

"The Child Moses"

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Good many of our talks lately have taken us down into Egypt where Joseph was first a captive and afterwards ruler. You remember that all the family of Jacob, the children of Israel, came into Egypt during the famine, and Pharaoh gave them land for themselves and their families. "And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." [Exod. 1:6-8]

This new Pharaoh was afraid when he saw the children of Israel so many and so strong. All thought that they were "more and mightier" than the Egyptians themselves, and in time of war they might join themselves to their enemies, and fight against Egypt.

So he "set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens," [verse 11] and gave them very hard, heavy work to do, thinking that this would kill some of them, and weaken the others, and they would not increase so fast, nor be so strong. In this however, he was disappointed, for hard work does not hurt anyone, but makes people strong and healthy. The Egyptians found this out when they tried to kill the Israelites with hard labour; for "the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew." [verse 12]

Then Pharaoh thought of a very wicked and cruel plan; he charged all his people that they should kill every little baby boy that God gave to the Israelites, but they might save the little girls alive.

Hundreds of years before this God had told Abraham that his descendants should go into Egypt, and be brought into bondage there; but He said also that after four hundred years He would bring them up again into the land of Canaan. Now the time for them to be delivered was drawing near, and Satan wanted to hinder God's purpose, and to prevent Him raising up a deliverer for them. So he was working through Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to have all the baby boys killed.

But when Moses, the one whom God had chosen, was born, his mother hid him carefully where the Egyptians could not find him, and was able to keep him in this way for three months. But as the baby grew and became strong, and his cries got louder, she knew she could not keep him hidden much longer. We are told that it was "by faith" that Moses' parents hid him, and "were not afraid of the king's commandment." [Heb. 11:23] They trusted that God would keep and save the child, and He did.

When Moses' mother could not hide him any longer, she took a little watertight ark made of bulrushes, and putting the child inside, she laid it in the flags at the edge of the river. Moses' little sister Miriam waited by the river, and watched to see what would become of the baby.

In a little while she saw Pharaoh's daughter coming to bathe in the river, and her maidens were walking along by the river's edge. Soon she saw the little ark, and as it was covered, she could not see what was inside, so she sent her maid to fetch it. When she opened it,

she was surprised to see a sweet little baby boy. Most likely the child had been asleep, and waking up hungry to see only a strange face bending over him, "the babe wept."

God touched the heart of the king's daughter with pity for the beautiful child. She knew that he was an Israelite, and that his mother had taken this way to try to save his life, and she determined that he should not be thrown into the river to perish, like the rest of the babies.

But what was she to do with the little one? Just then Miriam, who had been watching all the time, and could see that she had pity for her little brother, came to her and said, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" She was told to go, and of course ran home quickly and fetched "the child's mother."

[Exod. 2:7, 8]

Pharaoh's daughter said to Moses' mother, "Take the child, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." [verse 9] But she did not seem to know that she was hiring a mother, and paying her wages, to feed and take care of her own little one.

Here again, just as in the history of Joseph's life, we see how wonderfully God works to carry out His own purposes. He had chosen Moses, that through him He might deliver the children of Israel from their Egyptian bondage. Then came the decree of Pharaoh that all the baby boys should be killed, and it seemed that Moses must perish with the rest.

But instead of this God used this very decree to bring Moses to the notice of Pharaoh's daughter, for if it had not been for this, his mother would not have put him by the river. Through the king's daughter, God provided the means for Moses to be properly nourished and clothed and educated.

During the years that Moses' mother had him with her, she taught him very carefully of the God of his fathers, the only true God, so that he should not afterwards become a worshipper of the idols, the false gods, that the Egyptians served. He knew how God had watched over and saved him, and he understood that by his hand God would deliver the children of Israel from the Egyptians.

When Moses was old enough to leave his mother, he was taken into the king's palace and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter, who looked upon him as her own son. But he did not forget that he belonged to the people of God, and that God had a work for him to do for them. He became "mighty in word and deed," and "learned, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." [Acts 7:22]

But this was not the training that fitted him for his life work. He had other lessons to learn that he could not learn in Pharaoh's palace, and so God led him away from there into a place where He could teach him. How He did this, and what the result was we shall see at another time.