

THROUGH EYES OF FAITH
The Life of Moses: Deliverance through Faith.
Exodus 1:1-2:10
 Chadron Berean Church

Imagine sitting down one day to read the newspaper and finding in it your own obituary. That'd be shocking, wouldn't it? It would also be interesting to see what people had to say about your life. You get to read your own snapshot biography. Story has it that this happened to Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite. A journalist, mistaking him for his recently deceased brother, printed up a scathing obituary about his life. Dynamite is something that can be used for good or evil, but the editor labeled him as the "merchant of death" who got rich finding new ways to mutilate and kill. Apparently, the article led Nobel to rewrite his will, become a philanthropist, and start the Nobel Foundation.

I think that's a fitting thought to kick off our biographical sermon series on **the life of Moses**. As we study Moses' life, you might find yourself asking, "*How is my obituary going to read? My biography? What legacy am I leaving behind?*" Personally, I really enjoy biographical books and sermons, especially biblical biographies. By studying their life and their walk with God, we learn how to live and walk with God. You find yourself relating to them in incredible, personal ways as God takes you through similar situations in your life. You find yourself saying, "*Been there. Done that.*" or "*Wow, I'm there right now.*" Sometimes you are humbled. Sometimes you are encouraged, challenged, safeguarded, or comforted. Sometimes you just find yourself smiling at how relevant their story is for your life. But then again we shouldn't be surprised. God's Word is living and active (Heb. 4:12) and speaking of Moses and the Israelites, Paul said their example is for us to learn from. It was "*written for our instruction*" (1 Cor. 10:6, 11).

But who is Moses? What do you think of when you think of Moses? Be honest, some of you think of an ark and a global flood. You still get Moses and Noah confused. Some of you probably have images of Charlton Heston coming to mind: strong, deep voice, gray haired, flawless. Or maybe the cartoon character in the Prince of Egypt: a sleek, chariot-racing, quick-witted young man.¹ Both of these are very unrealistic. When we study what the Bible has to say about Moses, I think you'll find him incredibly relatable. He was a man who lived in the same world we do, who faced our kinds of struggles both inwardly and outwardly, *and he didn't always handle them correctly*. Yet, God used him in incredible ways to lead the nation of Israel.

Why study Moses? Honestly, he's been next on my biographical sermon list for four years. I'm interested in studying his life because outside of Jesus no one has left an impression as deep and as lasting as Moses.² One man said history turns like a hinge on his birth.³ Our lives and even the laws of our country have been shaped by God's influence through him. He's the writer of the first 5 books of the Bible (**Torah/Pentateuch**), writer of one of the **Psalms** (90), and mentioned more than 700 times in the Bible. As the nation of Israel's leader (humanly speaking), his life spans the pages of **Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**.

In **Deuteronomy 24:10-12** we see God's own estimation of Moses at the end of his life: “*And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.*” It’s almost inconceivable to think that God would use anybody today as He did Moses. His achievements are daunting to think about. Trying to do a short series on his life is also daunting! He was a godly leader. He was humble, a man of faith, prayer, loyalty, and courage. Even though his accomplishments for God are renown, Moses was not much different than you and I. He was not perfect. I’m excited to study his life together. Today we’ll start with his birth in Exodus chapters 1 & 2.

I. **ISRAEL MULTIPLIES IN EGYPT. (EX. 1:1-22)**

1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. 6 Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. 7 “, so that the land was filled with them.

So these first few verses function as a **bridge**, connecting Exodus to where Genesis left off. It’s a continuation of the story of Jacob’s family and a record of the formation of the nation of Israel. If we’re going to appreciate the exodus, Israel’s coming out of Egypt with Moses as leader, we should note how they ended up there. **Exodus** by the way means **exit, departure**, or going out.

Remember God promised a man named **Abraham** (first Hebrew) that he would make a great nation, a chosen nation, out of his **descendants**. He would make them like the **stars of heaven** or the **sand of the seashore** (Gen. 15). God promised him the land of **Canaan** that we know as the land of Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). But before they inherited the land, God told Abraham that his offspring would be **sojourning servants** in the land of **Egypt** first. There are two main reasons for this. **1) To prepare Israel.** Egypt was like God’s warm and prosperous incubator to hatch a nation that could eventually conquer the land of Canaan. He blessed and multiplied them there over 400 years as He said He would (Gen. 15:12-16). **2) To prepare the land.** God keeps tabs on nations and God would not go in and wipe out the Canaanites until their iniquity was “complete” – until they were ripe for judgment and God used Israel to carry that out.

But they ended up in Egypt through a chain of unorthodox, God-ordained events (Gen. 50:20). **Joseph**, Abraham’s great grandson, was hated by his brothers and they sold him as a slave. He ended up in Egypt but because God was with him, was promoted to Pharaoh’s right-hand man. Later, his family moved to Egypt because of a famine in Canaan. They settled in **Goshen**, the eastern part of the prosperous Nile delta (Gen. 47:27). There they increase rapidly, going **from 70 to around 2 million** by the time of the Exodus.⁴ Apparently, they took God’s first command to “be fruitful and multiply” seriously (within the marriage covenant of course)! But that became a problem for the Egyptians as we read on in verse 8:

8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 He said to his people, “Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 10 Come, let us deal wisely with

them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.” 11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 13 The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

So Jospeh dies and a **new king** has ascended the throne who didn’t know him. With no Jospeh to offer a kind word on behalf of the Hebrews, the attitude towards them is souring. Many commentators made the point that this probably took place right after Egypt had overthrown the **Hyksos rulers**, a Semitic people who basically overthrew the Egyptians in their own land. For a long time, Egypt didn’t have an army because the desert and waters were natural defenses. But the Egyptians were finally able to drive out the Hyksos and developed an army for the first time. So that’s one reason for the growing suspicion and hatred of the Hebrews. They might join their enemies and there’s a lot of them.

Besides that, the Israelites were also shepherds and **shepherds were loathsome** to the **sophisticated Egyptians** (Gen. 46:31, 33-34). Remember Egypt is the world’s superpower during this time. They were serious about education. They had universities, writing (hieroglyphs), art, music, mathematics, engineering (pyramids!), wisdom, history, medicine, dentistry, and even rudimentary brain surgery. **Acts 7:22** says, “*Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians.*” But they had a very debased system of worship, worshiping dark, Satanic powers. They were a superpower with a connection to dark powers. But with those elements in the background, you can see how the **suspicion and hostility** would grow rapidly against the foreign Hebrews with a monotheistic belief system.

So *exit* peace and prosperity, and *enter* the taskmaster and the whip. They are forced to do construction for the Egyptians and labor in their fields.⁵ We’ll see later that they are forced to make bricks, and bricks without straw from the Nile delta mud, something we have great **circumstantial evidence** for.⁶ I can’t help but mention two: archaeologists have found **mud-brick structures** made without straw in the eastern Nile delta of Avaris/Pi-Ramesses, and **hieroglyphs** (pictographic writings) depicting two Egyptian supervisors lashing a group of Semitic people making bricks, telling them to “*work without fainting.*”⁷ Pharaoh wanted the Israelites to work themselves to death under the hot Egyptian sun, killing them off and leaving them too exhausted for a life at home, discouraging child-bearing. But the Bible says the more they worked, the more they multiplied! So Pharaoh cranked up the dial.

15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; 16 and he said, “When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” 17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?” 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous

and give birth before the midwife can get to them.” 20 So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. 21 Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.”

So **midwives** were or are women who specialized in maternity care. They assisted mothers and babies at childbirth. I think we’re even seeing a resurgence of midwives today. But these two witty women are more likely to be the supervisory midwives in Egypt. According to Pharaoh’s orders, they were to kill all the **male Hebrew babies**. I’m guessing they were to watch closely as the baby came out and if it was a boy, they would probably cover that up and suffocate the child before it even had a chance to breathe and then just claim that the baby was stillborn. Or maybe they weren’t supposed to be secretive about it at all, I don’t know. I do know it is wretched to think about happening then or today with abortion.

Worth noting is that this is the first example of **anti-Semitism** in the Bible. It’s not just people hating other people. Satan knows that **through Israel** (the Jews, Hebrews) **the Messiah will come**. In Genesis 3, God promised a Savior through a woman’s seed (virgin birth) who would crush Satan’s head (Gen. 3:15). So, he’s obviously not a fan of Hebrew baby boys. Revelation 12 pulls back the curtain on what happened with Jesus’ birth. Herod’s killing all male Jews under 2 years of age in an attempt to kill Jesus, wasn’t just Herod. It was the serpent of old, the dragon in the garden who **through Herod** was seeking to kill the Messiah in infancy. How interesting to think that Pharaoh’s crown often has a serpent on its forehead. He takes on the role of the serpent by killing Hebrew boys.⁸ It’s a spiritual, cosmic battle.

But thank God for His people who are **pro-life** and **fear God** more than men! These midwives tell Pharaoh – maybe honestly – that these women are vigorous and babies are coming out before they could get there and say, “Push!” And hey, God is with them so it could be true. God could be speeding things up providentially. Sometimes you sit around and wait forever for those babies to move, and then when they decide to move it’s over before you know it. The doctor’s rushing in late to the room. But even if it’s not true, these women are **courageous** and doing what’s ultimately right. The Bible says to be subject to rulers and those in authority but not if it goes against God’s law. There’s a time to resist and obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

But isn’t it awesome though that Scripture records the names of the midwives, **Shiphrah** and **Puah**, but not the pharaoh?⁹ Having Pharaoh’s name would’ve been helpful for dating the Exodus, but it tells us God’s not impressed with the power and prestige. He’s impressed with **people of faith**. He blesses these midwives who refused to do what Pharaoh said.

II. THE BIRTH OF MOSES. (EX. 2:1-10)

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.

So from other Scriptures we know Moses’ parents are **Amram** (Ex. 6, Num. 3, 1 Chron. 6) and **Jochebed** (Ex. 6, Num. 26). Both are from the tribe of **Levi**. Levites would become the mediating priests and caretakers of the tabernacle so I think this is a little clue as to the function

that Moses will serve. He will be the main **mediator** between God and Israel. But notice his parents, too, are committed to the Lord and disobey Pharaoh. They see their child is **beautiful** (as any parent does) and they **hide him for 3 months**. **Hebrews 11:23** says they did this **by faith**. “*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.*” They make it into the hall of faith. But you know what happens after 3 months? The babies get their lungs! He’s getting a little too noisy and too active to continue hiding him so they made a plan:

3 But 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. 4 His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. 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.”

So while her husband is probably slaving away, Jochebed carries out the plan. She puts him in a **wicker basket** that will float. The word used here is the same word used for Noah’s **ark** in Genesis. And she places this little ark among the reeds for Pharaoh’s daughter to find. In parts of the Ancient Near Eastern world, it appears that this was the equivalent of setting a baby on another’s doorstep or giving up your child to the gods associated with that river. I think the earliest audience would have read this and thought this is **the commission of the child into the care of the God** and that this baby has **a divine vocation that lay ahead**.¹⁰ He will be a ruling deliverer. What happens here is really similar to what God does with the plagues. He takes something that is supposed to be under the control of pagan gods like the great rivers and makes it clear that He is the one in control and this baby will have a special role.

I must admit that while I always pictured him floating down the river, Jochebed is more careful than that. She placed him among those sturdy **reeds** where I think they knew a soft-hearted princess would visit soon and take pity on him. Moses’ sister, **Miriam**, probably 8-10 years old at the time, watches closely from a distance (**Aaron**, his brother, is 3 years older; Ex. 7:7). When Pharaoh’s daughter finds the baby and the baby starts crying, Miriam comes up all casual, you know, slightly disinterested, and offers to find a mom to feed it. And then Pharaoh’s daughter tells Jochebed she will **pay her to raise her son**.¹¹ So **Pharaoh is now paying to raise a Hebrew boy who will deliver them from his hands!** What a turn of events! This has *God’s* hand all over it. Not coincidence. **Providence**. One man said the heart of the king is like water in the hands of the Lord and He turns it wherever He wishes – and apparently the same with the

king's daughter's heart (Prov. 21:1). Remember, Pharaoh is just a pawn in God's hand as we'll see later (Rom. 9:17). God is stirring him up to get Israel out of there.

But eventually the boy grows old enough to be given back to Pharaoh's daughter who names him **Moses**. Little did she know that that Moses would be the one God used to "draw out" Israel from Egypt like he was "*drawn out of the water*." I can't imagine the agony of Jochebed who let him go too soon. She's heartbroken, but thankful he won't be forced into slavery and she will pray for him every single day, you can guarantee it. She is a woman of faith.

In summary, what are we to make of **Moses' birth and the circumstances surrounding it**? It's ugly. It's grim. The slavery. The genocide. Jochebed letting go of her son. Being raised by another family with a different god. No one naturally looks at this situation and thinks this is good. Yet think about this: this is the background of one of the most influential, godly men to ever live. This was what God's chosen man was born into and came out of. As hard as it is to acknowledge, Moses is right where God needs him to be. He is raising up a deliverer. From a human perspective, it's nothing but trouble. From God's perspective, His plan is moving forward to accomplish His purposes for His glory.¹² It gives us our key principle for today from Moses' life.

God's people operate through eyes of faith.

Like the midwives or Moses' parents, we have to operate not by feelings or sight, but **by faith**. In fact, we're going to see Exodus is a book about **deliverance through faith** and what God can accomplish through people of faith like Moses (Heb. 11:24-29). It's a book of faith, about faith, directed at a people of faith.¹³ We look at his mess in Exodus and think, "*Things are falling apart*." From God's perspective they're falling into place. In the words of Jethro in *The Prince of Egypt*, you have to learn to "*see things through heaven's eyes*." There is bigger picture developing, one that Moses won't even really understand until he's 80 years old.

So how about your biography? Maybe you look back on your childhood or your life or your current set of circumstances and you're tempted to think, "*I'm just an accident. Or God has forgotten about me*." But what if – just what if – 5, 10, 20, 40 years down the road, and on into eternity, you are going to look back on your life and say, "*God knew what He was doing the whole time. He really is a Romans 8:28 kind of God*." But for now, you have to walk by faith. One man wrote, "*Our moment in history and our unique, individual circumstances become the anvil upon which our character is beaten out and formed. We will either rise to the challenge of our times [as people of faith] or we will remain stuck on the sideline.*"

Everyone has a Genesis, but they need an Exodus from sin through faith in Christ.

But we have one more application to make this morning. If you're here this morning and don't have any hope and don't know where you are going to spend eternity, or don't have a walk with God and would like one, you need to know that the way to God is not through your own effort or by being good enough or trying harder. You need an Exodus that only God can accomplish. It's a

deliverance from sin through faith in what Jesus, the ultimate Deliverer, did for you on the cross with His death for your sins, His burial and resurrection (Deut. 18:5-19; Acts 7:17-43). He is the one who causes us to be born again spiritually by the Spirit of God, who draws us out of the slavery to sin, through faith in Him.

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), ix.

² James Montgomery Boice, *The Life of Moses: God's First Deliverer of Israel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018), 3.

³ Swindoll, 2.

⁴ Boice, 17. “In Exodus 38:26, about two years after the exodus, the number of men over twenty years of age is given as 603,550. When women and children are added to that number, it adds up to at least two million people.”

⁵ “In the 13th century B.C.E., during the reign of Ramesses the Great (also known as Ramesses II), the old Hyksos capital of Avaris in the northeastern Delta was rebuilt and expanded under the new name of Pi-Ramesses (House of Ramesses). This could well have been one of the Biblical cities (named Pithom and Ramesses) that, according to Exodus 1:11, were built by the Israelites when they were enslaved.” Lesko, Leonard, and Barbara Lesko. “Pharaoh’s Workers: How the Israelites Lived in Egypt,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25.1 (1999): 36–41, 43–45.

⁶ K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 246.

⁷ Kitchen writes, “In brick making, the most famous example [of hieroglyphs] comes from a scene in the tomb chapel of the vizier Herkimer of circa 1450. It shows mainly foreign slaves “making bricks for the workshop-storeplaces of the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes” and for a building ramp. Here, labeled “captures brought-off by His Majesty for work at the Temple of [Amum],” hence serving as forced labor, Semites and Nubians fetch and mix mud and water, strike out bricks from brick molds, leaving them to dry and measuring off their amount. As many have observed, it offers a vivid visual commentary on part of what one may read in Exod. 1:11-14 and 5:1-21.... Besides concern for amount and targets, straw for inclusion in mud bricks (5:7, 18) was a theme in contemporary Egyptian papyri.” Kitchen, *Reliability*, 246.

⁸ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Exodus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2014), 12.

⁹ Boice, 26.

¹⁰ David E. Graves, *The Archaeology of the Old Testament: 115 Discoveries that Support the Reliability of the Bible* (Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada: Electronic Christian Media, 2019), 99-100.

¹¹ “Through the archaeological digs in recent years, researchers have uncovered ancient religious ritual associated with the god of the Nile. It included a statement of trust that many Egyptians may have repeated. The statement read, ‘I have afflicted no man. I have not made any man weep. I have not withheld milk from the mouths of sucklings. Could the princess have taken this oath? It’s certainly possible.’” Swindoll, 25.

¹² Eugene H. Merrill, Mark. F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011), 211.

¹³ John Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), xx,