



How Did the Israelites Come to Be in Egypt?

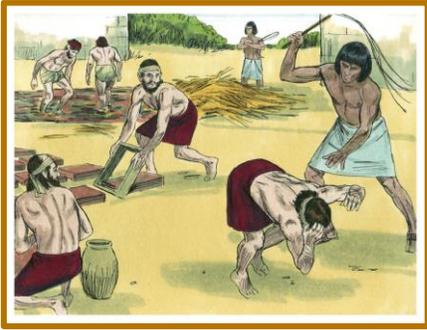
Many generations before Moses was born, there was an Israelite living in Egypt, named Joseph. Joseph was born in Israel. He was the grandson of Abraham and the favorite of the seven sons of his father, Jacob. Joseph's jealous brothers kidnapped him, sold him into slavery in Egypt and told their father that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Although originally a slave and even put into prison in Egypt, Joseph was gifted by God with the ability to interpret dreams. He was able to correctly interpret the dreams of the Pharaoh, or king of Egypt, that warned of a terrible famine that would come to Egypt. The Pharaoh made Joseph a governor and put him in charge of storing food so that the Egyptian people would not starve when the famine came. After seven years, the famine came, not only to Egypt but also to Israel. Joseph's family in Israel had nothing to eat or to feed to their cattle and sheep. They came to Egypt to buy grain. Eventually, Joseph was reunited with his father who was overjoyed that his favorite son was alive. Joseph invited his family to come to Egypt and live as guests.



- *There is a saying that God can bring good out of evil. How did God bring good out of the evil that happened to Joseph?*
- *Joseph's family were immigrants who left their home because there was no food. Today there are still many immigrants. Why do people leave their home countries today?*



Why were the Israelites Forced to be Slaves?



Many, many years went by and the new Pharaoh no longer remembered about Joseph. The Israelites were hard workers and they prospered in Egypt. They had many children and became so numerous and strong that the Egyptians began to feel threatened. They feared that if a war came to Egypt the Israelites might join their enemies. Or, they feared that the Israelites might leave

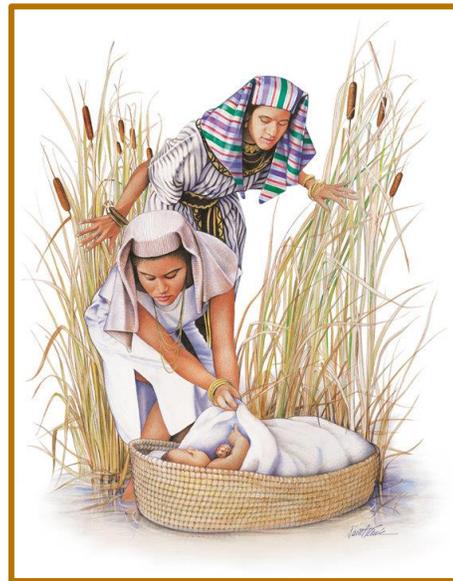
Egypt all together and then they would have no one to do all the work of building cities and working in the fields. So the Egyptians put slave drivers over the Israelites and forced them into hard labor. In spite of terrible conditions, the population of Israelites continued to grow and the Israelites spread all over the country of Egypt.

- *Why did the Egyptians feel threatened by the growing number of Hebrew immigrants?*
- *Do some people feel threatened by immigrants today? Why do you think they feel that way?*



Moses: A Baby Threatened & Saved

The Egyptian Pharaoh felt so threatened by the growing number of Israelites that he gave these orders to two midwives: ***“When you help the Hebrew women give birth, kill the baby if it is a boy, but if it is a girl, let it live.”*** The midwives believed in God and did not follow the Pharaoh’s order. When Pharaoh asked them why they weren’t killing the Hebrew baby boys they said: ***“The Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women: they give birth easily, and their babies are born before either of us gets there.”*** Finally, the Pharaoh commanded all of his people: ***“Take every newborn Hebrew boy and throw him into the Nile (River), but let all the girls live.”***



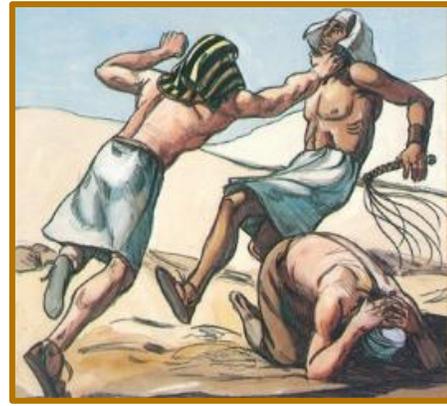
Moses was born at this time. His mother loved him so much that she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer, she made a basket of reeds and covered it with tar to make it waterproof. She placed it in the tall grass by the edge of the Nile River. The Pharaoh’s own daughter found the baby Moses. She heard him crying and felt sorry for him. Moses’ own sister, Miriam, was watching from a distance to see what would happen to her baby brother. She saw the Princess pick up Moses and went up to her and said: ***“Shall I go and call a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for you?”*** ***“Please do,”*** said the Princess. Miriam brought her own mother to help and the Princess paid her to take care of Moses. When the child Moses was old enough, the Princess adopted him as her own son.

- *There were a number of women who each did something to save the Baby Moses. Who were they and what how did their actions save baby Moses? What words would you use to describe these women?*



Moses: A Young Man Fights to Help his People

As the adopted son of the Princess, Moses lived an easy life in the palace. He never went hungry and never lacked for anything. Yet, Moses felt drawn to his own Hebrew people. When he was a young man he decided to visit the Hebrews. He went out of the palace and observed the hard life of his people. Slave drivers forced the Hebrews to work long hours in the hot sun. They lived in terrible conditions and were not even allowed to worship God on the Sabbath. As Moses was walking among his people he saw an Egyptian whipping a Hebrew. Moses was filled with righteous anger. He fought the Egyptian. Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.



Moses was afraid that Pharaoh would find out that he had killed an Egyptian. He knew Pharaoh would sentence him to death if he found out. So Moses fled Pharaoh and went to Midian, a country that bordered Egypt.

- *What is slavery? What do you know about slavery in our own country?*
- *In some places today, poor people are forced to work for very low or for no wages, producing some of the food that we eat or products that we use. What can we do about this?*

RESOURCE: *Free the Slaves* website is a resource:
<http://www.freetheslaves.net/about-us/>



Moses Meets God

In Midian Moses married a woman named Zipporah. Her father's name was Jethro and Moses went to work for him looking after a large flock of sheep. It was Moses' job to guide the sheep to pastures where they could find grass to eat and to places where they could find water to drink. One day, Moses led the flock of sheep through the wilderness to the foot of a mountain named Horeb. Looking up the side of the mountain, Moses saw a bush blazing with fire. It was a strange sight because, even though the bush was on fire, it wasn't being burned up. The bush was still green. Moses said: ***"I must go and look at this strange sight and see why the bush is not burned."***



When Moses went up to the bush to get a good look, he heard a voice calling out to him. It was the voice of God, calling ***"Moses, Moses!"***

Moses answered ***"Here I am."***

God said ***"Come no nearer. Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."***

Moses covered his face and was afraid to look at God.

- *We know that God is all-powerful, yet the bush was not burned up and Moses was not harmed when he approached the burning bush. What does that teach us about approaching God when we talk to him in prayer?*
- *God told Moses to 'come no nearer' and to take off his shoes because the ground was 'holy.' What does that teach us about approaching God when we talk to Him in prayer?*



Moses Learns God's Name

God spoke to Moses in the burning bush about the suffering of the people in Egypt: ***“I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow. . .”***

Then God told Moses that He wanted him to go back to Egypt: ***“I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt.”***

Moses was overwhelmed by this request from God. ***“Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”***

God reassured Moses, ***“I shall be with you.”***

Moses wondered if the Hebrew people would even follow him. He wondered what he would say to them: ***“I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” But if they ask me ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?”***

At this God told Moses his name, ***“I Am who I Am. This is what you must say to the sons of Israel: ‘I Am has sent me to you.’”***



- How do you think Moses felt when God asked him to return to Egypt?
- What thoughts went through your mind when you heard that God's name is "I Am?"
- What does the name, "I Am," tell you about God's nature?