

Seven Significant Developments

Part 1: Developments 1 to 3

Exodus 1:1-14

Introduction

Egypt was the land of events foreseen at least 700 years earlier by Abraham. He saw them as part of a prophetic vision that is recorded in *Genesis 15:1-21*. The details of this vision revealed that Abraham's descendents would be captives in a foreign land for 400 years; they would ultimately be delivered and come forth with great wealth. This revelation suggests several purposes served by the bondage in Egypt. When Joseph became second ruler in Egypt and was finally visited by his brothers, he made it clear that his place and position were not an accident. Three times he repeated that it was not his brothers, but God who sent him to the land of Egypt, *Gen 45:5, 7, 8; 50:19-20*. God's providential care of Joseph (see *39:2, 3, 5, 21-23*) is a clear indication that God had a plan and purpose for the Hebrews' time in Egypt. There are at least five purposes that are suggested by the text as presented in our introduction to the book. Here they are again in a revised form for review:

1. It was to be a time of preparation for reclaiming and occupying the Promised Land. In Egypt they would learn to serve others even in difficulty. The oppression and suffering would teach them patience, endurance, and dependence upon God, *Exod 1:11-14; Acts 7:17-19* [NOTE: *Acts 7:1-53* presents an overview of Hebrew history from Abraham to Jesus including their time in the land of Egypt *7:9-36*; see *The Believer's Study Bible*, chart entitled *Harmonization of Stephen's Speech and Its Old Testament References*, pp. 1550-1551].
2. By the power of God, Egypt and the exodus would be a great and everlasting demonstration of His determination to redeem His people. Exodus contains great lessons in redeeming grace, *Exod 19:4*; cf. *Deut 29:2; 32:11; Isa 63:9; Rev 12:14; Acts 7:20-36*.
3. The Hebrews needed a place where their culture could develop. They also needed a land where they could grow in numbers; where there were educational opportunities; in short, where there was a better environment than Canaan before the pagan tribes were conquered. Egypt provided a sanctuary during the seven-year famine in the time of Joseph and as Jacob's descendents stayed on, they also reaped the benefits of their culture, *Exod 1:7; Acts 7:20-36*.
4. Abraham was a wealthy patriarch. As the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enlarged their family clan, their wealth eroded. By the time of

Jacob's latter years, there were fewer opportunities to have the wealth needed for these family clans to become a great nation. Therefore, God saw to it that the Hebrews were well paid for the time of their servitude when they departed Egypt, see Exod 11:2-3; 12:25-36.

5. In addition to the positive benefits to the Hebrews, the 400 years also provided opportunity for them to repent of all their ungodliness. It is apparent that they did not turn to God, who pledged to drive their enemies from the land, Exod 23:27-33; Numb 33:50-56; Deut 7:1. The Hebrew nation was to be God's instrument of judgment on the pagan Amorite and Canaanite nations who were wholly given to worship of Baal, Asherah, Melqart, and at least twenty others, see "Pantheon of Canaanite Deities," attached.

Significant Developments

Growing anxiety over the plight of the Hebrews in Egypt is presented in a masterful way. Tensions build as the narrative unfolds each of the seven successive steps that lead from the enslavement of God's people to the selection of a liberator. It is clear from the outset that things have changed since the time of Joseph when the Hebrews received special care. But even then, Joseph was careful about the introduction of his family to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He coached his father about how to reveal their occupation because "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians," Gen 46:34; see 46:28-47:12. Therefore, Joseph personally made arrangements for his father, brothers, and their families to live in the land of Goshen, Gen 46:34 and 47:1-12. The unfolding of these seven developments has been purposefully divided into two parts for two reasons. First, we cannot cover all of them in one lesson. Second, I don't want us to miss the lessons that God would teach us in each of these studies. Dividing the material into two parts will allow us to see the great lessons God gave the Hebrews in the context of each passage.

Seventy family members came into the land with Jacob and his sons, Exod 1:5; Gen 46:27. So, the Book of Exodus begins with "Now these are the names . . ." which appropriately makes the connection with Joseph and the fact that he was responsible for bringing his family to Egypt to preserve them. Chapters one and two present the significant developments that set the stage for the events that unfold in the rest of the Book of Exodus. The first three developments unfold in 1:1-14 and present the situation of the Hebrews before Moses. Exodus 1:15-2:25 presents four additional developments and introduces Moses, God's chosen deliverer, his birth, his preservation, his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter, his failed attempt to help his people, and his flight into exile.

1. The Death of Joseph and of a Pharaoh Who Knew Him, 1:1-6.

Verses 1-4. We already know that a relatively small group of seventy people came to Egypt with Jacob. So, verses 1-4 play tag with the past by

naming all the sons of Jacob who came with him to the land at the invitation and insistence of Joseph. This recounts the events that are recorded in Genesis 46:1-50:26. In these first four verses the contrast is made between the seventy who came and the multiplied number that were alive at the time of the birth of Moses as presented in 1:7.

Verse 5. This verse mentions the seventy who came with Jacob to the land of Egypt. This number coincides with Genesis 46:27, which also states that there were seventy, not counting Joseph, who was already there. Moses is intent on making the point that while only a few came, after 400 years there was a population explosion of Hebrews in the land of Egypt.

Verse 6. As long as Joseph was alive, he was in a position not only to be their benefactor, but also to see to it that his Hebrew families were well cared for in the land of Egypt. He made a promise to do just that to Jacob as recorded in Gen 45:10-11, see also 47:11-12. His promise was an inducement to convince his father to move the clan to Egypt. Joseph made good on his promise and secured the land of Goshen as an area where the family could prosper. Pharaoh endorsed Joseph's suggestion to put them in the land of Goshen and then made them shepherds over his own flocks and gave them the best of all the pastureland of Goshen, 47:5-10.

But the statement "And Joseph died and all his brothers, and all that generation," in verse 6, signals that there was no one left who could lay claim to the original promises made, because Joseph and all of the generation that came to the land from Canaan were long since gone. This information sets the stage with the reason for the change of attitude toward the Hebrews in the land of Egypt.

2. **Growth of the Nation, 1:7.**

Verse 7. The terminology used in verse 7 resounds with overstatement in the Hebrew and English texts. But these facts confirmed that the land of Egypt provided the Hebrews with the climate and culture that allowed them to thrive. They came at the invitation of Joseph with the blessing of Pharaoh and grew to equal and surpass the population of their hosts. The decision to place them in Goshen proved providential. Located on the eastern Nile delta, it was a fertile region with good pastureland, Gen 47:1-6. This area also was called the "land of Rameses," 47:11. The appearance of this name is very important because it discloses the location of the cities mentioned in Exod 1:11, which are often used to justify the 1220 BC date used by liberal scholars. It confirms that the name Rameses was in use in the time of Moses, 1450 BC.

The text of Exodus 1:7 succinctly and skillfully affirms the growth of the Hebrew nation in the land of Egypt. It is clear the writer goes above and beyond mere necessity to make a point when he says, (1) "the children of Israel were fruitful"; (2) the children of Israel "increased abundantly"; (3) the children of Israel "multiplied"; (4) the children of Israel "grew exceedingly mighty" [literally "became very numerous"]; (5) "and the land was filled with them." One easily grasps the intended impression that there were a lot of Hebrews in Egypt at that time. There were more than enough to be cause for alarm among the security-conscious Egyptians.

3. **Grave Persecution Initiated, 1:8-14**

Verse 8. A new king was crowned in Egypt "who did not know Joseph." The terminology used does not necessarily mean that the new Pharaoh had never heard of Joseph, but in fact suggests that he had no personal encounter with him and therefore no regard for him. Lack of adequate records from this period in Egypt's history leave us with many questions. Who was this Pharaoh? When did he rule Egypt? Why did he no longer feel obligated to honor the promises of a former Pharaoh who was long since dead?

Whenever a new administration takes the reins of government, changes are inevitable. Whoever this new Pharaoh may have been, he did not feel obligated to the promises made by a predecessor to a man and a people who were, in fact, foreigners. We do not know who was on the throne in Egypt at the time of Joseph's service. It is probably that Joseph's rise to power came at a time when Egypt was ruled by kings known as Hyksos [hick-sos], or "rulers of foreign lands." These foreign rulers gained control of Egypt in 2000 BC and ruled until about 1550 BC, when the Egyptians regained control of the southern region and the Hyksos remained in control of the north. Some scholars believe the Hyksos invaded the land and took control by overthrowing the ruling dynasty, see *Holman Bible Dictionary, Hyksos*, pp. 679-681; *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Vol. III, pp. 341-348. In light of experiences the Egyptians had with the Hyksos, it is easy to understand why Ahmose I, the Pharaoh who "knew not Joseph," would be suspicious of any other foreign groups living within their borders. The Pharaoh of the exodus from Egypt would have been Thutmose III. We will look at him more closely when we come to the exodus event.

In recent years, it has been suggested that the Hyksos migrated into Egypt in record numbers sufficient to overthrow the present form of government. Finally, Egyptian rule was restored in 1540 BC when Pharaoh Ahmose I defeated the Hyksos rulers and inaugurated the New Egyptian Kingdom over all Egypt. Joseph probably would have lived sometime after

2000 BC and may have been elevated to power by Hyksos Pharaohs. When Ahmose I returned Egypt to Egyptian rule in 1550 BC, he conquered the Hyksos rulers, and all the records of the foreign rulers were destroyed. Ahmose I ruled from 1550 to 1525 BC, followed by his son Amenhotep I who ruled from 1526 to 1506, and followed by his son, Thutmose I (1506-1493) and grandson Thutmose II (1493-1479). Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC) ruled for a time with his stepmother, Hatshepsut (1479-1458 BC). He was followed by Amenhotep II, who ruled from 1425 to 1401 BC. The new Pharaoh who "knew not Joseph" was likely his successor, Ahmose I, who ruled from 1550 to 1525 BC, see chart "Egyptian Rulers of the 18th Dynasty."

Moses was likely born under the administration of Ahmose I, who having vanquished the foreign Hyksos, would have been concerned about the multiplication of any foreign nationals in Egypt. Moses was probably born around 1530 BC. This would make Ahmose I the Pharaoh who "knew not Joseph," Exod 1:8. Moses lived forty years with the daughter of Pharaoh, meaning that he killed the Egyptian and fled Egypt as a fugitive sometime around 1490 BC, at the beginning of the reign of Thutmose II. When Moses returned in 1450 BC, Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC) was on the throne. This identification is consistent with Exodus 4:19: "All the men who sought your life are dead." The phrase "all the men" probably included Thutmose II and his officials charged with the capture and execution of Moses. Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC) was the Pharaoh of the exodus in 1450 BC. Be aware that a wide variation exists in fixing these dates depending on whom you read. They are adjusted from time to time as more information comes to light and may not match some comparative sources.

Scholars have long ignored an important fact that Thutmose III lost his firstborn son and his wife sometime between the 24th and 35th year of his reign, which would be between 1455 and 1444 BC. This coincides with the death of the firstborn in Egypt, which was in 1450 BC. We will take a closer look at Thutmose III when we come to the exodus event.

Verses 9-11. With this historical backdrop, we can see the concern of the Pharaoh in preventing another takeover by assimilation of a large and ever burgeoning foreign group in their population. Pharaoh was concerned that the Hebrews were more in number and mightier in strength than the Egyptians, and therefore they presented a security threat to the nation. He further noted that in the event of an attack against Egypt, they could join the enemy, fight against Egypt, and leave the land. This is the implication that the Hebrews must be controlled because their work was necessary to sustain the land of Egypt. The solution was to set

taskmasters over them to afflict them with their work. They also were commissioned to construct two supply cities of Pithom and Rameses.

Proponents of the later date for the Exodus point to this verse, noting that a city dedicated to Rameses would not have been built in 1450 BC since Rameses I did not rule in Egypt for another 230 years in 1220 BC. As noted earlier, the name was also connected to a district in Egypt in the time of Joseph. The district is mentioned in *Genesis 47:11* as "the best part of the land [of Goshen], in the land of Rameses." This indicates that Rameses was a territory in Egypt long before Rameses I became Pharaoh.

Verses 12-14. Like trying to stamp out a wild fire, the more the Hebrews were afflicted, the more they "multiplied and grew," v. 12. The effect on the Egyptians was predictable. The more the Hebrews multiplied, the more afraid they became. The Egyptian response was predictable. They became harsh and ruthless in their treatment of the Hebrews, v. 13. They daily increased the ill treatment and "made their lives bitter with hard bondage," v. 14. This treatment affected all areas of their servitude in making mortar and bricks. Verse 14 repeats the adjectives to stress the severity of their plight and stresses that "all their service in which they made them serve" was filled with harsh and ruthless treatment. But God blessed them and in spite of the bitterness of their service, they not only survived, but also they continued to grow stronger and multiply.

Conclusion

Lessons - Part 1.

1. Egypt was a nation envied by all of the ancient world during its reign of power, much like America, up to now. The waters of the Nile abounded with fish and the banks with fowl. The soil was replenished by the annual flood and yielded abundant harvests of vegetables and grain. The Hebrews lamented their loss of these things saying, "We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes," *Numb 11:5*. The lesson is a simple one. This world is not my final home! There's a land that is fairer than day, and by faith we can see it afar. Our Father waits over the way to prepare us a dwelling place THERE! God told Elijah to hide himself by the brook Cherith because He had commanded the ravens to feed him THERE!, *1 Kgs 17:4*. Egypt represents the prosperity of this present world, but it is not our final home.
2. Egypt represents the world's way of doing business. The Hebrews entered the land in great favor with the ruling Pharaoh. Read again from the lips of Pharaoh, "the whole land is before you," *Gen 47:6-12*. By the time of Moses 400 years later, they were comfortable in Egypt, but worse still they were compromised by

Egyptian morality, ethics, theology, worship, and culture. We shall see the proof later when the Hebrews, believing they were on their own, decided to return to Egypt and built a golden calf to worship, Exod 32:1-35. Had God not led them out, they would have been assimilated into the culture and disappeared forever. Hosea lamented Israel's bondage to sin (Hosea 10:1-15), then he celebrated God's love in deliverance, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1), a statement that was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, Matt 2:15. God calls all who would trust Jesus as Savior to come out of Egypt, Rom 3:23; 6:23.

3. The human soul craves more than the material world has to offer. A luxurious home, nice clothes, fine food, and elegant drink are perks of the "good life," but still leave the soul unsatisfied. A person's life may find temporary satisfaction in worldly fare, but at the end of life, they all lose their value, see Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31. "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."
4. God, in Jesus Christ His Son, alone offers freedom from slavery to sin, Rom 6:16; 7:19-25. Jesus came to deliver us from the bondage of sin. Egypt in the Old Testament appears repeatedly as a symbol of human bondage to sin. In Exodus alone, we have the bondage in Egypt, the plagues of sin, stayed only by the blood of the Lamb, the exodus from the land, and the preservation of God in the wilderness. Just as God was Israel's only hope out of the land of Egypt and Moses His appointed savior, so Jesus is the only hope from slavery to human sin, Acts 4:12.
5. Human suffering was not a part of God's plan but is a result of sin's presence in the world. We live in a fallen world. Therefore, people suffer because sin not only affects us, but those around us. Suffering also is another reminder that we do not want to stay in this present world order, but look forward to the day when sin and suffering are forever in the past, Rev 7:17; 21:4.
6. Human suffering will be overruled by God, and He uses it in ways that will turn tragedy into blessing, Rom 8:28. This will be discussed more fully in relation to 1:15-25.
7. The final lesson from 1:1-14 is that God is in control, not Pharaoh, not the Egyptians. This is true for us, but it is easily forgotten when we encounter difficulty, pain, suffering, attacks, and we feel abandoned. But He is still on His throne, and He is still Lord over all! Don't let the circumstances affect your knowledge that God knows who you are, where you are, what you need, and when you need it, Jer 33:3.