*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 24 - 29

“Moses”

**Monday, July 24 Exodus 1:1-22**

*“They multiplied so quickly that they soon filled the land”*

 There is an element of Exodus 1 that reminds us of Genesis. The language of Exodus 1:7 is creation language, calling to mind Genesis 1:28 and 9:1 where we read that the Israelites became “fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous.” The Israelites’ increasing numbers in Egypt was a sign of God’s presence and blessing. They, like their forefathers, were fulfilling the creation mandate. But, Pharaoh is not at all happy with what he sees. The increasing number of Israelites is perceived as a threat.

 Enslavement is one of three solutions by which Pharaoh attempts to keep the Israelites’ numbers to a manageable mass: enough for forced labor, but not enough to encourage rebellion. However, Pharaoh is no match for creator God and the Israelites continue to increase in number. The second solution is to command the midwives to kill all Israelite male children at birth (since only male children posed any military threat). This too proves futile and results in blessing for the midwives. The final solution is the murder of all male infants by throwing them into the Nile.

*You bless those, Lord, who belong to you and follow your will. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 25 Exodus 2:1-10**

*“She became pregnant and gave birth to a son”*

 The horror of Pharaoh’s edict at the end of chapter 1, and the despair it brought the Israelites, is “interrupted” by the report that a child is born to a Levite household. Just what relevance this child’s birth has to the oppression of his countrymen is not indicated at this point. All we are told is that he is born, hidden, abandoned, found by Pharaoh’s daughter, and adopted, as it were, as her own son. This Levite has become an Egyptian, for what purpose remains to be seen.

 These ten verses gain tremendous significance against the backdrop of chapter 1. The menace and vile poison of Pharaoh’s attempt at genocide yields to the story of the birth of an innocent child. This story is also the story of one more frustration of Pharaoh’s plan. His previous two attempts have been neutralized (enslavement of the population and killing the male children at birth). Those reading the story now wonder how – or perhaps if – this last plan of Pharaoh will be thwarted as well. What will the sparing of one child, one very special child, lead to?

*When all seems dark, Lord, I know that you are at work to bring me light. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 26 Exodus 2:11-25**

*“God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them”*

 The biblical narrative moves quickly from the story of Moses’ birth to a series of pivotal events that bring him to his initial meeting with God on Mount Horeb in 3:1 (the name “Mount Sinai” is not used until 16:1). In the space of these few verses, Israel’s deliverer goes from privileged status in Pharaoh’s house, to fugitive, to virtual exile in a foreign land.

 In verses 23-25 we are returned to Egypt and reminded of the bigger picture. The pharaoh who had sought to kill Moses is dead, but the Israelites are still being oppressed by their slave drivers. Moses may have settled down, but the situation in Egypt is anything but settled. The Israelites groan and cry out. It is here that the God of Israel enters the story explicitly. Their cry goes up to him, and he hears it. In verse 11 Moses sees the oppression of the Hebrew slave at the hands of the Egyptian. In verse 25 the God of Moses sees the oppression of his people. With these concluding verses of chapter 2 the stage is set. Having heard their cry for help, how will God rescue his people?

*You hear my cry for help, Lord, and you will rescue me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 24 - 29

“Moses”

**Thursday, July 27 Exodus 3:1-12**

 *“I am sending you to Pharaoh”*

 The Israelites’ cry has reached high to heaven, and this is what God tells Moses: “So now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh.” God’s plan is revealed. The outcast is chosen to bring God’s special people out of Egypt. This announcement, however, seems somewhat at odds with verse 8, which clearly implies that God is the one who will be doing the delivering. Of course, no contradiction exists. Moses is the *means* by which God will work his own redemptive power. There is, in fact, a recurring ambiguity throughout Exodus concerning who is doing the delivering. God or Moses? Moses and God’s roles are sometimes difficult to distinguish.

 One might think that Moses would skip with joy all the way from Mount Horeb to Egypt with the good news. But in a fashion more like a pouting child than a warrior singled out by his commander for an honorable task, Moses begins to question God’s wisdom – not once, not twice, but no less than five times. Moses’ first question, “Who am I?” is an assertion that he cannot do this task alone. God responds, “I will be with you.”

*You are with me, Lord, to enable me to do your will. Amen.*

**Friday, July 28 Exodus 3:13-15**

*“I AM has sent me to you”*

 Moses is not only conscious of his own lack of qualifications; he is also concerned about how his lack of qualifications will be perceived by the very Israelites he is being sent to deliver. All the Israelites know of Moses, if they know anything of him at all, is that he was brought up as an Egyptian, committed murder, and is a wanted man. What credentials does he carry? If Moses’ first objection was, “I don’t think I can do this,” the second objection is, “No one else will think I can do it, either.”

 Moses anticipates a question he expects to hear from the Israelites: “What is the name of this ‘God’ who you claim sent you to us?” God’s first response, “I AM WHO I AM,” can be understood as a near refusal to dignify Moses’ question with an answer: “I AM WHO I AM; they know very well who I am. What a question!” Then comes the announcement of the name Moses is to give to the Israelites: “I AM.” What follows is further elaboration on God’s identity as God declares himself to be the God of the patriarchs.

*You reveal yourself to me, Lord, so I know who I serve. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 29 Exodus 3:16-22**

*“Go, assemble the elders of Israel”*

 Moses is to bring his message to the elders of Israel, and must tell them that God will bring them up out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. After the elders listen to Moses they are *all* to go to Pharaoh and demand release. God continues his speech to Moses by declaring that Pharaoh will not listen to their request, even if it is couched in as nonthreatening a manner as possible. Only a “mighty hand” will compel him. This phrase foreshadows the entire plague sequence and subsequent deliverance through the Red Sea, where God displays his power with a “mighty hand and an outstretched arm.”

 Not only will Pharaoh send them away but, as they go, the Israelite women are to ask for silver, gold, and clothing for their children. Why does God tell them to do this? Perhaps this is payment to the Israelites from their Egyptian captors for years of slavery. It will also provide for the construction of the tabernacle – the holy place where they go to meet with God – that will be built during their wilderness journey to the Promised Land.

*You are mighty to save from the powers of this world, Lord, and I praise your name. Amen.*