concrete structure that Rameses II built in the city of Rameses was done so to replace the mud brick structures of the original city also called Rameses. It is quite possible that the Israelites were forced to make the mud bricks that were used to build the original city of Rameses but they did not make the concrete structures positively associated with construction projects of Rameses II. Even the book of Exodus confirms that the Israelites were forced to make their bricks from mud and straw (Exodus 5), not gypsum or limestone, sand and water.

With that as the background, Pharaoh Ahmose Seqenenre sought to rid the country of the Hyksos; therefore, with the growing population of Israelites in Egypt, it is reasonable that he would be afraid that they would join the Hyksos and rebel against him. The Israelites were in the land of Goshen in the northeast portion and delta of Egypt where the Hyksos were reigning. Pharaoh Ahmose Seqenenre was from Elephantine in southern Egypt, the largest of the Aswan islands. In order to control the entire nation of Egypt, Ahmose Seqenenre needed to control the Israelites and oust the Hyksos. Surely, Ahmose Seqenenre must have thought that he could control the growth of the



Picture 8: The Colossus of Rameses



Map 2: Goshen, controlled by the Hyksos; Elephantine, home of the southern Pharaoh's of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty

Israelites by instituting a form of population control by having the male children killed and allowing the females to live.

The battle with the Hyksos was not without a great cost to the family of Ahmose Seqenenre. Within three years, he lost his life in a battle with the Hyksos. His mummified head to the right shows the wounds that killed him.

As previously stated, Seqenenre's son, Kamose became the Pharaoh but ruled for just under three years. At his death, Ahmose I became Pharaoh at about the age of 10. His mother, Queen Aahotep was a force to behold; she ruled with him in his early years. Later, he married his older sister, Ahmose Nefertari, the daughter of Pharaoh who pulled Moses out of the Nile.



Picture 9: Wounded head of Pharaoh Seqenenre, the father of Kamose, Ahmose I, and Ahmose Nefertari.

## Freedom Turns to Population Control

**Exodus 1:15** Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah, and the other was named Puah; <sup>16</sup> and 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."

<sup>17</sup> But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. <sup>18</sup> So the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?"

<sup>19</sup> And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous, and they give birth before the midwife can get to them." <sup>20</sup> So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. <sup>21</sup> And it came about because the midwives feared God, that He established households for them. <sup>22</sup> Then 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."

According to the *Holman Dictionary of the Bible*, a midwife was a woman who assists in the delivery of a child. Her duties included cutting the umbilical cord, washing and salting the babe, and wrapping the child in cloths. It goes on to say the following.

The civil disobedience of the Hebrew midwives Siphrah and Puah confounded Pharaoh's plan to exterminate male Hebrews for a time ([Ex. 1:15-21](#)). Their faithfulness was rewarded with families of their own ([Ex. 1:21](#)), suggesting that childless women frequently served as midwives. The women of [Ruth 4:14-17](#) and [1 Samuel 4:20](#) were likely serving as midwives.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Holman Bible Dictionary. "Midwife."

According to Moses, the Hebrew midwives ignored Pharaoh's command.

## Moses' Parents

**Exodus 2:1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.**

According to Exodus 6:16-19, the man's name was Amram and was the son of Kohath, the son of Levi. According to Exodus 6:20, the daughter of Levi was Jochebed, the sister of Kohath. It is interesting that Jochebed is both the wife and aunt of Amram. Herein is a perfect example of the need for careful Scripture interpretation. The law was given through Moses to the people in the wilderness that a marriage such as this was unlawful;<sup>12</sup> that law was not in place at the time of this story.

According to the account in Genesis of the descendants of Jacob who moved to Egypt at Joseph's bidding, Kohath was among the 70. Because of the span of time involved in this story, Kohath must have been very young at the time and Jochebed was not born yet. To justify this interpretation we can determine the ages of Moses and his brother and sister only in relation to the time of the family's entrance into Egypt. Moses was born 2631 years after the creation of Adam.<sup>13</sup> Aaron was the middle child between Moses and Miriam who was the oldest. She must have been several years older than Moses because she was the one who approached Pharaoh's daughter when Moses was found and she offered to find a wet-nurse for the child. Therefore, Miriam was probably no younger than eight years old at the time which means that she was born before 2623 after the creation of Adam.<sup>14</sup> The entrance into Egypt occurred 2281 years after the creation of Adam.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, there were at least 342 lunar years between the time Kohath entered Egypt and Miriam was born. On our calendar, 342 lunar years are equal to 331 solar years. The only way to justify the relationships in this family is to assume that Levi was extremely old when Jochebed was born and Kohath was extremely old when Amram was born. Furthermore, both Jochebed and Amram were extremely old when Miriam was born. Jochebed was probably younger than Amram by several years, but we do not know that for sure. Levi would have had to outlive Joseph by many years and Jochebed would have been born long after Joseph's death. The Scripture does not give enough information to come any closer to their ages at the time of Miriam's birth and clarify this dilemma.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Leviticus 18:12

<sup>13</sup> 1541 BC

<sup>14</sup> 1549 BC

<sup>15</sup> 1880 BC

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 6 states that Levi lived to be 137 years of age (132 solar years); Kohath lived to be 133 years of age (129 solar years); Amram lived to be 137 years of age (132 solar years). Moses was 80 when he led the nation of Israel out of Egypt where they had been for 430 years (416 solar years). At Moses' birth, the nation of Israel had been in Egypt 350 years (339 solar years). If Kohath was born the first year Levi entered Egypt and Amram was born the last year of Kohath's life,  $129 + 132 = 261$  solar years that could spanned from Kohath entering Egypt to the death of Amram; 261 solar years which falls short of the number of years needed by 78 solar years. This dilemma is not explained in the Scriptures.

## Birth of Moses

**Exodus 2:2** **And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.<sup>3</sup> But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket 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.<sup>4</sup> And his sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.**

Moses was a beautiful baby, one who would win the heart of any woman, even one whose father had decreed that all Hebrew male children should be thrown into the Nile at birth. The basket with Moses in it was placed in a specific place “by the bank of the Nile.” It was no random place. Jochebed must have chosen the place carefully, knowing all the while that it was the location of the daughter of Pharaoh’s bath. Whether Jochebed directed Mariam, or she did it on her own volition, Mariam hid to see what would become of her brother who was about 90 days old.



Picture 10: Ahmose-Nefertari, who drew Moses out of the Nile, daughter of Pharaoh Seqenenre and Queen Aahotep and wife of Ahmose I

## Daughter of Pharaoh

**Exodus 2:5** **Then the 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.<sup>6</sup> When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."**

Nefertari uses the term “Hebrew.” We think of the descendants of Jacob as the nation of Israel, but they were officially known at the time as Hebrews. Why? Eber was Noah’s great-great-grandson. In Hebrew Eber is *Heber* from which the Hebrews take their name. Noah begat Shem who begat Arpachshad who begat Shelah who begat Heber whose line continued through Abraham to the twelve tribes of Israel. All descendants of Heber’s brothers as well as all the other descendants from the line of Shem are called Semites, but they are not Hebrews. Only the direct line of Heber are Hebrews.

Josephus’ comments support the Scripture when he says “the ark was borne along by the current, and that she sent one that could swim after it; that she was struck with the figure and uncommon beauty of the child; that she inquired for a nurse.”



Picture 11: Ahmose Nefertari, the daughter of Pharaoh Seqenenre and Aahotep who drew Moses out of the reeds and became his adoptive mother.

## Miriam's Request

**Exodus 2:7** Then 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?" **8** And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother. **9** Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I shall give *you* your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

In the divine providence of the LORD, Jochebed was employed by Nefertari to nurse Moses until he was weaned at the age of four.

## Naming of Moses

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

A child was not weaned until it was four years old. In most families, as was the case with Isaac in the book of Genesis, a family party was held to celebrate the weaning of a child in the Hebrew culture. In many cases, a child was not formally named until the weaning party. We do not know what Amram and Jochebed called Moses in those first four years; Nefertari named him Prince Moses. Moses means "drawn from;" it does not mean "drawn from the water" as many teach. His name is missing the additional word that tells from where Moses was drawn. For example, Ahmose means "drawn from the moon"; the same moon god is called *Allah* by the Muslims and *Sin* by the Mesopotamians. Ramoses or Rameses means drawn from the god Ra; Thutmose means drawn from the god Thut. Even though Nefertari says, "Because I drew him out of the water" the name for water was not added to his formal name.