

Exodus Chapter 1

Verses 1-7: The book begins with the very words of Genesis 46:8, which is in the context of God's promise to Israel (Jacob): "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee ... and I will also surely bring thee up" (Gen. 46:3-4). These verses relate information contained (in Genesis 35:22-26; 46:27; and 50:26). All of the tribes are represented as going down into Egypt.

The opening verses of Exodus provide context for Moses' life: the "children of Israel" were in "Egypt" because the family of "Jacob" had been led there by the providence of God (Genesis Chapters 37-50).

From 1:1 – 12:36 these scriptures recount Israel's final years in Egypt before the Exodus.

Exodus 1:1 "Now these [are] the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob."

"Egypt" was overrun by the Hyksos during the Second Intermediate Period (1786-1550 B.C.). Thus, there arose a "new king over Egypt" who not only "knew not Joseph" but viewed the Israelites as "more and mightier than we." By 1550 B.C. the Hyksos were expelled by Ahmose, who ushered in the Eighteenth Dynasty (during which names ending with "mose" became popular), and the New Kingdom Period (1550-1070 B.C.). During the early phase of the New Kingdom Period, Egypt reached its greatest heights of military and political power under Thutmose III while Moses was in exile in Midian. When Moses finally returned to Egypt, Amen-hotep II was on the throne and became the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

One man's (Jacob), family came into Egypt and grew into the nation of Israel. Joseph and his family were already in Egypt, and his father and eleven brothers and their families fled the famine and came to Egypt where there was food. Because they were of Joseph's family, the then currently reigning Pharaoh treated them royally.

Joseph had led Egypt into a food storage program which not only saved Egypt, but saved his family as well. The Pharaoh had welcomed Joseph's family and gave them land to dwell on. The wealth that Joseph had brought to Egypt was soon forgotten; and when the Pharaoh died, the new Pharaoh became afraid of the Israelites and made slaves of them in Goshen to keep them from overthrowing the Egyptian government.

Exodus 1:2 "Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,"

These are the first sons of Jacob by Leah.

We see Reuben mentioned first, because he was the oldest son. Reuben displeased his father greatly when he practiced incest with his father's concubine, Bilhah. This is a terrible sin, and Reuben was disinherited for this sin (Genesis 35:22).

Exodus 1:3 "Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,"

The sons of the legitimate wives are placed first, then those of the concubines. Leah has precedence over Rachel; Bilhah over Zilpah. The children of each wife and concubine are given in order of seniority. The omission of Joseph from the list is explained in the last part of Exodus 1:5.

"And Benjamin", who, though youngest of all, is placed before Dan, Naphtali, etc., because they were the children of the hand-maidens.

Exodus 1:4 "Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher."

Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher, are last mentioned, being sons of the concubine wives.

Exodus 1:5 "And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt [already]."

The number "Seventy" agrees with (Genesis 46:27 and Deut. 10:22; but the Septuagint and Acts 7:14 have 75). The Dead Sea materials also agree with the Septuagint. The number 66 (in Genesis 46:26), do not include Joseph and his two sons, and Moses likely added these later, making 70.

Acts 7:14 reports 75 with the addition of 5 relatives of Joseph included in the LXX, but not the Hebrew text.

This is just speaking of the families of Jacob and his sons and their families in Egypt. We remember from the lessons in Genesis that Joseph realized that his being sold into Egypt was part of God's plan for the provision of the covenant people.

Joseph's name is excluded because he was already in Egypt. You remember from Genesis that his brothers had sold him as a slave. The servant girls' children were listed last. In fact, Leah's children were even named before Rachel's child, because Leah was Jacob's first wife.

Verses 6-8: This summary of a lengthy period of time moves the record from the death of Joseph (1804 B.C.). The last recorded event in Genesis, to the radical change in Israel's history, i.e., from favor before Egypt's pharaoh to disfavor and enslavement (1525-1445 B.C.).

Exodus 1:6 "And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation."

Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation'; but Jesus lives, and therefore His people 'grow and multiply,' and His servants' work is blessed. And at the end they shall be knit together in the common joy of the great harvest, and of the day when the headstone is brought forth with shoutings of "Grace"! Grace unto it.

They were to be 430 years in Egypt, and all of the 12 brothers had died and now a new generation was carrying on in the place of their fathers.

Exodus 1:7 "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them."

This verse sounds like (Genesis 1:28; 9:1; 12:2; 17:2, 6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:14 and 48:4). This was visible evidence of God's blessing and the fulfilling of His promises.

About 603,550 men of fighting age left Egypt (Num. 1:46). Factoring in older men, women, children and the infirm, the total number of Hebrew people was probably about 2.5 million people by this time. The children of Israel had truly "multiplied" in the 370 years or so since Jacob and his family of 70 had arrived in the land.

The seed of Abraham was no longer an extended family, but a nation. The promise that his descendants would be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 35:11-12), had indeed been fulfilled in Egypt.

God's blessings were not just material in nature. Children are blessings from God. The Hebrews believed that many children meant that God has blessed you abundantly. They believed it was a curse not to have children. They were no threat to the Egyptians when there were just 70 people, but now that they were near 2-1/2 million, it is a totally different story.

Verses 8-11: Nearly 400 years of history are summarized in these verses which represented a line of pharaohs not just one. The "new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph was likely one of the pharaohs during the Hyksos takeover. Even after Egypt's native rulers returned to power, the Hebrew people were no longer honored in memory of Joseph.

Exodus 1:8 "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph."

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt" has been interpreted various ways. Some take the new king to be a native Egyptian, possibly one of the New Kingdom Pharaohs such as Ahmose (1570-1545 B.C.), who founded the Eighteenth Dynasty and expelled the Hyksos from Egypt. However, the Hebrew verb "*qum*" followed by the preposition "*al*" often has the meaning "to rise against," (as in Deut. 19:11; 28:7; Judges 9:18; 20:5; Sam. 18:31; 2 Kings 16:7), and it really never conveys the idea of assuming the throne in a peaceful manner.

This probably was a Hyksos king, since the Hyksos came forcefully into Egypt between 1720 and 1700 B.C., and were expelled about 1570 B.C. This would better fit the time in which Jacob came down to Egypt, 430 years before the Exodus (Exodus 12:40), thus entering Egypt about 1877 B.C. (compare Gen. 15:13 and its four hundred years). Joseph would have served during the reigns of Sesostris II (1897-1878 B.C.), and Sesostris III (1878-1842 B.C.), and died about 1805 B.C.

The Hyksos may well have had reason to hate the descendants of Jacob because of the episode at Shechem (Gen. 34), and Jacob's later conflicting with the Amorites (Gen. 48:22). The Amorites were one of the main elements of the Hyksos people.

The statement that they "Knew not Joseph" indicates their contempt for Joseph's previously privileged status next to Pharaoh and the divine blessings that accrued to the people of Israel as a result of this. Note a similar action on the part of a native Egyptian (in 5:2), directed toward Yahweh and submitting to Him.

As we said, as long as Joseph was alive, the Pharaoh remembered what he (Joseph), had done for Egypt. With the new leader, there was no memory of this. He had not known Joseph, and he had not lived during the famine. And he felt no obligation to this mass of foreigners living in his land.

Verses 9-12: This is another summary of a lengthy period of time, as indicated by the population continuing to grow in spite of increasing hardship imposed on Israel.

Exodus 1:9 "And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel [are] more and mightier than we:"

"His people": An Egyptian pharaoh designated Israel as a nation, marking the first time the term "people" or "nation" is used of them.

It is very unlikely that a native Egyptian king could have said, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we". The Hyksos may well have had reason to hate the descendants of Jacob because of the episode at Shechem (Gen. 34), and Jacob's later conflicting with the Amorites (Gen. 48:22). The Amorites were one of the main elements of the Hyksos people.

Verses 10-11: "Join ... unto our enemies ... set over them taskmasters": Israel was assessed both as a threat to national security and as an economic asset, slavery would therefore control the danger and maximize their usefulness.

Exodus 1:10 "Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and [so] get them up out of the land."

Here we see fear gripping this new ruler. These Israelites were growing in such numbers that he actually feared that they would overthrow the Egyptian government. He believed that they might even join in with Egypt's enemies and turn against Egypt; after all, they were foreigners. He wanted to be sure this will not happen. We will see in the next few verses that this monarch

believed if he could work them enough, they would stop multiplying and would be too worn out to mount up against the government.

Verses 11-22: Three unsuccessful methods were used to limit the exploding population growth of the Hebrews: (1) working the Hebrews to exhaustion and even to death; (2) commanding the “Hebrew midwives” to commit infanticide; (3) selective annihilation, with baby boys being cast into the River Nile while baby girls were spared.

Exodus 1:11 "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses."

“Treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses”: These were places where both provisions and military hardware were stored. Archeological identification has not been finally definitive, with some 3 to 5 options being put forward for them. Pithom is usually taken as a center of solar worship in northern Egypt, and Raamses as Qantir in the eastern delta region. In addition, the city might very well have been renamed under the reign of the later, powerful Pharaoh, and that name was better known to Israel later (compare the case of Laish or Leshem, renamed Dan in Genesis 14:14; Joshua 19:47 and Judges 18:29).

This meant that they were forced to labor for the government by cruel overseers. These treasure cities were encampments of war materials handy to be used to squelch any and all attacks that came against Egypt. The word "Pithom" means abode of the sun. Some believe that the miracles of Moses took place in this same Raamses. This forced labor, as we said, was to keep them worn out so they could not fight against Egypt. This ruler in Egypt was also using this free labor to build mighty monuments.

We will see as we go on in this book of Exodus, how we Christians were in bondage to the world of sin before our Deliverer comes and sets us free. This cruel ruler here afflicting these people (physical Israel), shows us of our great affliction by Satan until we receive the free gift of salvation through our Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exodus Chapter 1 Questions

1. How many of Jacob's family went in to Egypt?
2. Approximately how many will come out with Moses?
3. Who were the covenant people?
4. What 3 men were the promises to come through?
5. How many sons did Jacob have?

6. Who would they become?
7. What time (events) did Exodus cover?
8. Who is the Lamb?
9. What 2 types of law were introduced in Exodus?
10. The 10 plagues deal with what?
11. God's presence was shown by what 2 things in these travels?
12. Why was Reuben mentioned first in the list of sons?
13. Why was Joseph omitted from this list of sons?
14. Name the 12 sons of Jacob.
15. In what sin was Reuben involved?
16. How many souls came from the loins of Jacob in verse 5?
17. What had Joseph finally discovered was the real reason he was sold into captivity?
18. At what time did the Egyptians turn against Joseph's family?
19. Why did the ruler decide to make the Israelites slaves?
20. What does the word "taskmaster" indicate?
21. "Pithom" means what?
22. What is the message you received in this first lesson?