

Moses — Birth and Early Education

When God spoke to Abraham He revealed that his descendants would spend 400 years in Egypt. Later, He recorded the actual time as 430 years. Since Moses was 80 at the Exodus, the time of Israel in Egypt as the book of Exodus begins would have been about 350 years.

Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. Gen 15:13-14

Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years — on that very same day — it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. Ex 12:40-42

And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh. Ex 7:7

While the book opened with the fact that seventy people came down into Egypt, it was clear that during those years, several things had changed.

- 1 The children of Israel had multiplied.
- 2 A new dynasty arose with no concern or knowledge of Joseph and the great deeds he had done.
- 3 Because of the explosive growth, fear and suspicion grew that Israel was/could become a threat.

But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. 8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; 10 come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." Ex 1:7-11

Due to these factors Israel's position in Egypt rapidly deteriorated.

1. Lost favor in the sight of the Egyptians. 1:8-10
2. Became slaves ruled over by taskmasters. 1:11-12
3. Began to force them to serve with rigor and made their lives bitter with hard bondage. 1:13-14
4. Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the male but save the female babies. 1:15-20
5. Pharaoh commanded all his people to throw all the Hebrew boys in the river. 1:22

"But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 18 till another king arose who did not know Joseph. 19 This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. Acts 7:17-19

The Birth of Moses

The second chapter of Exodus opens with the birth of Moses. It is not until later that God revealed Moses had a brother who was three years older than Moses. Miriam's age is not revealed, but it is probable she is the eldest, since she speaks with Pharaoh's daughter in such an intelligent manner. Evidently, Aaron passed through the time of the danger of being thrown into the river without incident, but Moses was threatened. She hid him for three months, but it became apparent that he could no longer be hidden. So they took the necessary steps to hide him in the reeds by the river. It is difficult to know what was in the minds of his parents. Did they hope for God's providence? It appears from Hebrews that they did expect something from the Lord. Miriam stood and watched to see what would happen.

So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. 3 But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. 4 And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. Ex 2:2-4

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. Heb 11:23

Stephen also inferred the providence of God when he says Moses was well pleasing to God even at that time.

At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. 21 But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. Acts 7:20-22

Moses is left in the small basket floating in the reeds when the daughter of Pharaoh arrives to bathe in the river. As they walked the path to the place in the river where it was open enough to bathe she finds the basket with the crying infant inside. She inferred he was a Hebrew baby since he was hidden all alone in the river.

Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the

riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. 6 And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Ex 2:5-6

In one of the most amazing acts of providence anywhere in the Scriptures, on the same day, one moment the parents must give up the child because they can't hid him anymore and a few hours later, Moses is back in the home and his mother is being paid by Pharaoh's daughter to raise him. The events that led to this are simple enough. When Miriam sees the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter and realizes she wants the child, but can't raise him yet, she offers to find a Hebrew woman to nurse Moses. The woman she chose was Moses own mother.

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" 8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother. 9 Then 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. Ex 2:7-10

Moses therefore remains with his mother all the time necessary to nurse him. At some point after he was weaned, he was brought to Pharaoh's daughter.

And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water." Ex 2:10

Moses Early Education

Stephen makes clear that Moses was forty years old in the next verse.

Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. Ex 2:11-13

"Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. Acts 7:23-25

Although these forty years are passed over with little information in Exodus, there are some very important inferences to be made when looking at the further information the Holy Spirit revealed in the New Testament. First, Stephen revealed that Moses had been "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and was "mighty in word and deed." (Acts 7:22-23).

But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. Acts 7:21-22

Clearly, Moses received the best education money and power could but in that age. God revealed that he at that time in his life he was mighty in his words and in his deeds. Although these were important achievements and roughly equivalent to our own college degree, this education played no part in the most important decision of his life. It was not the "wisdom of the Egyptians" that brought about his decision.

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. Heb 11:24-26

Clearly, there were two competing visions. The vista from Egypt's wisdom revealed the "treasures of Egypt" and the ease and prosperity of being in the household of Pharaoh. It's only enticement: "the pleasures of sin for a season." This powerful vista has tempted and destroyed multitudes. It is one of the three temptations Satan used on Jesus (Lk 4:5-6) for it blends the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life into one terrible vision.

Only the "eyes of faith" could have revealed the panoramic vista seen by those who "walk by faith and not by sight." (2Cor 5:7). It was from this perspective Moses could see the "recompense of reward" and the "greater riches" gained through "the reproach of Christ." It is clear that for forty years Moses saw both. But the day finally came when he had to "hate the one and love the other" or "hold to one, and despise the other." (Mt 6:24). When that day came it was his faith and not Egypt's wisdom that won the day.

What was the source of this faith? Since all faith comes "by hearing the word of God" (Rom 10:17) clearly at the same time Moses was learning the wisdom of Egypt, he had also learned God's wisdom. Perhaps his mother had taught him as she nursed him (Ex 2:7-10) passing on his heritage as Abraham's seed. If so then he was like Timothy who "from a babe" had "known the sacred writings which are able to make wise unto salvation." (2 Tim 3:15) Maybe he had continued contact with his sister Miriam, his brother Aaron, and his family who then created this foundation that changed his destiny. It was by this faith that he became one of those precious souls listed in the "great cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 11.