

Message #3**Exodus 1:8-22**

There is an interesting statement in the book of Psalms which says: “Israel also came into Egypt...and He (God) caused His people to be very fruitful and made them stronger than their adversaries” (Psalm 105:23-24). You can put God’s people anywhere and He will bless them.

There is no doubt that God was blessing the nation Israel while she was in Egypt. The words that describe the blessings in **verse 7** (fruitful, multiply) are the very words Moses used in Genesis 1 that described the blessing pronounced by God on man and woman (Gen. 1:28). God was blessing Israel, even when she was living in Egypt.

The problem is things were so good, that Israel had no plans to leave. Now there is nothing wrong with God blessing and prospering people. There is nothing wrong with God making things nice for His people, but there is something wrong when the people start forgetting about the Word of God and will of God and that is exactly what was happening to Israel as time went on.

So what God ultimately did was to sovereignly permit things to become very negative toward Israel. What that would ultimately do is create an atmosphere where the people of God would be driven to God and to look to Him for help. The lesson to see in this text is this:

GOD, IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY, WILL, AT TIMES, TURN HIS PEOPLE’S WORLD UPSIDE DOWN IN ORDER TO DIRECT HIS PEOPLE TO DO HIS WILL.

Now this text may be broken down by the two key sovereign facts Moses presents:

SOVEREIGN FACT #1 – A new Pharaoh/King arose who did not know Joseph. 1:8

The noun Pharaoh is a name of the office much like the noun President. It was first used in the 18th dynasty as a title for the king of Egypt. There are different Pharaohs that would have existed from the time of Joseph to the time of the Exodus:

- 1) Ahmose was the 1st Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1570-1546 B.C.) - expelled Hyksos.
- 2) Thutmose I was the 3rd Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1525-1512 B.C.) - kill Hebrew babies.
His daughter would pull Moses out of the Nile River (Ex. 2:5).
- 3) Hatshepsut (a woman) was the 5th Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1503-1482 B.C.) - She was probably the stepmother of Moses—co-regent reign with Thutmose III.
- 4) Thutmose III was the 6th Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1504-1450 B.C.) - this is possibly the Pharaoh that tried to kill Moses and caused him to flee (Ex. 2:15).
- 5) Amenhotep II was the 7th Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1450-1425 B.C.) - this is the Pharaoh that experienced the plagues and Red Sea destruction (Ex. 3:10-15:19).

By the way, the artifacts and mummy of the King Tut tomb, which has toured the United States, is King Tutankhamen, who was Pharaoh in 1333 B.C., some 100 years after the events of the book of Exodus.

Now according to the “*Cambridge Ancient History*,” these are the probable key Pharaohs that are connected to the book of Exodus.

But what is interesting is that the specific Pharaoh is not named. We don’t know who he specifically is. It is very possible that this is King Thutmose I (1526-1512 B.C.). But really, these are all guesses. God does not name him.

What we do know about this is that he was a “new” king. The Hebrew adjective “new” (chadash) emphasizes something new in the sense of something unheard of before (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 263). This meaning is supported by the Greek Septuagint uses the adjective “new” (καινος) which specifically stresses brand new in quality (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 226). There was a brand new Pharaoh who would not have the same quality as other Pharaohs concerning Joseph and the Hebrew people. Something unheard of before was about to take place in the relationship.

What we specifically learn about this Pharaoh is that he did not “know” Joseph. Now this does not mean he had not heard of the name Joseph or of the fact that he had been Prime Minister of Egypt. What this means is that he did not acknowledge any connection to Joseph and he did not intend to follow through with anything Joseph had established. He did not seek to discover or gain knowledge of anything about Joseph or the Hebrew people.

SOVEREIGN FACT #2 – A new Pharaoh/King was concerned about the numbers of Israelis living in the Egyptian land. **1:9-22**

God’s people were thriving. The big concern this new Pharaoh had was that the Israelites would multiply and become so strong that they could fight the Egyptians and get their freedom. The fact is God had blessed the Egyptian world because of their presence (Genesis 39:1-5). Truth is, God had so blessed the Egyptians because of Joseph that the people of that part of the world went to Egypt to purchase seed and food and other supplies (Gen. 42:1-2).

Now this is interesting because Satan is behind what is happening here. He obviously is somewhat aware of the fact that God’s program is ultimately going to move His people. The fear that God’s people are going to fight the Egyptians is really a delusional and emotional fear promoted by Satan. There is absolutely no evidence that Israel had done anything to create this mindset. In fact, the Israelites, for the most part, were quiet shepherds who quietly tended their sheep and were not those who plotted and planned insurrection movements against the Egyptian government.

This is a twisted invention of this Pharaoh. Notice he says at the beginning of **verse 10**, let us “deal wisely” with the Israelites. His rationale was if we ever get into a war, the Israelites can turn against us and join those who hate us. What you are about to see is satanic wisdom at work against the people of God. As Dr. Bush, in his commentary said, the wisdom proposed here is “wisdom of the serpent” (*Exodus*, p. 13). This is worldly wisdom that is out to stifle and stop the program of God.

This Pharaoh came up with a three-fold plan to stop the Hebrew people from overpopulating:

Satanic Plan #1 - The plan of hard manual labor against Hebrew adults. **Ex. 1:11-14**

The new Pharaoh/King comes up with a plan of affliction against the adult Israelites. Normally when manual labor is strenuous, the population tends to grow more slowly. It is a statistical fact that, generally speaking, population explosions occur in prosperous areas rather than oppressive areas.

The plan of this Pharaoh was simple—let’s make life so difficult for God’s people that they cannot multiply and expand. This word “afflict” is the same word God used when He told Abraham that His people would be “oppressed” for 400 years (Gen. 15:13).

According to **verse 11**, what this Pharaoh specifically did was to appoint taskmasters over the Israelites and force them into hard labor and he especially put them on two building projects concerning two cities, Pithom and Raamses (Ramses, Rameses). These were two cities that were built to store goods controlled by the Egyptian Empire. It is uncertain where these cities actually were. Some have speculated that Pithom is Heliopolis and Raamses is Qantir, but we don’t know. By the way, the Israelites of the Exodus built cities, not most of the pyramids. They may have built a small one, but their building was with bricks, not stone. The pyramids had been around even since the days of Abraham and many were built later than this period. Josephus said that these Israelites did, however, dig channels for the Nile (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 55).

The goal of the Pharaoh was to break down their spirits and destroy their energy to the point that they would not be able to multiply and prosper. In fact, there is no doubt that this Pharaoh expected that this kind of treatment would actually kill some of the Israelites through the horrible treatment. According to Josephus, the Egyptians became very jealous of and abusive to the Israelites (*Ibid.*, p. 55).

What this Pharaoh did, according to **verse 11**, was to appoint taskmasters over the Israelites to make life as difficult as possible. There is a wall painting that has been found in an Egyptian tomb which is dated to the time of Thutmose III which contains an inscription that contains the Egyptian equivalent to this Hebrew word “task-master,” which means slave master. On the wall there is a picture of a slave who is being beaten by an overseer, which shows the brutality of treatment against these Israelites (Ronald F. Youngblood, *Exodus*, pp. 26-27).

But according to **verse 12**, the plan backfired because the more Pharaoh afflicted the Israelites, the more God blessed them. They continued to flourish.

On the one hand you have the cruelty of the Egyptians against the Israelites, but on the other hand you also have the favor of God on the Israelites. The Israelites kept multiplying and expanding.

According to **verse 12**, the reaction of the Egyptians was one of “dread.” That Hebrew word means that not only were these Egyptians afraid of the Israelites, they also were loathing them and becoming very weary of them (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 729).

According to **verses 13-14**, they stepped up the pressure. They made them “labor vigorously.” The Egyptians are known for their bricks. In fact, as F.B. Meyer said, “The brick was the staple of Egyptian architecture, as only the temples and palaces were constructed of stone” (*Exodus*, p. 19). So the Hebrews were taken away from their flocks and forced to build things out of mortar and bricks.

We are talking here about forced labor or slave labor. These were nothing more than Egyptian “slave labor camps” in which the Israelites were treated in hateful ways. In fact, there is an inscription on a wall that reads “the rod is in my hand do not be idle.” This was relentless oppression. These poor Hebrews were beaten and the goal of the Pharaoh was to make their lives miserable through hard labor.

The language here describes the fact that the Egyptians were brutal in their treatment of the Israelites, but as **verse 12** said, their plan did not work. God can bless his people no matter where they are and no matter what you do to them.

Satanic Plan #2 - The plan of having midwives kill male Hebrew babies . **Ex. 15:15-21**

The new Pharaoh/King came up with a plan of murdering the innocent Israelite babies. This is an evil plan supported and promoted by a government, much like ours supports abortion. This is as horrible a plan that any could conceive.

This was Pharaoh’s “final solution,” which is to kill every newborn baby boy. The real satanic purpose of all of this is to try and keep a baby boy from being born who would live to become the Deliverer of all of Israel and of all sinners. This is an extermination plot because Satan knew that a Son would be born through the Abrahamic line who could save sinners.

According to **verse 15**, there were two educated women to whom Pharaoh turned. They were “mid wives.” The Hebrew word means they were involved in bringing forth babies. Plutarch, the Greek writer of the early Roman period (46 BC) says in his writings that there were ancient schools like colleges where women went to be taught medical and obstetrical subjects. It is very probable that these two women were well-trained and well-qualified in the medical world.

One was named **Shiphrah** and the other was named **Puah**. Probably these were two head nurses who were responsible for all the other midwives who helped deliver babies for the Hebrew women. Now it would seem from these two names that these may have been two Hebrew women and not Egyptian women. These are Hebrew names, not Egyptian names.

What is critical to see here is that we do know the two names of these women and we do not know the name of the Pharaoh.

The reason these two women are named forever in Scripture is because they were faithful to God. **The way to earn a great eternal name for yourself is not by being a famous politician, or athlete or entertainer, but by being a faithful believer.**

According to verse 16, Pharaoh ordered these two women to immediately kill any male baby and let any female baby live while on the “birth stool.”

The Hebrew word “birthstool” literally has to do with some type of stone vessel. It is possible that it refers to some type of stone seat upon which a woman would sit to deliver a baby. It is also possible that it refers to a stone water trough for washing the newborn baby. If this is true, it would be easy to put the baby boy’s head in the water and kill it. Pharaoh wanted the women to kill all Hebrew baby boys so that they could not grow up to become warriors against the Egyptians.

But carefully observe verse 17, the women “feared God.” Because they feared and revered God, they refused to obey. They let all baby boys live. The choice these women made is a similar kind of choice we will have to make many times in our lives. The choice is this—do we fear God enough to obey him or do we obey the godless powers or forces of this world?

There are times when the right thing to do is to disobey civil law. There are times when God’s people need to be willing to say, “I will not obey that”; “I will not do that.” We are to be law-abiding citizens, but when society demands that we do things contrary to God’s Word, we need to be as bold and as faithful as these two women.

It is quite obvious that this Pharaoh doesn’t have a big concern for the sanctity of life. So for these two women to do this is to risk their own careers and their own lives. But this is the stand they took. They feared God and would not kill those babies.

According to **verse 18**, the Egyptian King called them to accountability and asked them why they had let the boys live. What an evil leadership. When you have political leaders questioning why we are letting life created by God to live, you have reached a world on the verge of judgment. When we have a political leader who praises and applauds Planned Parenthood that kills babies and aborts babies, we are nearing the same evil of the Egyptian world in Exodus.

Now **verses 19-21** have created a big problem for the rigid legalists. Shiphrah and Puah inform the king that the reason why they haven’t killed the male babies is because the Hebrew women seem to give birth faster than Egyptian women and they give birth before they can get there.

Now many have questioned the fact that they seem to shade the truth and God honors them for it. The Christian church has debated this text and questioned it for a long time, even since the days of Augustine. Years ago, in an ethics class this very text was used to support a philosophy of situation ethics, which says lying is okay if done in certain situations.

But there are a couple of observations we want to make about this:

Observation #1 - It is very possible because of a blessing of God they are telling the truth.

There can be no question from **verse 12** that God was, in fact, multiplying the number of Israelites at a rapid rate. It is very possible that many times the women did have their baby before they got there due to the fact that God's hand was in this.

In fact, the word "vigorous" in Hebrew (ha-yoth) is a word that emphasizes a quick and fast childbearing ability that is beyond what is natural (Gesenius, p. 233). This may have been a supernatural work of God.

Observation #2 - Even if they did stretch the truth, the evil of the Pharaoh caused it.

It isn't the nurses who are evil, it is Pharaoh. Rigid legalists always have trouble with being human because they are always interested in obeying the "letter of the law." But the fact is one who understands God and grace realizes that we do not live in a perfect society and sometimes one has to do what he/she thinks is right at the time in order to preserve life. If this was in fact a stretching of truth, it was done with a good intention; they feared God and did not want to kill Hebrew life God created.

Verse 20 makes it very clear that God blessed these two women because of what they did, or because of what they didn't do. According to **verse 21**, God so blessed these women that he gave them their own households.

This has been a big question—does God bless lying? No, that is not what He blessed. What God blessed was the fact that these two "feared" Him.

Satanic Plan #3 - The plan of having all Egyptians drown every Hebrew boy. **Ex. 15:22**

Pharaoh came up with another plan which incorporated all Egyptians. He demanded that all Egyptians search out any Hebrew baby boy and throw him in the Nile River, to drown and to feed the crocodiles. God will actually use this very water of the Nile to appropriately turn it into blood. That will be one part of the plagues God will use to bring this Pharaoh to destruction.

This was a genocide plan designed to kill off an entire Hebrew race of people. But it won't work. You see, this Hebrew race of people belongs to God. You cannot ever kill off Israel. Pharaoh tried it and couldn't do it. Hitler tried it and couldn't do it. Saddam Hussein tried it and couldn't do it. Osama Bin Laden tried it and couldn't do it. The Antichrist will try it and he won't do it. You cannot exterminate the Jews. God will not permit it.

What exactly was God doing in this hellish environment? He was getting His people ready to move. The Egyptian world was not her friend any more than this world is our friend. What is God doing when He permits political leaders to make hellish decisions? He is getting us ready to move.