

Hebrews 11:23

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Our story of faith now jumps ahead leaving behind our beloved Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—a true hero of Egypt—to a time when the children of Israel were enslaved by the Egyptians. To fully grasp the ramifications of this passage, however, we are going to have to dive into the history that led up to these events. The history is rich and it will help frame for us why Moses' parents were heroes of faith and why what they did was considered to be an act of great faith. Let's turn to ***Exodus 1*** for the story.

Exodus 1:8-14

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard

service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

In **Exodus 1:8** we are told that there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. If you think about it, this is a very strange thing given the fact that Joseph had a stint as the Prime Minister of Egypt and essentially saved Egypt from certain famine and starvation. He was a national hero who you think would undoubtedly be remembered especially given the way Egyptians memorialized their heroes. So what happened? Why did this new king know nothing of Joseph and why was he so hostile to the Israelites?

In the Hebrew, the phraseology in **Exodus 1:8** is very unique and emphatic. Most historians understand this phrasing to suggest that the king did not succeed in the traditional line of Egyptian Pharaoh ascent. Rather, the phrase in Hebrew “he rose up” suggests that there must have been some type of military coup where the Egyptians were, for a period of time, usurped by this new king who rose up against them.

Now if we go back to **Exodus 1:10** it is kind of a stretch to think that the Egyptians would believe that the Israelites, who were shepherds and farmers, were actually mightier than the Egyptians such that their great numbers posed an actual threat to the Egyptians. It is likely that the Egyptians were outnumbered in the area of Goshen, but clearly not when compared to the entirety of Egypt and the army that could have easily and quickly been amassed against the Israelites if they did try and do anything such as start a revolt. So I believe that it is very unlikely that this “new king” was actually Egyptian.

Interestingly enough, there was this group of foreigners who lived in Egypt known as the Hyskos who for a relatively brief period of time took control of Egypt beginning around 1720 BC. The Hyskos originated from Canaan and had been slowly filtering into Egypt for approximately 150 years. They were considered to be brilliant militarily and they are the ones who brought the modern technology of chariot warfare into Egypt. They also developed bronze weapons and composite bows which were much stronger than the weapons used by the Egyptians.

Their military superiority helped them take control of Egypt but their campaign was as much political as it was military. They mounted their uprising during a time of great political weakness in Egypt so they took over control without a lot of difficulty but it was a slow and gradual process and not some aggressive advance. They first took occupation of the middle kingdom and moved northward but that they never really occupied the south of Egypt and pretty much left that part of the country alone to manage itself.

The Hyskos also brought great social advances to Egypt in farming, cattle management, document preservation, pottery and linen production. So during their rule Egypt experienced great advances in technology all of which led to economic growth and vitality.

This scenario explains many things. First of all, it would be entirely reasonable for the Hyskos to fear that the Israelites might join any Egyptian insurrection and rise up against them and help the Egyptians re-take possession of their land. The Israelites at this time would have been natural allies to Egypt; after all, they had been living in the land of Goshen for some time now peacefully co-existing with

their neighbors. That is why this “new king” put into place this strategy to oppress the Israelites—a sort of pro-active blow to prevent any thought of uprising or alliances.

In addition, the sheer numbers of the Israelites who lived in Goshen might explain why the king said that the Israelites were mightier than they were—especially if the Hyskos had lost any significant numbers in the military campaign. Man-for-man the Hyskos were definitely outnumbered.

Then add to it that the history between the Israelites and the Hyskos was not at all warm or friendly. The Hyskos are believed to have been comprised from various tribes in Canaan but primarily from the Amorites who held the largest land mass in Canaan. In this map you can see how big of a piece of Canaan that the Amorites occupied in these early days.

Now the Amorites and the Israelites had some bad blood. In **Genesis 34** we are told a story where an Amorite prince raped Dinah, one of Jacob’s daughters. The prince said he loved her and wanted to marry her and Jacob agreed to the marriage under the condition that the whole community of males would be circumcised, which was the only way the families could be merged and Dinah’s dignity preserved. The prince agreed with the terms but when all the men of that community were recovering from this painful procedure and were essentially immobile, Dinah’s brothers Levi and Simeon came in and slaughtered every one of them and took all their possessions.

Jacob was furious and said: “You have made me stink among all the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites” (**Genesis 34:30**).

And then in **Genesis 48:22** we find out that part of the land grant that was given by Jacob to Ephraim and Manasseh came from the portion of land that he took from the Amorites with his sword and bow.

So it is likely that the some of the Amorites who had settled in Egypt still remembered what the Israelite ancestors had done to them. This might also have motivated their desire to oppress the Israelites knowing what they were capable of and the ways that the Israelite God had given them military victories in the past against insurmountable odds.

Now, some historians try and argue that all of this happened the other way around. They say that Joseph had risen to power during the time of the Hyskos rule and that the Hyskos and Israelites were allies. They say that when the Egyptians regained power they ethnically cleansed the land and were the ones who oppressed the Israelites.

That is definitely a possibility, but that scenario does not quite fit the historical facts. History tells us that when the Hyskos lost power that they left the land and returned to Canaan because the Egyptians were cleansing their land of these foreign oppressors who were identified in many of the ancient writings as Semitic people. However, if the Israelites (who were also Semitic) were such good friends and allies with the Hyskos, you would think they would have also left fearing the eminent wrath of the Egyptians and the ethnic cleansing of their land of all Semitic people. But it is clear that they didn't.

Personally, I think the first scenario is more likely to be the right one. The rising up of a Hyskos king would explain why the new king did not have any association with Joseph and his heroic deeds. And we must not down play the historic hatred

that existed between the Israelites and the Amorites and believe me memories have long lives. And finally, we cannot skip over one of the most prophetic passages of the Old Testament which speaks to this time of great and horrific oppression; a passage which gives us another clue to this puzzle.

Genesis 15:13-16

Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

There is no reason to think that this reference to the iniquity of the Amorites is tied only to their eventual expulsion from Canaan because of their idolatry and other sinful behavior; rather, this verse just might be the tie-in to indicate that the Amorites would be the ones who would perpetuate a horrible judgment against the Israelites and thereby fill up their cup of iniquity. Keep in mind the great affliction perpetuated against the Israelites in Egypt was not just that they had to do hard labor under the brutal whip of task masters, but it also included the genocide of innocent children.

Exodus 1:22

Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live."

Yes, one of the new king's bright ideas to control the Israelites was to kill all the newborn baby boys but let all the newborn baby girls live. In this way they would eventually dilute the ability of the Israelites to join any rebellion. On the one hand it was not a very good strategic move from an economic standpoint; after all, it would dilute their labor force and limit their rapid construction of key supply cities like Pithom and Rameses. Yet from the perspective of a foreign oppressor it was a brilliant move.

To the Egyptians, the Nile was a sacred river that was intricately tied to the worship of their gods. When the Hyskos took over power they imported a few of their own gods but in a move to keep order and control of the many by the few they also continued to worship the Egyptian god's. In fact, they did very little to turn over the normal life that the average Egyptian experienced. They even kept Egyptian as the formal language and let the Egyptians maintain high posts in the government.

It is, therefore, more than likely that the Hyskos characterized the murder of these innocent Israelite children as a worthy sacrifice to the Egyptian gods as they sought greater fertility and blessing for the land as well as for the Nile. In this way they may have quenched any moral outrage that might have otherwise come from the Egyptians. The Hyskos were smart and they used religion to manipulate the Egyptians while at the same time eliminating a potential enemy.

Exodus 2:1-4

About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River. The baby's sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.

Here we have a man and woman who got married and had a son, but I want you to notice how quickly the text narrows its focus to the actions of the mother. She saw that he was special; she kept him hidden for three months; and when she could no longer hide him, she made an ark for him and let him go into the hands of the Lord and yet watched to see what would happen. Not sure why dad was not included in all of this except for the fact that it was the mom's faith that seems to be at the true heart of this story.

Hebrews 11:23 does speak, however, to the actions of the parents, as I am sure that dad had to agree with all that mom did as her actions put the household in great risk. But the writer of Exodus (who was Moses moved by the Holy Spirit) clearly wanted us to focus on the faith of his mother.

Now there is so much going on here in this short passage: prophetic fulfillment; spiritual awareness; prophetic foretelling; and raw unbridled faith which plays out in criminal rebellion.

Prophetic Fulfillment. Mom and dad (Amram and Jochebed) must have been watching the calendar believing what the Lord had told Abraham. As we read, in **Genesis 15:13-16**, the Lord made it clear that the Israelites would be strangers in a foreign land for 400 years and the time had come. I am sure that this prophecy had been passed down for generations from Abraham to Isaac, Jacob, to Jacob's sons, and so forth.

Therefore, it likely that Jochebed and Amram expected that at any time the Lord would send a deliverer. Now, I don't know this to be true, but since this deliverer (Moses) was in so many ways a type of Jesus, it would not be too far of a stretch to assume that the women of the day were hoping to be the lucky and blessed one to carry the deliverer in the same way that during Jesus day the faithful women all hoped they would be the lucky and blessed one to carry the true deliverer—the Messiah.

I am sure that within the community of faith, people had been talking about the fact that the time was at hand. With the intense level of oppression that they endured on a daily basis, I am sure they had been living for the day that God would deliver them and allow them to return to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Spiritual Awareness.

So there must have been something to the fact that Moses was this "special" baby. Other translations say that he was beautiful, a good or fine child. Whatever was going on with that baby, it caused Jochebed to conclude that he was the "one"—the promised deliverer—for clearly she taught Moses that he was the "one" and Moses grew up believing it.

Amram and Jochebed already had two other children, Aaron and Miriam, but there was something different about Moses; he was not like they were. I don't know if he glowed, spoke in baby tongues (ha), or if the Spirit just made them aware that he was the "one;" it was probably the later of these. But I don't think she believed he was the deliverer just because he was exceptionally good looking and beautiful; something else was going on. I simply don't think this phrase really captures for us what Jochebed experienced. But, regardless, Jochebed knew that Moses was special and subsequently Moses knew.

I say that because if we go to **Acts 7:23-29** it is clear that Moses grew up believing that he was the promised deliverer. Next week we will talk about an incident where Moses tried to step into the role pre-maturely assuming that everyone knew he was the deliverer. Well that didn't go so well for him; but the point I want to make is that this occurred while Moses was still living in Pharaoh's household—40 years before the whole burning bush and voice from God incident.

Again, we will get into that part of the story next week, but it is clear that the spiritual awareness of the prophetic fulfillment—the coming of the deliverer—were, by faith, passed down from Jochebed and Amram to Moses.

Prophetic Foretelling and Fulfillment. Amram and Jochebed were from the tribe of Levi and they were the lucky ones chosen to bear both Moses and Aaron—the prophet and the priest who combined fulfilled a "type" of Christ. As we have studied in Hebrews, Jesus was a fulfillment of the one who would come and be a prophet like Moses (**Hebrews 3**) and the priest like Aaron (**Hebrews 5, 7, 8**). But, as we know, Jesus' priesthood is far grander than that of Aaron for Jesus' priesthood descends from the line of Melchizedek and is an eternal priesthood.

In addition, right before Jacob died, by faith, he prophesied over each of his sons. In **Genesis 49:5-7**, Jacob prophesied that Levi would not possess any territory but would be scattered throughout the nation of Israel. And, as we know, when the Israelites conquered Canaan, by the word of the Lord to Moses, the Levites possessed no territory within Israel but their territorial inheritance was given to the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh).

The sons of Aaron were instead set apart as priests of the Lord and the rest of the Levites were given responsibility to care for the duties and responsibilities associated with the Tabernacle and the administration of the priesthood. Thus, they were given places to live spread out amongst all the other tribes so that entire nation of Israel had access to the priesthood and would receive instruction on the worship of God.

Raw unbridled faith played out in criminal rebellion. Fearing the continuing growth of the Israelites, Pharaoh first instructed the Jewish midwives to kill all the baby boys as soon as they were born but to let the girls live. Yes, that is right. He wanted Jews to kill Jews. How horrible.

Think about the cruelty of these Hyskos' leaders. Genocide is clearly unthinkable and beyond inhumane, but to force a people to carry it out on themselves, to be the very instruments of their own slaughter, is cruel and pitiless beyond measure. And it is probably this act that tipped the scales against the Amorites finally filling their cup of iniquity causing the Lord to punish them both in Egypt and later in the land of Canaan.

However, because the Jewish midwives feared God, they refused to obey Pharaoh. The Israelites continued to multiply and Pharaoh started to freak so he

called the midwives to task being absolutely infuriated with continuing growth of the Israelite population. The midwives bold faced lied to the king. They said: “Sir, the Hebrew women are very strong. They have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time! They are not slow in giving birth like the Egyptian women.”

So not only did they disobey the powers that be, they lied to the king. But guess what. We are then told that God blessed the midwives because they feared God more than they feared man; and so in reward God gave to them children of their own. All of this can be found in ***Exodus 1:15-21***. I have always found this passage amazing. They disobeyed, they lied, and still they were blessed.

Seeing that his plans were being frustrated, Pharaoh then empowered his own people to carry out this genocide. He instructed all his people—all Egyptians—to search out and find any Hebrew babies and throw the boys into the Nile (***Exodus 1:22***). He effectively marshaled a personal police force from the entire nation; no baby boy would be safe.

It is likely that they conducted house by house searches, breaking down doors, to search for rebels and any hidden children. Jochebed knew that she could only keep the boy hidden for a short time and even then she knew she was placing her entire family in life-threatening jeopardy.

Can you imagine being a parent and wrestling with what you should do in this situation. There would be no way you could hide the kid forever. Even if for some reason you were able to keep it secret for an extended period of time, when the Egyptians saw any older male child it is likely they would exact judgment on the entire household for rebelling against the King. Hiding Moses was a huge risk to

everyone. After all, they lived in a police state; they were slaves and they had no rights, no liberty or access to justice. What would you do? Would you obey the king and protect your family; after all, you have other children to think about? Or would you try and protect your special child?

In the midst of all of this wickedness, Jochebed and Amram decided that they would rebel; they would risk carrying for this kid beyond the allotted time giving them time to think of some other option to deal with the child. She knew he was a special child and I believe that at this time was pretty convinced, or at the very least hoped, that he was the “one”—the promised deliverer. So let’s see what they decided to do.

Exodus 2:5-10

Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Now let's talk a bit about this issue of rebellion to the authorities. Ultimately Jochebed obeyed the letter of the law by placing Moses in the Nile, but she defied Pharaoh by building for Moses a waterproof ark to keep him safe when he was placed in the river. She also placed him among the rushes so he would not be pulled away by the current. She figured she would rather be the one to release her son (into the hands of God) than risk someone breaking down her door, taking him, and just tossing him in the river to die.

I also don't think it was random that she placed the baby in the location of the river where Pharaoh's daughter would be bathing; it's not like the Pharaoh's daughter made a special trip to Goshen to bathe (come on, Goshen was the land of the slaves). This means that Jochebed had to have researched this out and took an unbelievable risk. She had to have hid the child and secretly traveled to one of the sacred cities where Pharaoh's household lived and then released the child into the Nile right where she knew the women bathed.

Then she arranged for Miriam, Moses' older sister, to watch and see what would happen to the boy. It's as if she expected that if he was truly the "one" that God would personally intervene in this situation and preserve her son. And sure enough that is exactly what happened. By the hand of God, a slave successfully defied a king and her child was miraculously saved by the very ones who would otherwise be his executioners.

I can only imagine Jochebed's reaction when she learned from Miriam that Moses was miraculously saved by the daughter of Pharaoh and then that she was the one chosen to be the child's nurse mother. The whole thing is outlandish. Isn't

God funny in the way He does things? Who, except for God, would think of hiding Moses right under Pharaoh's own nose; right in his own household?

Jochebed was a criminal who exhibited raw and radical unbridled faith. As a result, she saw God do the unfathomable. Imagine, everything she did was a crime—treason even. Yet, in God's eyes these were all great acts of unbridled faith.

Have you ever thought about how this idea fits with the Biblical concept that we are to obey our government as it has been established by God (**Romans 13**)? Jochebed did anything but obey.

Clearly there is a time when God asks us to honor the law of God above the law of men. Fearing the Lord is always a higher law than fearing man. This is important to keep in mind. As we are in what I believe to be the end of days, I believe that we will be faced with these types of decisions where the law of God is pitted against the law of man or even just the will of man; and we are going to find ourselves smack dab in the middle. We will need to, by faith, stand for the Lord and do what we know He has told us to do regardless of the consequences.

This might mean that we will find ourselves pitted against our government, our employers, our religious leaders, our parents, our brothers and sisters, and even our own children. Some of you already know far too well what this is like and you have experienced the beginning of this kind of persecution. This is all prophesied about in **Luke 12:49-53** and **Matthew 10:16-39**. You should be sure and read those passages; but I have to warn you they are a bit unnerving.

In fact, we know that one day it is going to get so oppressive that to even buy food or conduct business people will need to identify themselves with the

enemies of God (***Revelation 13:11-18***). How is that for oppressive and terrorizing? That will not be an easy time and everywhere we turn we will be confronted with gross injustice.

We will need to walk in the footsteps of faith that have been laid for us by such people as Jochebed, Amram, and these Jewish midwives who, according to ***Hebrews 11:23***, were not afraid of the king's edict. They trusted that God would preserve this beautiful child and through him deliver the nation; and He did just that. They had a raw and radical faith in the midst of total darkness. They are truly heroes.

Before we close tonight I want to ask if you think you have the type of raw and radical faith that can stand in the midst of intense opposition and injustice. Do you? Remember, faith is not something that happens to us by magic; it is a choice in which we must be trained. As we have talked about so much through our study in Hebrews, this is why the Lord takes us through difficult times. We all want our lives to be easy and filled with blessing, but you must understand we are being trained to be men and women of faith whom, like the saints of old, are able to stand in the midst of unprecedented darkness.

So I encourage you that no matter what difficulty you are going through to understand it through this lens and let the Lord complete His perfect work in you. Stop fighting Him. Stop acting as if your life is so horrible; believe me it can get much worse. Training is never easy; it is always difficult. It does not "feel" good. But it is just what in His wisdom He has determined is necessary for you to grow in your faith and become radical in your faith just like Jochebed.

If you yield your will to the Lord, I believe like Jochebed you will see God bring you deliverance in some unfathomable and crazy ways. He is faithful and He loves you more than you can imagine. He knows that you can be a man or woman of this kind of raw and radical faith. That is why He has sent you here so you can learn and be trained in a community of people that are like minded and will help you through the difficulty. Let Him have his loving way with you; you won't like it necessarily, but you also won't regret it.

Let's Pray.

Map

