*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 1 - 6

*Exodus Chapters One and Two*

**Monday, June 1 Exodus 1:1-7**

*“They multiplied greatly”*

It is helpful to think of Exodus more as the second chapter of a five-chapter book (Genesis through Deuteronomy) than a stand-alone book. Exodus describes one stage of Israel’s story that began with creation in Genesis 1 and ends with the Israelites poised to enter the Promised Land at the end of Deuteronomy. In Exodus 1, a number of elements draw the reader back to Genesis, thus driving us to read Exodus in light of what has come before.

The first six words of 1:1 are (in the Hebrew) an exact repetition of Genesis 46:8 where the names of Jacob’s sons are given as they prepare to move their families from Canaan to Egypt. Now, some 400 years later, the names are repeated, showing a continuation of the past; this is one part of a larger story. Another connection with Genesis is found in 1:7 which employs creation language: the Israelites became “fruitful and multiplied.” The Israelites’ increasing numbers in Egypt was a sign of God’s presence and blessing. They, like their forefathers, were fulfilling the creation mandate.

*Thank you for your Word, Lord, that teaches us about your people. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 2 Exodus 1:8-14**

*“They have become much too numerous”*

The new pharaoh who came to power was either wholly ignorant of his own nation’s history, or (more likely) he simply chose to act in ignorance of Joseph’s wise counsel and how the Egyptians had benefited from it (Genesis 41). He is troubled by the increasing number of Israelites, thereby opposed to their fulfillment of the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply. In this respect, Pharaoh represents not only a force hostile to God’s people by enslaving them, but a force hostile to God himself, who wills that his people increase in number.

We see, then, already at this early stage of the book, what will become much more pronounced later on: the real antagonists in the book of Exodus. This is not a battle of Israel versus Pharaoh, or even of Moses versus Pharaoh, but of *God* versus Pharaoh. Enslavement is one of three solutions by which Pharaoh attempts to keep the number of Israelites to a manageable mass: enough for forced labor, but not enough to encourage rebellion. This proves futile as oppression merely results in further increase, showing that Pharaoh is no match for God.

*You are amazing, Lord, fulfilling your purposes regardless of opposition. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 3 Exodus 1:15-22**

*“If the baby is a boy, kill him”*

Pharaoh’s second solution was to command the midwives to kill all Israelite male children at birth (since only males posed any military threat). This, too, proves futile and even results in blessing for the midwives. Ironically, they are blessed by the very thing Pharaoh enlisted their help to prevent: population increase. The final solution is the murder of all male infants by throwing them into the Nile. Thus, what for the Egyptians is a life-giving force becomes for the Israelites an instrument of death. The significance of this murderous act, both for Egypt’s future destruction and Israel’s deliverance, will be clearly seen when God brings the struggle to a close.

It is important to note the apparent “absence” of God in this chapter, an absence that extends into chapter two. What is made plain beginning at 2:23-25 is that God *is* with his people even though it does not appear to be so. Regardless of the turn of political events – whether a benevolent Pharaoh in Joseph’s day or a cruel Pharaoh in the present day – it is God who directs their paths, bringing blessings in times of peace and deliverance in times of trouble.

*In our struggle against evil in this world, Lord, you are with us. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 1 - 6

*Exodus Chapters One and Two*

**Thursday, June 4 Exodus 2:1-10**

*“She gave birth to a son”*

The despair and apparent hopelessness of chapter 1, in which Pharaoh uses enslavement and male infanticide to control the Hebrew population, is “interrupted” by the report that a son is born to a Levite (one of the twelve tribes of Israel) 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 her son. This Levite child has become an Egyptian.

Ironically, the child, once doomed to death by Pharaoh’s decree, will become the very instrument of Pharaoh’s destruction and the means through which all Israel escapes not merely Pharaoh’s decrees, but Egypt itself. The child once abandoned in the reeds (*suph*) along the shore of the Nile will later lead his people in triumph through the Reed Sea (*yam suph*). Moses’ salvation as an infant will be replayed later with respect to Israel at the very infancy of her existence as a nation.

*You, O Lord, are mighty to save. Amen.*

**Friday, June 5 Exodus 2:11-15a**

*“Moses fled from Pharaoh”*

The biblical story moves quickly from Moses’ birth and privileged status in Pharaoh’s house to fugitive from Pharaoh’s anger. Moses has grown to be a man. The text does not give us Moses’ age, although Stephen speaks of Moses as being forty years old at the time (Acts 7:23). One day Moses goes out to be with his people where he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave, an act that evokes a strong action on Moses’ part. Having killed the Egyptian he hides the body, hoping to cover up his crime.

However, when on the following day he intervenes in a fight between two Hebrews, it becomes clear that his previous day’s deed is known. Pharaoh hears of it and seeks to kill Moses, which prompts him to flee to Midian. We are not told why Pharaoh responds in this way. Would he really want to kill his son for taking the life of someone so relatively insignificant? Perhaps his strong reaction may be evidence that he is well aware of Moses’ Hebrew birth, and that Moses’ act of murder shows Pharaoh that his true allegiance is with Israel rather than Egypt.

*Like Moses identifying with his people, Lord, in Christ you identify with us. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 6 Exodus 2:15b-25**

*“God heard their groaning”*

Moses arrives in Midian and sits down by a well. His action there anticipates his character as future redeemer and leader of his people. Some shepherds come and drive away the flock that Reuel’s daughters are trying to water. Moses’ role as shepherd of God’s people is foreshadowed by his response. Just as he will rescue the Israelites from Egypt, guiding and protecting them in the wilderness, so he “rescues” the daughters and cares for the sheep. He is accepted into Reuel’s household, marries one of his daughters, and has children. Every indication is that he has found a new home and has every intention of settling down.

In verses 23-25 we return for a moment to Egypt to remind us of the big scene (“meanwhile, back at the ranch,” so to speak). The pharaoh who has 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. The behind-the-scenes God of chapters 1-2 is not absent.

*You hear our cries for help, Lord, and you come to our rescue. Amen.*