

Series: The Name of God #1657

Title: Exodus 2

The Israelites and Moses

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. I am glad that you can join us again in the Book of the Exodus, beginning in a moment in chapter 2. Last time we read most of chapter 1 and we saw firsthand in what bad shape the Israelites were. They went from being shepherds in Canaan to being slaves in Egypt. And their new born baby boys were under assault from the Egyptian Pharaoh who feared Israelite population growth. It is in this context that we pick up the reading in Exodus 2.

You can turn there in your Bible while I remind you about the reason we are doing extensive reading in these early chapters of Exodus. It's this: we are coming to the personal name for God, which is Yahweh. And I want us to see how God gives this name for Himself in the context of *relationship*. God, in relationship to Moses (an individual). God, in relationship to the Israelites (a community of people). Yes, God is to us Yahweh. But He is first Yahweh to these Hebrews. Taking the Bible in its proper context is essential for us. Also, this background reading sets us up for a clearer understanding of Exodus 3 where we will hear God's name.

I am reading Exodus chapter 2, verses 1-4, **"Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. ³But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him."** Last time we talked about the state of the Israelites (as a people, a community). Now we learn about four specific Israelite people: Amram and Jochebed (the parents), Miriam (the sister), and Moses (the new born baby son). This passage describes the birth of Moses.

The two Levites are married. Amram is the man and Jochebed his wife. We find out their names later, in Exodus chapter 6. She conceives and bears the son. And the Bible says "he was beautiful." The Apostle Paul was not a good looking man, but Moses was very handsome indeed, even as an infant. And Moses' parents must have been people of great faith in God, because they hid him for three months. And we already know why: Pharaoh commanded the Jewish baby boys be drowned in the Nile River. *Then*, in an act of even more fervent faith, Jochebed, when she could no longer hide Moses, she put the boy in a wicker basket, covered it with tar and pitch, and floated him among the reeds by the bank of the same Nile he was supposed to be drowned in. And Miriam, the older sister of Moses, watched to see what would happen to her baby brother.

From the beginning, I think the parents of Moses are among a remnant of Hebrews with a vibrant faith in the Living God. I say "remnant," because this was a time when many Israelites were doubting God, and had turned to the worship of the false gods of the Egyptians. Listen to Joshua chapter 24 and verse 14, written much later but harkening back to these days.

"Fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt..." And listen to Ezekiel chapter 20, verses 5-8, **"I am the Lord your God, ⁶on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. ⁷I said to them, 'Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.'⁸ But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt."**

In these passages we learn that some of the Israelite people abandoned their faith in *The God*. But not Moses' parents. In fact, the opposite. I think they were both very aware of and believed wholeheartedly in what God Almighty had promised to Abram (to Abraham) in Genesis chapter 15, verses 13-16. Let me also read that so you can hear the word of the Lord.

Genesis chapter 15, beginning in verse 13, **“God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”** As Moses was born, guess what? This was nearly the end of the 400 years and Moses was of the fourth generation of God’s people who will return to the Promised Land of Canaan. In other words, Amram and Jochebed had very good reasons to believe that Moses could well be a significant young man in God’s plan for the redemption and the liberation of their people.

And now let’s hear how God sovereignly makes it so that Moses *will indeed* be *the* central figure in God’s plan. And first, God must preserve the boy’s life. I am reading again in Exodus 2 beginning in verse 5, **“The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children.’ ⁷ 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 Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Go ahead.’ So the girl 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. ¹⁰ The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, ‘Because I drew him out of the water.’”**

Wow! What a development. Of all people it is *Pharaoh’s* daughter that finds Moses! And, after identifying the baby as Hebrew she does not have him murdered, but rather takes pity on him and preserves his life *by* accepting the offer of Miriam (remember, she has been watching her brother’s floating basket). And the “nurse from the Hebrew women” is Jochebed (Moses’ mother). You cannot make this up! Only God could arrange for this. Moses returns to be nursed by his Mom and parented by his Mom and Dad, and to grow up with his sister until, at the appropriate age, he is returned to Pharaoh’s daughter. She gives him the name Moses.

And it had to be during those years when Moses was back with his own parents, people very faithful to the Living God, that they taught him all about the Lord and the Israelites’ history, *and* about their promised future based on what God had said to Abraham (as we have read). We know that Moses understood he had a destiny to fulfil for His own people, so that even though he went back to the palace and was raised into adulthood by Pharaoh’s daughter, Moses never forgot where he came from. God is really going to use Moses’ time growing up in Egyptian royalty to his advantage, for example in the formal education he received in reading, writing, arithmetic, and the learning of languages, as well as being well fed and participating in sports, like horseback riding. But, we will not take the time to go into that now.

I want to return to the text and at least finish reading this next section of Exodus chapter 2. I am at verse 11. **“Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹² So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and [Moses] said to the offender, ‘Why are you striking your companion?’ ¹⁴ But he said, ‘Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and said, ‘Surely the matter has become known.’ ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.”**

Uh oh! Moses has committed murder. So, let me just say this here, if you know how much God will use Moses as we continue reading the narrative, and you have positioned God such that you do *not* think He can ever forgive *your* confessed sin – because you think you are too bad to be forgiven - just remember that God forgave Moses for murdering the Egyptian. My friend, confess your sins to the Lord, receive His forgiveness, and move on in your life to love and serve Him all the rest of the days of your life, knowing that you too have been forgiven.

OK, we need to stop, but I will comment on the section I just read in Exodus next time. And then we will keep reading, setting the stage for God's name. So please be sure and join us next time because God Is!

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