

Moses, God's Deliverer

Introduction:

For 430 years the descendants of Jacob (Israel) and his 12 sons lived in Egypt. They had started out as a family group of 70, but they grew to be a large and mighty nation. A new pharaoh became king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. He was in fear of their numbers and their strength so he decided to set taskmasters over them and make them into slaves. In spite of their harsh treatment, the people of Israel continued to multiply.

So Pharaoh spoke to the Hebrew midwives, asking them to kill every male baby that was born to the people of Israel. These midwives feared God more than Pharaoh so they spared the baby boys' lives. Pharaoh called them in and questioned them about why they had saved the male babies. The women replied that the Hebrew women were strong and gave birth before they could get to them. So God continued to multiply the people of Israel and blessed the midwives for honoring him.

Pharaoh gave a command that every son born in Egypt was to be drowned in the Nile River, but the daughters could live.

Story:

A Levite (priest) named Amram married his father's sister Jochebed. She had a son, Aaron, and a daughter, Miriam. Then she got pregnant again and gave birth to another son. When she saw him she recognized that he was a beautiful child; she knew he was special. So she hid him for three months.

When she couldn't hide him any longer, she used papyrus to weave a basket-boat for him. She covered it with asphalt and pitch to make it waterproof and put the baby boy inside. Then she laid the basket-boat in the reeds beside the riverbank. She sent his sister, Miriam, to watch over him from a distance.

Pharaoh's daughter came to the Nile to bathe. She had some of her female servants with her. When she saw the basket-boat in the reeds, she sent a servant to get it. She opened it up and found the baby inside crying. She said, "This must be the son of one of the Hebrews."

Miriam appeared before her and asked, "Should I go find a nurse for him for you." (Back then a nurse was a woman who breast-fed a baby or helped raise a child. She became a respected member of the household. Children were usually between the ages of 3 and 5 when they were weaned off the breast. This allowed the nurse to be a big influence in the child's life.)

Pharaoh's daughter asked Miriam to fetch a nurse, and of course, she got the baby boy's mother. Pharaoh's daughter commanded Jochebed to take the child away and nurse him,

and said she'd pay her wages to take care of him. (This probably gave Jochebed several years to train her son in the ways of God.)

When he was weaned, the child was returned to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. (Adoption was practiced all the time by the Egyptians.) She named him Moses because it means "drawn out", and she drew him out of the water.

Moses grew to be an adult. He went to visit his relatives and saw their hard labor. He grew angry when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. When he realized that no one else was looking, he killed the Egyptian and buried his body in the sand.

The next day he went back to see his relatives. This time he discovered two Hebrew men fighting each other. He asked the one who started it why he was fighting his friend. The man replied, "Who made you our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?"

This made Moses panic. When Pharaoh heard about this, he planned to have Moses killed. Moses fled Egypt and went to live in the land of Midian.

There he sat by a well, when the seven daughters of the priest of Midian (Jethro) arrived to draw water for their sheep. Some other shepherds came and tried to drive the women and their flocks away from the watering troughs. Moses stood up and helped the women water their flocks. This made them return earlier than usual to their father. When he asked why they returned home so early the women told Jethro about the Egyptian that had helped them. Jethro had them invite Moses to dinner.

Moses ended up living with Jethro and marrying his daughter, Zipporah. Their first son they named Gershom (which means "stranger" because Moses was a stranger in a foreign land).

Back in Egypt, Pharaoh died. The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and hard work. God heard their cries. He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now Moses was shepherding Jethro's flock out near Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the midst of a burning bush. The bush was on fire, but it didn't burn up. Moses was amazed and turned to look at it. God called out to Moses from the bush and told him to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground.

Then God spoke to Moses and told him, "**I am** the God of your father, Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." So Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Then God said, **"I've taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I've heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. The Israelite cry for help has come to me, and I've seen for myself how cruelly they're being treated by the Egyptians. It's time for you to go back: I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt."** (Exodus 3:7-10)

Moses asked God why He would choose to send him to Pharaoh. God replied that He would be with Moses. He said that when Moses had brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, he would return to Mount Horeb and worship God there.

Then Moses asked God who he should say God was when he talked to the people and told them that God had sent him. God's reply was: **"I AM WHO I AM. Tell them, 'I AM sent me to you.'" God spoke again and said, "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is how I will be known."**

Then God told Moses to get the elders of Israel together and tell them that the God of their fathers had seen their slavery and heard their cries. He was going to bring them out of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey. He told Moses that Moses and the leaders of the people were to go to Pharaoh and ask to go three days' journey into the wilderness to make sacrifices to God.

God said, **" I know that the king of Egypt won't let you go unless forced to, so I'll intervene and hit Egypt where it hurts—oh, my miracles will send them reeling!—after which they'll be glad to send you off. I'll see to it that this people get a hearty send-off by the Egyptians—when you leave, you won't leave empty-handed! Each woman will ask her neighbor and any guests in her house for objects of silver and gold, for jewelry and extra clothes; you'll put them on your sons and daughters. Oh, you'll clean the Egyptians out!"** (Exodus 3:19-22)

Moses wasn't sure the people would actually listen to him. God told him to throw down the shepherd's staff in his hand. When Moses did, it became a snake. God told him to pick it up by the tail. When Moses did, it became a shepherd's staff again. Then God had Moses put his hand under his shirt. When he did, the hand turned white with leprosy. (Leprosy was a disease that ate the skin away.) God told him to put his hand back inside the shirt, and it became normal again. God said, "If they don't believe the first sign, they should believe the second. If they don't believe either one and won't listen to you, take water from the Nile and pour it on dry land. It will turn to blood on the dry land."

Moses replied that he was not a gifted speaker. He said he stuttered and stammered. God's response was: **"And who do you think made the human mouth? And who makes some mute, some deaf, some sighted, some blind? Isn't it I, GOD? So, get**

going. I'll be right there with you—with your mouth! I'll be right there to teach you what to say." (Exodus 4:11-12)

Moses begged God not to send him. God got angry with Moses and said, **"Don't you have a brother, Aaron the Levite? He's good with words, I know he is. He speaks very well. In fact, at this very moment he's on his way to meet you. When he sees you he's going to be glad. You'll speak to him and tell him what to say. I'll be right there with you as you speak and with him as he speaks, teaching you step by step. He will speak to the people for you. He'll act as your mouth, but you'll decide what comes out of it. Now take this staff in your hand; you'll use it to do the signs."** (Exodus 4:14-17)

So Moses went to Jethro and told him that he needed to return to his relatives in Egypt. The Lord had told Moses that all the men who wanted to kill him were dead. Moses took Zipporah and his sons and returned to Egypt with the staff of God in his hand.

God spoke to Moses and said, **"When you get back to Egypt, be prepared: All the wonders that I will do through you, you'll do before Pharaoh. But I will make him stubborn so that he will refuse to let the people go. Then you are to tell Pharaoh, 'GOD's Message: Israel is my son, my firstborn! I told you, "Free my son so that he can serve me." But you refused to free him. So now I'm going to kill *your* son, *your* firstborn.'" (Exodus 4:21-23)**

God spoke to Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness. They met at the mountain of God, and Moses told Aaron all that God had spoken to him.

Then Moses and Aaron met with the elders of Israel. Aaron told them all the words that God had spoken to Moses. He demonstrated all the signs to the people. Then they believed that God had sent Moses to free them from their slavery in Egypt. They bowed their heads and worshiped God.

Summary:

In this story we see some bold women: the two Hebrew midwives, Jochebed, and Miriam. The Hebrew midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and saved the baby boys' lives. Jochebed understood that her son was special and disregarded the law to drown him in the Nile. Miriam watched over her brother to help her mother enact the plan to save Moses' life. She did this by approaching the Pharaoh's daughter about finding a nurse for him. It must have been hard for these women to overcome fear of the consequences for their actions in order to serve God. Sometimes we have to make hard choices too.

Corrie ten Boom hid Jews during World War II from the Nazis who wanted to kill them in concentration camps. She and her family were caught and put in concentration camps to die. Before this happened, Corrie asked her father one day how they would be able to withstand this threat of death and handle the way they would be treated. His reply was that when Corrie was a little girl, he never gave her the train ticket until time to board the train so she wouldn't lose it. He told her that her heavenly Father would prepare her for that day, but she mustn't worry about it. The ticket that would enable her to do it would come at the right time. We call this grace. Grace is God's ability or power within us that helps us do things He's called us to do.

Moses, too, was afraid that he wouldn't be able to lead God's people. He looked at his own weaknesses—stammering and stuttering—and thought he was unfit. God didn't see Moses the same way Moses saw himself, but He was willing to send Aaron to assist Moses. Isn't it amazing that even after God appeared in a burning bush that didn't burn up, turned the staff into a snake, made Moses' hand white with leprosy, and said He'd turn the water from the Nile into blood, Moses still questioned God? It's wonderful to realize how patient God is with us! The apostle Paul said that God's power works best in our weakness.

Discussion Questions:

1. What had happened to the people of Israel during the 430 years they were living in Egypt?
2. Why was Pharaoh afraid of them?
3. What was Jochebed's plan to save her son's life?
4. Jochebed became Moses' nurse. Why was this important to his future? What did he learn from his mother?
5. Why did Moses flee to Midian?
6. When Moses became a shepherd in Midian, how did God appear to him? What did God say His name was? Why is this important? What does it mean?
7. When God told Moses he was sending him back to Egypt, what signs did he show Moses to show the people?
8. Why didn't Moses think he was the man for the job?

9. Why do you think God allowed Aaron to be Moses' spokesman?
10. Look at the summary and define grace.
11. What did the apostle Paul say about weaknesses?
12. The Hebrew midwives feared God more than the king (Pharaoh). They must have understood **Proverbs 29:25**—“**Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but to trust the LORD means safety.**” (NLT) Let's learn this verse this week.