

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 6
Exodus 1-11

Key Concepts: The key concept is that God hears the cries of and works for the liberation of the oppressed, which in this case are the children of Abraham to whom God is bound by the covenant.

Stories: The stories in this section begin with Pharaoh making all of the Hebrews into slaves and are followed by Pharaoh trying to make the midwives kill all of the male babies, the midwives refusing, Moses being born, hidden, placed in a basket in the Nile, being found by Pharaoh's daughter, nursed by his own mother, growing up with privilege, and then killing an Egyptian. The stories continue with his flight into the wilderness where he meets the priest Jethro's daughter, who is a Hebrew, marries her, becomes a shepherd, sees the burning bush, encounters God, receives and resists his call to free God's people, finally goes with Aaron, confronts Pharaoh, announces God's plagues and then in the end is told of the coming of the worst of the plagues, the death of the first-born.

Brief Summary of Stories: What is fascinating about these stories is that when they are told in a more secular setting (the movies: The Ten Commandments or The Prince of Egypt) the focus is on Moses. While this makes for great on-screen hero worship, the reality of these stories is that they are about God. Let's take a look and see why. It is God who hears the cries of God's people. It is God who encourages and blesses the mid-wives. It is God, one assumes, who causes the princess to find Moses and have pity on him. It is God, again assumed, who directs Moses steps to meet the right people in the wilderness. It is God who confronts Moses. It is God who gives Moses all that Moses needs to liberate the people. It is God who tells Moses what to do. It is God who hardens Pharaoh's heart. It is God who brings the plagues. It is God who tells Moses what is ahead. God is the mover and shaker in these stories.

There are several fascinating concepts in these stories. The first is the role of women. The mid-wives are the only Hebrews who stand up to Pharaoh. They have been commanded to kill all of the male babies but they fear God and so refuse to do so. They come up with elaborate explanations as to the reason they cannot do so. The daughter of Pharaoh also refuses to comply with her father's decision to kill all of the male Hebrew babies. She has pity and saves Moses even though it is against the law. There is an irony in her act in that it will be this same Moses who will bring word of the death of the first born...which will affect every Egyptian family. Though the princess is not named, the two midwives are, which is unusual in such an ancient story.

Second, we have a long conversation between Moses and God in which Moses resists doing what he was born to do...liberate God's people. The story makes it clear that Moses was a liberator at heart. Not only did he kill an Egyptian who was oppressing God's people, he also liberates the daughters of the priest of Midian from oppressive shepherds. This would make sense considering that he himself had been liberated from the waters of the Nile.

Finally this story can be seen as a contest between God and Pharaoh, who considered himself to be a god. As you read the stories note the sense of Pharaoh constantly challenging the power of Moses' God. The question in the story is, will the God of Moses be powerful enough to keep the promise and the covenant alive? As we leave our story the answer still has not been answered.

1. How do you respond to my contention that this story is about God more than about Moses?
2. Where have you seen women act as liberators similar to those in our story?
3. How would you feel saying no to God?
4. How do you understand the issue of God hardening Pharaoh's heart?