

### The Nation of Israel is Formed in Egypt

#### Exodus 1

Exodus 1 – *“Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: <sup>2</sup> Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; <sup>3</sup> Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; <sup>4</sup> Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. <sup>5</sup> All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already). <sup>6</sup> And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. <sup>7</sup> But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. <sup>8</sup> Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup> And he said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; <sup>10</sup> come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.” <sup>11</sup> Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. <sup>12</sup> But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. <sup>13</sup> So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. <sup>14</sup> And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.*

*<sup>15</sup> Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; <sup>16</sup> and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birth stools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; 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 commanded them, but saved the male children alive. <sup>18</sup> So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?” <sup>19</sup> And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.”*

*<sup>20</sup> Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. <sup>21</sup> And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them. <sup>22</sup> So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”*

#### Background Notes

The theme of the book of Exodus is “Deliverance” or “Redemption.” It is the record of the redemption of Israel. God delivered the nation of Israel out of their condition of slavery in the land of Egypt and into a covenant relationship with God. The title “Exodus” means *to exit* or *to depart from* or *the way out*. Moses was the author of the entire Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), so Moses was the author of the book of Exodus. Critical scholars of the Bible debate

and deny the Mosaic authorship of Exodus, but our Lord quoted from the book of Exodus in chapters 7 and 12 of the Gospel of Mark, and in both chapters the Lord said that Moses was the author. That should be good enough for us! In Exodus 1 contains some factual data that bear on the date of the Exodus. Christian scholars debate the date of the Exodus, and evangelical Christians hold two views. One view is called the “Late Date Exodus” view; this view places the date of the Exodus at about 1290BC. The other view is the more conservative “Early Date Exodus” view, and this view puts the Exodus earlier, at 1446BC. The date of 1446BC is based on I Kings 6:1, which says: *“In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, he began to build the temple of the Lord.”* Since we can pinpoint the years of King Solomon’s reign, a simple calculation provides us with the year 1446BC for the date of the Exodus.

Exodus 1:8 says: *“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph”* — that is, the new king did not look with favor on the Jewish people. Who was this “new king”? A new dynasty of Semitic Pharaohs known as the Hyksos took over Egypt and ruled between the years 1730 BC and 1570 BC. If the *“new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph”* refers to the coming in of the Hyksos dynasty, the dates fit in very well with the conservative “early date” of the Exodus. In this view then, in Exodus 1:13 we have the expulsion of the Semitic Hyksos and the return of the true Egyptian pharaohs. They continued the oppression and even increased it: *“and the Egyptians worked the Israelites ruthlessly.”*

Exodus 1:11 also bears on the date of the Exodus. It says that under the oppression, Israel built the storage cities of Pithom and Ramses. If the city of Ramses here is in honor of either Ramses I or Ramses II, it makes the date of the Exodus too late for even the “late date” view of the Exodus. This is because you must add an additional 80 years here for Moses. Moses was born in Exodus 2, **after** the building of the storage cities and Moses is 80 years old at the time of the Exodus. So it makes the Exodus too late for any view. Most likely the city of Ramses was named after the Egyptian sun god Ra, and the Ramses Pharaohs took on that same name later. I hope you were able to follow all of that! It all fits in with the conservative early date of the Exodus in about 1446BC.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The nation of Israel was formed in Egypt.

The nation of Israel started with about 70 people (v5), when Jacob and his extended family came to Egypt to be with Joseph during the time of severe famine (Genesis 46). Joseph settled them in the Nile delta, in the fertile land of Goshen. By the time Jacob’s descendants left Egypt 430 years later (Exodus 12:40-41), there would have been at least two million people. 603,550 men 20 years and older arrived at Mt. Sinai after the Exodus (Numbers 1:46), so at least two million people must have come out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

But was 430 years a long enough time period to allow for this rapid population growth? Yes -- no problem! Calculations show that with a growth rate of only a few percent, it could easily be accomplished. Verse 7 says, *"...the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so the land was filled with them."* Remember, about 150 good years preceded the oppression, and even during the oppression the Israelites continued to grow in numbers. *"But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians began to dread the Israelites..."* (v12).

The nation of Israel was not formed like other ancient nations, as a result of the Tower of Babel. Israel was formed in Egypt. The nation of Israel was formed in Egypt.

## 2. The nation of Israel was forged in Egypt.

In Exodus 1 we see that the nation of Israel was formed in the midst of affliction and oppression, and it was forged in the crucible of bondage and slavery. The new king who "knew not Joseph" was afraid that with the increasing numbers, the Hebrew people would gain power (v.9) and in time of war might join the true Egyptians who hated the Hyksos (v10). And so the oppression and slavery began, and it continued even when the Hyksos were expelled. *"...the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly* (v12-14).

Inscriptions and pictures of Semitic slaves making bricks have been found in Egypt, and these artifacts support the biblical record. Because the hard labor did not stop the growth of Israelite population, the Pharaoh commanded the chief Hebrew midwives to practice infanticide, and kill all the male babies as soon as they were born. *"When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth...if it is a boy, kill him, but if it is a girl, let her live"* (v16). But the Hebrew midwives very properly disobeyed the Pharaoh's order. They obeyed the higher authority – **God!** And so should we! We should obey all authorities over us unless that authority contradicts what God has commanded. Then, as Acts 5:29 says, *"...we ought to obey God rather than men."*

This brings us to an important question: Did the midwives **lie** to Pharaoh when they answered his accusation? Let's read verses 18-19 again: *"Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, 'Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?' The midwives answered Pharaoh, 'Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.'" Did the midwives lie? If they *did* lie, God didn't commend them for lying, but rather for their reverence for God by not killing the babies. However, I don't think they lied. I believe they were telling the truth. I believe the Lord enabled the Hebrew women to give birth quickly -- and I'm sure the midwives didn't rush to the scene either! But I believe they didn't lie! I believe that the Bible **never condones lying**. (And that's a lecture in itself!)*

Pharaoh's evil plans were thwarted, but he then commanded that all male babies were to be drowned! *"Then the Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: 'Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.'"* (V22). But this plan was thwarted as well, because out of these circumstances came the birth of Moses and his training in the courts of Pharaoh! God was at work on behalf of His people in spite of the Egyptians' oppression. The nation of Israel was forged in Egypt.

## **Practical Application**

### **When the going gets tough, don't think God is against you!**

If you had told one of the oppressed Hebrew slaves to take heart because God was working out His sovereign plans through all the hard work and misery of slavery, how do you think that Hebrew slave would have responded? Hopefully he would have refrained from swearing! But I doubt whether he would have said, "Praise the Lord!" But guess what? God was working out His sovereign plans through all of this oppression of His people! God was working out His sovereign plan.

Do you see the lesson for us? Are you undergoing some kind of affliction and oppression right now? Are circumstances against you? Does it seem that God has forgotten you, or even turned against you? Listen -- it's not true! Don't allow Satan to deceive you and discourage you! God has not forgotten you, and He is not against you. When the going gets tough, don't think that God is against you!