

“A New King . . . Who Didn’t Know Joseph”

A reading from Exodus (Exodus 1:8-2:10)

⁸⁻¹⁰ A new king came to power in Egypt who didn’t know Joseph. He spoke to his people with alarm, “There are way too many of these Israelites for us to handle. We’ve got to do something: Let’s devise a plan to contain them, lest if there’s a war they should join our enemies, or just walk off and leave us.”

¹¹⁻¹⁴ So they organized them into work-gangs and put them to hard labor under gang-foremen. They built the storage cities Pithom and Rameses for Pharaoh. But the harder the Egyptians worked them the more children the Israelites had—children everywhere! The Egyptians got so they couldn’t stand the Israelites and treated them worse than ever, crushing them with slave labor. They made them miserable with hard labor—making bricks and mortar and back-breaking work in the fields. They piled on the work, crushing them under the cruel workload.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ The king of Egypt had a talk with the two Hebrew midwives; one was named Shiphrah and the other Puah. He said, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the sex of the baby. If it’s a boy, kill him; if it’s a girl, let her live.”

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ But the midwives had far too much respect for God and didn’t do what the king of Egypt ordered; they let the boy babies live. The king of Egypt called in the midwives. “Why didn’t you obey my orders? You’ve let those babies live!”

¹⁹ The midwives answered Pharaoh, “The Hebrew women aren’t like the Egyptian women; they’re vigorous. Before the midwife can get there, they’ve already had the baby.”

²⁰⁻²¹ God was pleased with the midwives. The people continued to increase in number—a very strong people. And because the midwives honored God, God gave them families of their own.

²² So Pharaoh issued a general order to all his people: “Every boy that is born, drown him in the Nile. But let the girls live.”

Moses

2 ¹⁻³ A man from the family of Levi married a Levite woman. The woman became pregnant and had a son. She saw there was something special about him and hid him. She hid him for three months. When she couldn't hide him any longer she got a little basket-boat made of papyrus, waterproofed it with tar and pitch, and placed the child in it. Then she set it afloat in the reeds at the edge of the Nile.

⁴⁻⁶ The baby's older sister found herself a vantage point a little way off and watched to see what would happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe; her maidens strolled on the bank. She saw the basket-boat floating in the reeds and sent her maid to get it. She opened it and saw the child—a baby crying! Her heart went out to him. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrew babies."

⁷ Then his sister was before her: "Do you want me to go and get a nursing mother from the Hebrews so she can nurse the baby for you?"

⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said, "Yes. Go." The girl went and called the child's mother.

⁹ Pharaoh's daughter told her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me. I'll pay you." The woman took the child and nursed him.

¹⁰ After the child was weaned, she presented him to Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him as her son. She named him Moses (Pulled-Out), saying, "I pulled him out of the water."

The word of the Lord.