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## Seven Significant Developments

### Part 2: Developments 4 to 7

Exodus 1:15 - 2:25

#### Introduction

What began four hundred years before as a glorious blessing from the providence of God had ultimately turned into the Hebrews' worst nightmare. They came to Egypt at the insistence of Joseph and the invitation of Pharaoh and received the royal "red carpet," see Gen 46:28-47:12. Jacob and all Joseph's brothers were given choice land and special attention. But their celebrity status turned into animosity, then into oppression, and finally into slavery at the hands of their hosts, the Egyptians. They came in freedom but were conscripted into slavery and were mightily oppressed. Just when things seemed darkest, they got even worse. Joseph's exploits were long since forgotten. The Hebrew population continued to grow, posing a perceived threat to their host country. Severe measures were enacted to control population growth and break the spirit of the Hebrews, 1:1-14. Cheer up! The worst is yet to come!

#### 4. Genocide of Hebrew Infants, 1:15-22.

**Verses 15-16.** This next step sounds so tragically familiar. The Hebrew people were subjected to the genocide of newborn males in an attempt to control population growth and eliminate the perceived threat to the Egyptians. Pharaoh went to the two midwives, Shiphrah, whose name means "beautiful," and Puah, whose name means "splendid one." They were in charge of delivering Hebrew children. He gave them specific but chilling instructions. They were told that if the newborn were a male he was to be killed, but if female, she should be allowed to live. This plan was to control the rapid population growth by eliminating the number of males born into the Hebrew families.

**Lesson:** Even when the circumstances around us are grim, we need to be aware of the fact that God sees and knows what we are going through. He often does not eliminate the trials but uses them to help us grow in our faith and trust in Him to get us through. In the letters to the seven churches of Revelation, Jesus says to each one, "I know . . ." Rev 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 14. It often is a comfort to know that God knows, and He will lead us through the valley of the shadow, Ps 23:4.

**Verses 17-22.** Because these two women "feared God" more than Pharaoh, they ignored the instructions to kill the male babies and allowed them to live. So Pharaoh reprimanded them and asked why they had ignored his instructions.

The midwives explained that Hebrew women bore children quickly and gave birth before the midwives arrived to assist them, vv. 18-19. As a result, God blessed the midwives and their own households, vv. 20-21. It is wonderful to see how God uses men and women who fear him. Fear of God is the reverence, respect, and awe that is the basis for faith, see e.g. Deut 10:12; 31:12; Ps 15:4; 111:10; 115:11; Prov 1:7; 9:10; 10:7; 14:27; Isa 2:2-3; Acts 9:31.

Pharaoh did not give up his plan so easily but implemented four policies to create hardship and break the spirit of the Hebrews. First, note how the tension builds as he appointed taskmasters over them, transforming them from free citizens to slaves, 1:11. Second, he increased their workload to the point that their work was bitter and oppressive, 1:11, 14. Third, he ordered the execution of all newborn male children in an attempt to stall population growth and weaken the community by having fewer males to defend the helpless, 1:15-16. Fourth, he ordered the Egyptians to drown all male children by casting them in the river, 1:22. This order would be acceptable to the Egyptians because it was an act of worship. Casting a newborn into the river would honor the god of the Nile, whose name was Hapi, the son of Horus. There also was a goddess of the Nile, whose name was Anuket.

Ethnic cleansing and genocide is not a new phenomenon. It clearly is a satanic manifestation of the adversary's hatred for the Hebrew people because they were chosen by God to bring forth the Messiah for the salvation of the world, see Rev 12:1-6. It has been true over the centuries that God ultimately judges those nations who have declared themselves to be enemies of God's chosen people. Even a nation as mighty as Hitler's armies could not survive the atrocities perpetrated against the Jewish people. Satan's attempt to eradicate the Hebrew race is tied to his desire to stop them from bringing the Messiah into the world. Even after Jesus came, the adversary holds the Hebrew people in contempt and would still like to eradicate them. For this reason anti-Semitism has been present in every generation of human history. This fact has affected the Jewish culture today, just as it did in the time of Moses.

**Lesson:** Any person, group, or nation that seeks to "fear" and serve God will be a target for the "wiles" of Satan, see Eph 6:10-20. The people of God often are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Matt 5:10, especially those who seek to live God-honoring lives, 2 Tim 3:12. The mystery of pain and suffering is that God does not always remove it from the lives of those who trust Him. Instead He gives them grace, endurance, and strength to go through it victoriously, see "The Enigma of Pain and Suffering" handout.

## 5. **God's Gift of a Savior, 2:1-10.**

**Verse 1.** There is skillful detail in the explanation of the birth and preservation of Moses. It is clear from this account that God providentially superintended the deliverance of Moses from the fate of most, if not all, the Hebrew male newborns. The account begins with the lineage of Moses who was the son of a descendant of Levi who married a woman who was of the same tribal clan. Neither of the names of Moses' parents is given here. This is because the focus of the account here is on the birth of the deliverer, Moses. Later the genealogy of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam is given in Exodus 6:14-30. It is there that we learn Moses' father was Amram and his mother was Jochebed, 6:20; Numb 26:59. Amram's name means "the people are exalted," and Jochebed's name means "Yahweh is Glory."

**Lesson:** In the midst of the dark night of suffering, God always has a plan to overrule the suffering by His wonderful redeeming grace, Rom 8:28. The providences of God that clearly are tied to the birth and preservation of Moses serve to illustrate God's determination to redeem all who trust Him.

**Verses 2-4.** God's providential intervention is evident throughout these verses. We clearly see how God guided and nurtured the characters involved to insure the preservation of Moses. Jochebed conceived and had a son. He was a goodly child, and what mother would not think so of her baby? So, she hid him for three months to protect him from what seemed to be the inevitable fate of drowning, 2:2. Moses' mother was true to the demand of the Egyptian law to throw her son into the river. In the providence of God, she was able to devise a way for God's providential intervention by placing him in a little basket made watertight by covering it with "asphalt" and "pitch," v. 3. Then she placed it in a position of advantage and sent Moses' older sister to watch the spot where the daughter of Pharaoh often came to swim, v. 4.

**Verses 5-9.** When Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to bathe, she saw the basket and had her maidservant retrieve it. Opening the basket, she saw that it was a Hebrew baby boy, and she had compassion on him, vv. 5-6. Moses' sister was in place to run to Pharaoh's daughter and offer the services of her mother, so Moses' mother was employed to take care of her own son. She took him, nursed him, and cared for him. How awesome is the providence of God to arrange for Moses to be cared for by his own mother!

**Lesson:** God will even use the unbeliever as an instrument to accomplish His purposes. It was not a coincidence, but it was divine providence that brought the daughter of Pharaoh to bathe at this place and at this time. It was no coincidence that she had "compassion" on him, v. 6, and was determined to

save his life. It was no coincidence that she accepted the offer of Moses' sister to find a Hebrew woman willing to "nurse" the baby Moses. Be alert to the providences of God that fill the trials of life!

**Verse 10.** The next remarkable miracle that is recorded in the section was the child's growth and development. Moses' mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, probably at about four years old, after he was weaned. She took him, and she adopted him as her own son. She named him Moses from the Hebrew מוֹשֶׁה *masha*, which means to "draw out" because he was drawn out of the water, v. 10. In Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:21-22, he says, "But when he was set out," referring to his placement in the river, "Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." This means that through God's providence, he had the best of both worlds. He received his education of Scripture and faith from Jochebed.

There is a wonderful contrast here between Abraham and Sarah and their failed attempt to arrange things for God in their own family in light of Sarah's inability to conceive a son. She gave her Egyptian handmaiden to her husband to have her bear a son for her master. This was a legal way of doing things in those days to provide a legal heir. However, clearly missing from their arrangements was any consultation or seeking God's perfect will. As a result, the bitterness and disunity between Hagar and Sarah, plus the bitterness and hatred between their descendents, stand as a sobering testimony of human attempts to arrange our lives for God.

Jochebed, on the other hand, did what she could to protect and nurture her newborn son. When she could hide him no longer, she gave him over to the providence of God. She complied with the letter of the law with her own heavy spirit and placed her son into the river, but only after she had taken every precaution to preserve his life. God honored her efforts and arranged for her to legally care for and rear her own child. She was even paid to do it.

Stephen's history lesson on the providences of God tells us that Moses' life was divided equally into three parts. He was in Egypt forty years, Acts 7:23; he fled to the wilderness for forty years, Acts 7:30; and he led the Hebrews in the wilderness for forty years, Acts 7:43; and died at the age of 120 years, Deut 31:2. The second forty years he was in the school of "hard knocks," trying to survive in the wilderness. The third forty years he was back in the "school of God's providence" in the wilderness leading the Hebrews and teaching them to trust God. But those first forty years began with the school at his mother's knee.

Moses' mother was a godly woman. How do we know this? Her name, Jochebed, "Glory to Yahweh," tells us of her character. She was a godly woman, who gave glory to Yahweh her God. She poured her heart, soul, and life into Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, her children. Moses was chosen by God to be the savior of his nation; Aaron was the first high priest of the nation; and Miriam was a wonderful support to her brothers. Children like these do not come out of a vacuum, nor do they come out of godlessness. Moses' mother provided the foundation of his faith. Her trust of God in the disposition of her son is a wonderful demonstration of one person's willingness to trust the providence of God. She did! It worked! Try it!

**Lesson:** One of the greatest privileges God gives to parents is to have the joy of sharing the good news of God's saving grace with their family. Although a great man of God, Abraham did not use his mistakes as an opportunity to warn his descendants of the pitfalls of moral and spiritual failures. Consequently, those same moral failures were repeated in the lives of his children. Moses' mother was a godly woman, and we see how her own faith was imparted and multiplied through her family.

#### **6. Choose You This Day Whom You Will Serve! 2:11-15.**

Every believer has to come to a defining moment. Moses faced the choice. Perhaps Joshua later remembered Moses' example when he gave his famous oration in Joshua 24:14-15: "If it seems evil of you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord Yahweh."

**Verse 11.** "It came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown. . . ."

There is only one clue as to the age of Moses when this event took place, and it is in the New Testament sermon of Stephen at Pentecost. He says that Moses was forty years old, see Acts 7:23-29. With the arrival of manhood, Moses became aware of his ethnic heritage. He saw the injustices that were perpetrated on his people and developed deep compassion and sympathy for their plight. He must have pondered in his own heart what he could do to help his people. God was at work developing a deep sense of identification, which was needed if Moses was to become the leader of his people.

**Verses 12-14.** Unfortunately Moses violated his mother's example and became impatient about how he ought to help the suffering of the Hebrews. He saw one of the Hebrews being abused and beaten. He took matters into his own hand. When he thought no one was looking, he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand, 2:12. Two days later, he tried to break up a fight between two Hebrew men, and one of them said, "Are you going to kill me as

you killed the Egyptian?" v. 14. Realizing that his crime was known, he fled for his life. He made the wrong choice. God could still use him but not before spending forty years in the wilderness waiting on and listening to God.

**Lesson:** It is so easy for anyone to see God's plan and purpose but get off track trying to get there on his own. Even those who are great men and women of faith are vulnerable to running ahead of God. We get ahead of God anytime we see where God is taking us, and we take over the process and try to accelerate our move to God's destination. Unfortunately, when we do this, it always leads us on a detour that prolongs the distance to our destination. Moses spent an extra forty years in "BSOTD" seminary (Back Side of the Desert Seminary) before he could move on to his God-called purpose.

**Verse 15.** As soon as the deed of Moses came to Pharaoh, he sought to have Moses put to death. Moses had betrayed the trust placed in him by Pharaoh's daughter and by Pharaoh. Moses was in line to become a leader in Egypt, perhaps even the successor to Pharaoh. God might have used him in a great leadership position as He used Joseph, but Moses forfeited all of it in a moment of anger and violence. Consequently, he had to flee to the wilderness and went to the land of the Midianites to live there. The wilderness was then, and is now, an awesome barren desert wasteland. In Moses' own words penned in his final message to the people, he says that God found them "in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness . . ." Deut 32:10. It is an amazing fact that many of God's choicest servants were tutored in the solitude of the "waste-howling wilderness." It was a school to train some of God's choicest leaders. So, Moses fled there to learn for another forty years before he would be ready to lead the people from bondage. This is a classic example of running ahead of God and then lagging behind. Because of Moses' impetuous act, God had to take him into the wilderness for another forty years of preparation and teaching, before he was ready to lead the Hebrews.

We can almost hear the words of the Lord. "I could have used you as a leader in Egypt to free your people. I could have used you to end the oppression and suffering. I could have led you safely through the wilderness to the land of promise. I could have brought you out of captivity, but you tried to take matters into your own hands. You proved you were not yet ready to trust Me fully, so I will have to wait while you learn the lessons of forty years, living in the wilderness. Yes, the time will not be wasted. You will learn how to survive in the wilderness, but you could have learned it all from Me without ever going into the wilderness, if you had not taken matters into your own hands and killed the Egyptian." Have you been there? Have you ever run ahead of God?

Moses learned in the school of the "wilderness," just like David, who fled to the wilderness from Saul, 1 Sam 23:14, 15, 23, 24; 24:1; 25:1, 4, 14, 25; 26:2, 3; and like Elijah, who fled there from the clutches of Jezebel, 1 Kgs 19:4-10. Jeremiah made much use of the figure of the wilderness as a place of judgment, Jer 3:12; 4:11, 26; 9:10, 26; 12:10, 12; 13:24; 48:6; 50:12; 51:43. Paul was led into the wilderness of Arabia for three years and there God revealed Himself more fully, before he began his public ministry in Jerusalem, Gal 1:17-18. John the Baptist was also a sojourner in the wilderness of Judea, Matt 3:1. But the most notable of all was our Lord Jesus who, after His baptism by John the Baptist, was led into the wilderness and tempted of the adversary, Matt 4:1-11.

#### **7. God Remembers and Blesses, In His Time, 2:15-25.**

Doubtless Moses reflected on his impetuous mistake that fateful day when he took matters into his own hand and killed the Egyptian. Like Joseph, he was on the pathway to leadership in the administration of Egypt. But, he got too far ahead of God and lost his opportunity. The wilderness became his new training ground, and God had prepared the way for him.

**Verses 16-22.** In Midian, Moses sat by a well when the seven daughters of a priest named Reuel, or Raguel, Numb 10:29, whose name means "friend of God," came to draw water. He is also called Jethro, "excellent one" in Exodus 18:2 and Raguel in Exodus 2:18. When Moses came to the land of Midian, local shepherds tried to drive Jethro's daughters away, but Moses helped them and watered their flock. When Jethro was informed of what had happened, he invited Moses to eat with them. Ironically, his daughters told their father that an "Egyptian" delivered them from the oppression of the shepherds, v. 19. Moses was content to take up residence there and married one of the daughters whose name was Zipporah, whose name means "sparrow." She bore a son to Moses whose name was Gershom, meaning, "one in exile" or literally "one who is a stranger," vv. 20-22.

**Lesson:** Good News! We may forget about God, or become unfaithful to Him, but He never forgets where we are and He is always faithful to us. Even though Moses had violated God's law by killing the Egyptian and run way ahead of God, God provided a wonderful godly family for him with Jethro. He provided a godly wife for him in Zipporah. He taught Moses the wonders and ways of the desert, along with the survival skills needed to prepare him to lead the Hebrews, who would ultimately spend 40 years wandering there waiting on God's timing.

**Verses 23-25.** After several years passed, "in the process of time," the Pharaoh who had sought to kill Moses died. But the oppressive tactics against the Hebrews did not slacken with his death. The cry of the Hebrews came before God, v. 23. God heard their prayers and remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a reference to Genesis 15:13-21. God looked on the Hebrews and acknowledged their plight. He had not forgotten them although most assuredly many had concluded that He had forgotten them. This is always true when we are going through suffering. Does God know? Does God care? Why doesn't God answer?

There is a coded message in Zechariah 1:1. As the people languished in the hardships of returning and rebuilding Jerusalem, they asked these familiar questions. Does God know? Does God care? Why doesn't God answer? And the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet. The three names of Zechariah, his father, and his grandfather were a wonderful promise and welcome message. Zechariah means "God remembers!" Berechiah means "God blesses!" Iddo means "in His time." God never forgets. He ultimately blesses. But, He does so in His time. So He did with the Hebrews in Egypt, "In his time, He remembers, and He blesses."

**Lesson:** It took forty years for Moses to come to the place where he was when he killed the Egyptian and fled from the plan and purpose of God. Moses gets an "A" for endurance and for never giving up on God. There are many lives that become derelict when they get ahead of God and never return to the place where they got out of His will. There is sad news for those who fail God in this way. Their lives are lost to the original plan and purpose God intended. Let us take care not to become a derelict life, wasted to God's plan and purpose because of some frivolous and impulsive act that takes us on a tangent from God's original plan and purpose for our lives.