

Moses(2)

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Moses' Birth and Childhood

During the time that all newborn Hebrew boys were to be killed by casting them into the Nile,¹ a certain boy was born to parents of the family (tribe) of Levi.² His mother hid him for three months but, when she could no longer hide him from the Egyptians, she put the child in a basket made of reeds and coated in tar and pitch and placed the basket in reeds near the bank of the Nile. The daughter of Pharaoh (the Bible does not mention the name of the Pharaoh or his daughter) spotted the basket and had it brought to her. When she opened the basket, she saw that it was holding a crying Hebrew child (Exodus 2:1-6).

The child's sister³ had been watching to see what would happen to him, and offered to Pharaoh's daughter to find a Hebrew woman who could nurse the child. Pharaoh's daughter consented, and his sister brought her mother to be the child's nurse (Pharaoh's daughter was unaware that the nurse was the child's mother). When the child had grown enough, his mother returned him to Pharaoh's daughter who then made him her own son. She named him Moses because she had drawn him out of the water (Exodus 2:7-10).

Moses as a Young Man

After Moses had grown into a young man, he went out from the palace and observed how his fellow Hebrews were being mistreated by the Egyptians. When he thought that no one was looking, he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew laborer. However, word got around and he lost all credibility with his fellow Hebrews. Even Pharaoh heard of it (Exodus 2:11-15).

Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses (i.e., have him put to death) for what he did. Moses escaped Pharaoh's wrath by fleeing to the land of Midian. He helped the family of the priest of Midian. Thankful for his assistance (thinking he was an Egyptian), the priest gave his daughter Zipporah to be Moses' wife. Moses named his son Gershom (Exodus 2:15-22).

Takeaways

- The love and courage of a mother, who disobeyed the command of Pharaoh to save the life of her child, is revealed to us. We discussed occasions for disobedience to higher authorities in the previous lesson.

¹ Exodus 1:8-22 refers to a Pharaoh (king) that came to power sometime after Joseph's death and who had no knowledge of Joseph or what he had done for Egypt. The Bible doesn't say how long or how many pharaohs after Joseph's death. However, the family of Israel had multiplied greatly, so much so that they had grown mightier than the Egyptians and the Pharaoh was afraid that they would rise up against Egypt. Consequently, he instituted means to have all Hebrew boys put to death at birth. This likely occurred quite some time after Joseph had died for Israel to have grown so large, and this death decree for Hebrew boys apparently was near the end of Israel's sojourn in Egypt that lasted 430 years (Exodus 12:40-42). The death decree may have been instituted after Moses' older brother Aaron was born, but Scripture doesn't say this. We know that Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 years old when they started dealing with Pharaoh concerning the release of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 7:7).

² The names of Moses' father and mother were later revealed as Amram and Jochebed, respectively (Exodus 6:20). The tribe of Levi would become the tribe of priests (beginning with Moses' brother Aaron) who would be responsible for meeting the spiritual needs of the nation of Israel (Exodus 28:1-4).

³ The sister was most likely Miriam, who was the only sister of Moses mentioned in the Bible (Exodus 15:20).

- The fact that Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter, that his own mother became his nurse, and that Pharaoh's daughter later made him her own son demonstrates the will of God. That is, nothing happened by chance.
- It would not be unreasonable to think that Pharaoh's daughter was putting herself at risk by making a Hebrew child as her own son. Again, however, nothing happened by chance; this was all part of God's plan for Moses and Israel (and for Egypt). We'll see how God used Moses later.
- No matter how hard we might try, it is impossible to hide our sinful actions. Sooner or later, it finds us out; also, God knows everything we do (Luke 8:16-17; 12:2-3; Galatians 6:7-9; Hebrews 4:13). We are exhorted to stop sinning; that is, stop consciously or intentionally living our lives according to the flesh. Instead, we are to live according to the Spirit (John 8:1-11; Romans 6:1-2, 12-14; I Corinthians 15:34; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:1-11; I Timothy 5:8-11).
- Moses committed murder. Murder has always been wrong (God cursed Cain for killing Abel—Genesis 4:8-16) and every culture has their laws for dealing with murder. Pharaoh wanted Moses to be killed, so his act may have been punishable by death under Egyptian law (Exodus 2:15). Under the Law of Moses (i.e., the Law of God revealed through Moses), which came later, *premeditated* murder⁴ was to be punished by death (Exodus 20:13; 21:12-14). So, why wasn't Moses punished for his sin?⁵ We don't know for certain. It seems that the murder was premeditated because Moses tried to be careful not to be seen; nevertheless, God provided for him a place to flee from punishment by Pharaoh. We do know, however, that God had a plan and purpose for Moses and used him despite his sin. This demonstrates the grace of God and should humble us. It should remind us to leave judgment to God (Romans 2:1-2; 14:10-12). It should also remind us to accept the forgiveness of God (i.e., not dwell on or punish ourselves for our sins), examine ourselves to understand whether we are living for God or ourselves (II Corinthians 13:5; I Thessalonians 5:21-22), and desire to live according to the Spirit of God rather than according to sinfulness.

⁴ To me, Exodus 21:12-14 implies that there were degrees of murder—still guilty but with different levels of punishment—just as we have in our laws today. Premeditated murder was automatically punishable by death. However, David planned and was responsible for the death of Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) even though he didn't personally kill him (II Samuel 11:2 – 12:23). Under the Law of Moses, therefore, David should have been punished by death (David was also guilty of adultery with Bathsheba, which was also punishable by death for both of them—Leviticus 20:10). By the grace of God, he was not put to death, but he repented of his sin to God and lost his illegitimate child who was born to Bathsheba (God also punished him in other ways—II Samuel 11:9-13). God continued to use David for His purposes despite his sin. However, we should never put God to the test by purposely committing sin (Romans 6:1-2; Matthew 4:4-7). Nor should we ever consider ourselves to be above the law of the land just because we are Christians (i.e., because we serve *a higher law*—Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17). To do so is a demonstration of our arrogance. Furthermore, we need to realize and understand that we—believers in this dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1-12)—are no longer under the requirements and consequences of the Law of Moses (Romans 3:21-26; 6:14; Galatians 3:10-12; II Corinthians 3:4-11). The Law was symbolically nailed to the cross with Christ and taken out of our way (Colossians 2:13-14; Galatians 3:13-14).

⁵ Moses wasn't caught and put to death or otherwise punished for his murder; he escaped punishment by leaving Egypt.