

PREPARATION OF MOSES

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

The title, Exodus, literally means "a road out" which signifies God's deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egypt. God's supernatural deliverance of Israel (Ex 1-18) was an object lesson to all subsequent generations of Israelites that He was all-powerful and able to perform His covenant promises (10:2). The Exodus, furthermore, was a great act of separation preparatory to the giving of the law (Ex 19-24) which established Israel as a holy nation and a peculiar people (Deut. 7:6-11). As an external manifestation of His covenant, God ordained the erection of a tabernacle which would be filled with His own glorious presence. This tabernacle allowed Israel to become personally involved in the worship of Jehovah through the prescribed ritual and priesthood (Ex 25-40).

The opening narrative of Exodus forms a continuation of the book of Genesis. Chapter one explains why the Israelites were in Egypt (1:1-6). Moses then recounts the progressive steps of oppression against Israel. Since the days of Joseph things had changed considerably in Egypt leaving the Hebrews in an extremely impoverished position.

Chapter two gives evidence of God's continuing interest in the welfare of His covenant people as He begins to prepare Moses to deliver them. The preservation of Moses' life, his education in Egypt, his initial administrative failure, and his training in the wilderness all point to God's providential molding of the man He would later commission and empower as one of His choice servants of all time.

I. Israel's Disaster in Egypt — 1:1-22

A. Israel's Presence in Egypt — 1:1-6

Israel was a displaced nation as long as they were in Egypt. Through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God had made some spectacular promises concerning the nation of Israel. However, since the blessings of this covenant were tied to the land of Canaan, they could never be obtained in Egypt. God had specifically warned Isaac not to go into Egypt but to stay "in the land" and that as he remained there, God would be with him and bless him (Gen 26:1-4). Toward the end of Jacob's life, he was determined to go to Egypt to see his son Joseph. On the way out, he stopped to get God's approval. God permitted him to go. He also promised to bless him and to return him to the land (Gen 46:1-4). Consequently, the exodus was the fulfillment of that promise to Jacob. It also fulfills God's prediction of suffering for Abraham's descendants and subsequent deliverance after 400 years (Gen 15:13, 14).

1:2-4 — Jacob's sons are listed according to their mothers with the sons of his two maidservants appearing last (Cf. Gen 35:23-26).

1:5 "Seventy souls" — This modest figure is contrasted against the multitudes at the time of the exodus (approx. 2,000,000).

B. Israel's Prosperity in Egypt — 1:7

Israel's rapid growth into a nation is emphasized grammatically by a climax of verbs:

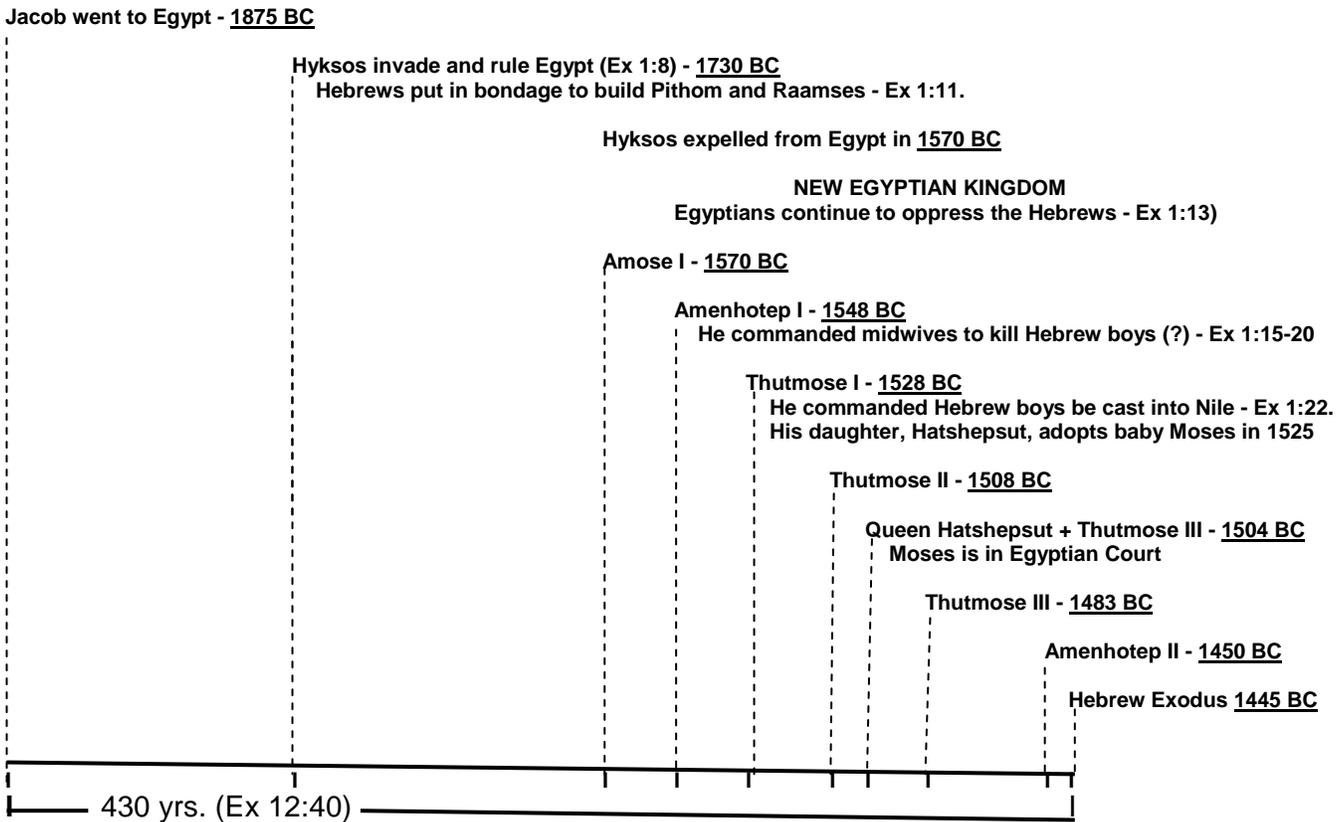
1. **"Were fruitful"** — from a term related to horticulture regarding the multiplication of plant life whether of small multiples or of several hundred-fold increase. The term indicates that women of Israel, as a rule, were capable of having large families.

2. **"Increased"** — literally, "increased abundantly" (Gen 1:20). The term is used with reference to the profuse procreation of fish and reptiles.

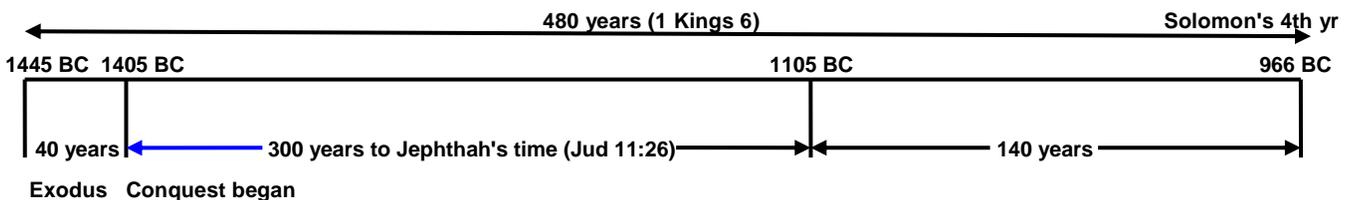
3. **"Multiplied"** — is a general term referring to something being numerous.

4. **"Waxed exceeding mighty"** — as the numbers of Israelites multiplied, their collective strength also increased. This apparently posed a threat to the Egyptian Pharaoh.

NOTE: At this point it is necessary to establish a historical setting for the oppression and the exodus. Two factors make positive identification of historical data difficult: First, although Moses knew the Pharaohs by name, their identities were not crucial to the narrative since God's role was the predominant one. Second, the recording of Egyptian history was intended to eulogize the Pharaoh. Therefore, any mention of a nation like Israel, who successfully rebelled and escaped from Egypt, was stricken from the record. Liberal scholars, most of whom deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, date the exodus at c. 1290 B.C. Much more consistent with other biblical chronology is the date c. 1445 B.C. supported by conservative scholarship. The graph below follows the early date for the exodus of Israel from Egypt (1445 B.C. instead of 1290 B.C.)



The principle evidence for the early date is found in two biblical texts along with coinciding Egyptian history. (1) According to 1 Kings 6:1, Israel's exodus from Egypt took place 480 years prior to the 4th year of Solomon's reign (966 B.C.). (2) In approaching Canaan after 40 years of wandering, Israel requested permission from the Amorites to pass through their land. Instead of consenting, the Amorites attacked them, were defeated and Israel took their land. In Jephthah's day, the Ammonites claimed Israel took away their land. Jephthah denied their claim and said Israel took the land from the Amorites, but he asked them why they had not claimed this land in the last 300 years, if it had been taken from them (Judges 11:26). Those who hold to the late date must explain away both of these concrete historical references. The following graph illustrates the position of these two Scriptures, which refute a late date for the exodus.



C. Israel's Persecution in Egypt — 1:8-22

1. Instigation — 1:8-10

1:8-10 — "There arose up a new king over Egypt" - literally, "a new king rose against Egypt." There is strong evidence to connect this event with the Hyksos invasion of Egypt in 1730 B.C.

- a. The grammar implies a violent disruption of the normal Egyptian dynastic succession.
- b. A foreign ruler would have no reason to respect the past contributions of Joseph.
- c. The Hyksos would have reason to hate the descendants of Jacob because of the incident at Shechem (Gen 34) and subsequent wars with the Amorites (Gen 48:22). The Amorites were the primary stock of the Hyksos.
- d. The Hyksos were never a large nation and would understandably fear the rapidly multiplying Hebrews (1:9).
- e. Having existed peacefully under the previous Pharaohs, the allegiance of Israel would naturally be suspect in the eyes of the Hyksos (1:10).
- f. The manpower of the Hebrews could be used effectively in building fortifications against possible attack.

2. Intensification — 1:11-22

Four progressively stricter measures were taken by the Pharaohs in order to insure Israel's submission and limit their multiplication.

a. Taskmasters were appointed — 1:11-12

1:11 — In an attempt to weaken the collective strength of the Israelites, the Pharaoh disrupted their unity by breaking them down into labor gangs under the brutal supervision of Egyptians. The "treasure cities" of Pithom and Ramses were located on main water routes and were constructed for the purpose of storing grain. This was probably a continuation of the system initiated by Joseph (Gen 41:48).

1:12 — In spite of the severe oppression which normally would have diminished population growth considerably, Israel continued to multiply at a tremendous rate. Observing this spectacle, the Egyptians were "grieved," literally, "horrified." This fear was naturally provoked by the realization that there was a mysterious power operating on behalf of Israel which was foreign to them.

b. Bondage was intensified — 1:13-14

1:13 — "Serve with rigor" - "rigor" comes from a root word which means "to break or crush in pieces."

1:14 — The nature of their labor was two-fold: (1) brick making under the hot Egyptian sun, and (2) agricultural labor which was especially difficult because of the need for irrigation.

c. Midwives were commanded to kill male babies — 1:15-21

1:15 — The two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, were probably heads of an organized guild of midwives.

1:16 — The cruelty and devilishness of this Pharaoh is seen in the fact that he attempted to force women to murder innocent babies before the eyes of their mothers and by so doing effect the extinction of their own race!

1:17-21 — It is possible that the midwives withheld their services deliberately so as to escape the performance of such a revolting decree. It is very possible that God enabled the Hebrew women to deliver easily in order to facilitate their stupendous population increase.

d. All people were commanded to destroy Hebrew male babies — 1:22

Previous failure brought this Pharaoh to open brutality. Neither this decree nor the previous one was issued by the Hyksos. It was under this ban that Moses was born (c. 1525 B.C.), 80 years before the exodus (1445 B.C.). This would place the dictum in the reign of Thutmose I (1528-1508). The previous command to the midwives was probably issued under Amenhotep I (1548-1528).

II. God's Deliverer for Israel — 2:1-25

A. God's Protection of Moses — 2:1-8

2:1 — The names of Moses' parents are given in Exodus 6:20 as Amram and Jochebed. This abbreviated account focuses on the life of Moses who was not the first child, but had been preceded by Miriam (2:7) and Aaron (6:20).

2:3, 4 — The faith of Amram and Jochebed, commended in Hebrews 11:23, is manifested here in the construction of this small reed box in which Moses was placed. It seems that Jochebed deliberately placed the ark in a position where Pharaoh's daughter was accustomed to bathe and then instructed Miriam how to react when he was found. God rewarded this faith in greater measure than they had hoped.

2:5 — The daughter of Pharaoh mentioned here is probably the famous Hatshepsut, daughter of Thutmose I. History reveals her to be a most capable and strong-willed leader. She was the only living child of Thutmose I by his primary wife. She kept close to the throne by marrying a son which Thutmose I had by a lesser wife. This son assumed the name Thutmose II and was easily dominated by Hatshepsut until his death after a short reign. The next heir was Thutmose III who was then only 10 years old. Hatshepsut took advantage of his youth, seized the crown, and reigned twenty-two years until her death. Thutmose III resented Hatshepsut as well as her adopted son, Moses, who later fled Egypt to escape his wrath (2:15).

B. God's Preparation of Moses — 2:9-22

1. Spiritual training — 2: 9

God providentially allowed Jochebed to nurse and raise her son for Hatshepsut. There can be little doubt that during these few years she carefully but urgently indoctrinated him in the things of God. The significance of this training is clearly seen in the most crucial decision of Moses' life (Heb. 11:24-27).

2. Scientific training — 2:10

There is no evidence that formal adoptions were practiced in Egypt at this time, but, nevertheless, Moses became her son in that she took him into her family with all the rights and privileges of a son. These privileges included a thorough education in "all of the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22).

3. Leadership training — 2:11-15

2:11 — "Moses was grown" - Many years had elapsed between verses 10 and 11. By Hebrew standards a "grown man" was 40 years of age. It is at this point that Moses made that very significant decision to trust God and cast his lot with God's people, thereby turning his back on the riches of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-27). The recent discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb, which revealed the fabulous amounts of wealth that Egyptian royalty enjoyed, gives us a greater appreciation of this decision.

2:11b-14 — Moses' action against the Egyptian on behalf of the Hebrew was not without serious implications:

- a. He irreversibly cast his lot with the Hebrews.
- b. He revealed a passionate sympathy for his kinsmen.
- c. His zeal to lead God's people ended in confusion since he lacked God's endorsement.

NOTE: Moses never forgot the question of the struggling Hebrews: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" (2:14a). Throughout his later ministry and especially at his initial call by God to lead Israel out, this was his principle concern (3:11, 13; 4:1, 10). Assured of God's endorsement and authority, he became the most capable human leader of any age!

4. Specialized training — 2:16-22

Moses fled to Midian where he settled, married, and started a family. While engaged as a shepherd for Jethro (3:1), Moses became very well acquainted with the landscape over which he would later conduct the nation of Israel. Although Moses was well-treated in the home of Jethro, he still lived under the humiliating knowledge that he was banished from his countrymen. He expressed these sentiments in the naming of his first son, "Gershom" which means "banishment" coming from the root word which means "to drive out" or "to cast away." As the years passed, his discouragement gave way to a confident hope in the trustworthiness of God. This is evidenced by the naming of his second son, "Eliezer" which means "God is my help" (18:4).

C. God's Purpose for Moses — 2:23-25

These verses actually constitute an introduction to the next chapter.

2:23 — Thutmose III had died and with him died Moses' fear of returning to Egypt. The Israelites certainly hoped for an alleviation of their plight with an administrative change, but they were bitterly disappointed as Amenhotep II assumed control and continued their hard bondage.

2:24 — "God heard their groanings" - God is said to "hear" those requests which He grants and to "be deaf" to those which He rejects. The basis of God's response to their cry was the covenant He established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2:25 — "God looked upon the children of Israel" - literally, "God knew" them with regard to the very basic nature of Israel at heart - they were still the chosen seed of Abraham. Therefore, He accepted them.