

# The Book of Exodus

## The Oppression in Egypt

Text: Exodus 1

- I. The Arrival of Israel (Exodus 1:1-6)
- A. The word “now” in verse 1 is actually “and” in Hebrew, indicating the connection between Genesis and Exodus.
  - B. Thus, the reader is reminded of those who came into Egypt with Jacob.
    - 1. Notice that their households were included – wives, children, servants, etc.
    - 2. However, only the direct descendants of Jacob were counted in verse 5.
    - 3. The number 70 is counted different ways in different passages (Gen. 46:26-27; Deut. 10:22; Acts 7:14 [75 souls]).
    - 4. It is meant to show how God formed a great nation from a small beginning.
  - C. The sons mentioned were the head of families and the tribes of Israel.
  - D. The 70 also would have been heads of families, leaders of Israel, known by all in the time of Moses.
  - E. Yet, that initial generation died – including Joseph – and trouble followed for Israel.
- II. The Growth of Israel (Exodus 1:7-12)
- A. While dwelling in Egypt, the descendants of Israel multiplied and grew greatly.
    - 1. When the children of Israel left Egypt, there were 600,000 men of fighting age and strength (Exodus 12:37).
    - 2. This number does not include women, children, the elderly, or the tribe of Levi (cf. Numbers 1 – esp. vs. 46-47 [603,550]).
    - 3. Likely, the number of Israelites at the time of the Exodus was around two million.
    - 4. This growth shows the fulfillment of God’s promise to multiply the descendants of Abraham.
    - 5. It also demonstrates that significant time had passed since the death of Joseph.
  - B. In time, a new king (probably representing a new dynasty) gained rule over Egypt.
  - C. This king did not know or understand what Joseph had done to save Egypt; thus, he had no care or desire to provide for the Israelites.
  - D. Instead, he feared their numbers and saw them as a threat to Egypt.
    - 1. It is interesting to note that he also feared losing Israel as a benefit to Egypt.
    - 2. Yet, by his actions, the king would bring about the removal of Israel.
  - E. The Pharaoh determined to enslave the Israelites and to force them to labor in making bricks and building cities.
- III. The Oppression of Israel (Exodus 1:13-22)
- A. As masters, the Egyptians were cruel, harsh and severe (cf. “rigor”).
    - 1. “Hard bondage” means, “Severe work” or “hard labor.”
    - 2. They also labored “in the field” – referring to agricultural work including fertilization and irrigation.
  - B. To diminish their numbers, Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill any male Hebrew children as they were born.
    - 1. The midwives refused to do this because they feared God.



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- a. It seems that these midwives were Hebrews and not Egyptians.
    - b. The names given in verse 15 are Semitic names, not Egyptian.
    - c. Thus, their fear of God shows their understanding that “we ought to obey God rather than men” (cf. Acts 5:29).
  2. When questioned by Pharaoh about their disobedience, they claimed that Hebrew women did not need the service of a midwife like the Egyptians did.
    - a. While there was some truth in this statement, it was not the whole truth, for verse 17 states that they saved the men children alive.
    - b. For their fear of God, the midwives were blessed with protection and the establishment of their households.
    - c. Does this mean that God approved of and blessed their deception?
    - d. Of course not!
    - e. They were wrong to lie, but they were right to defy the king’s orders.
    - f. God blessed them in spite of their sin, not because of it.
  3. Thus, the children of Israel continued to multiply and grow strong.
- C. When the midwives disobeyed his order, Pharaoh instructed all the people to kill the male Hebrew children by casting them into the Nile River.
1. Someone has written: “When tyrants cannot prevail by deceit, they burst into open rage.”
  2. It is sad to realize the depths to which human beings will sink in their mistreatment of one another.
    - a. This illustrates the difference between true faith in God and the false religions of man.
    - b. Those who feared God would not take innocent human life – even if their own lives were threatened.
    - c. Those who followed the false gods of men had no reservation when it came to killing the innocent.
  3. It is likely that the casting of the children into the Nile was a form of worship.
  4. The Egyptians worshipped both the Nile itself and the great crocodiles that inhabited its waters.
- D. It was during this time of great oppression and persecution that Moses was born.

