

EXODUS

Chapter 1

Israel Increases Greatly in Egypt

1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: **2** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, **3** Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, **4** Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. **5** All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. **6** Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. **7** But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

1:1–5 *These are the names.* Hbr links Ex to Gn; first six Hbr words of Ex are identical to those in Gn 46:8. Cf Gn 49:2–27. Ex begins with remembering. (TLSB)

1:1 *These are the names of.* The same expression appears in Ge 46:8 at the head of a list of Jacob’s descendants. (CSB)

Israel ... Jacob. Jacob had earlier been given the additional name Israel. (CSB)

1:2–4 The sons of Leah (Reuben through Zebulun) and Rachel (Benjamin; Joseph is not mentioned because the list includes only those “who entered Egypt with Jacob,” v. 1) are listed in the order of their seniority and before the sons of Rachel’s and Leah’s maidservants: Bilhah had Dan and Naphtali, Zilpah had Gad and Asher (see Ge 35:23–26). (CSB)

1:5 *seventy.* Same number as in Gn 46:27; descendants of one man and his 12 sons. (TLSB)

1:6–7 From the death of Joseph to the rise of a new king (v. 8) was more than 200 years. (CSB)

1:6 Gn ends with the report of Joseph’s death. The repeated obituary portends trouble for Israel. (TLSB)

1:7 See Ac 7:17. God’s promised blessing of fruitfulness and increase had been given to Adam (Ge 1:28), Noah (Ge 8:17; 9:1, 7), Abraham (Ge 17:2, 6; 22:17), Isaac (Ge 26:4) and Jacob (Ge 28:14; 35:11; 48:4). God continued to fulfill his promise during the 430-year sojourn in Egypt. (CSB)

people of Israel. Israel in v 1 refers to a person. In Egypt, Israel became a nation. (TLSB)

the land was filled with them. The Hebrew used here echoes the blessing of Adam (Ge 1:28)—God’s initial blessing of mankind was being fulfilled in Israel. The Israelites who left Egypt are said to number about 600,000 men, “besides women and children” (12:37). (CSB)

Underscores the prolific fertility of Israel. What God promised Abraham (Gn 15:5; 17:6), and seemed impossible to him, came to pass. (TLSB)

1:1–7 Israel emerges as a people. God’s blessing and the fulfillment of God’s promise gives growth and preserves His people in a foreign land. Consider how God provides for, supports, protects, and preserves His Church day by day. “For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him” (SC, First Article, p xxxvi). God blesses us as He blessed Israel, yet He has also revealed to us His greatest blessings in His only-begotten Son. • O Lord, the multitude of Your blessings leads us to multiply thanks and praise to Your name. Fill Your Church with sons and daughters faithful to You. Amen. (TLSB)

Pharaoh Oppresses Israel

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. **9** And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. **10** Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” **11** Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. **12** But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. **13** So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves **14** and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. **15** Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, **16** “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” **17** But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. **18** So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and let the male children live?” **19** The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” **20** So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. **21** And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. **22** Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

1:8 Now. C 300 years since Joseph’s death. (TLSB)

new king. Probably Ahmose, the founder of the 18th dynasty, who expelled the Hyksos (foreign—predominantly Semitic—rulers of Egypt). (CSB)

Circumstances changed for Israel with the advent of this king, whose name was unimportant to record. However, see chronology, pp xcv–xcvi. The Egyptian pharaoh was regarded as a divine son of the gods. The upcoming struggle is between the gods of Egypt, represented by Pharaoh, and the true God.

1:10 The king’s actions proved him a fool; attempting to prevent their “exodus,” he provoked this very result. Some rabbinic traditions attributed this shrewd counsel to Jannes and Jambres. Cf 2Tm 3:8. (TLSB)

1:11 *taskmasters.* The same official Egyptian designation appears on a wall painting in the Theban tomb of Rekhmire during the reign of the 18th-dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III. (CSB)

Supervisors who imposed a harsh workload. For the Old Kingdom of Egypt (third millennium BC), there is no evidence of foreign laborers enslaved for building projects. However, the New Kingdom of Egypt is known for such labor (from c 1870 BC). The tomb of the vizier Rekhmire shows slaves making mud bricks and Egyptians watching over them (Kitchen, p 247). (TLSB)

store cities. For grain storage. (TLSB)

Pithom and Raamses. Cities in the Nile Delta named in Egyptian historical records. Exact location unknown. (TLSB)

Pharaoh. The word, which is Egyptian in origin and means “great house,” is a royal title rather than a personal name. (CSB)

1:12 *the more they multiplied.* What the king feared (v 10), happened.(TLSB)

dread. Anxious fear of slaves not previously experienced fell on the Egyptians. (TLSB)

1:13–14 *work as slaves ... work in the field*. Hbr word for “service” or “work” appears five times, emphasizing the burden placed on God’s people. Agricultural work was added to building projects. (TLSB)

1:14 *made their lives bitter*. A fact commemorated in the Passover meal, which was eaten “with bitter herbs” (12:8). (CSB)

all kinds of work in the fields. Including pumping the waters of the Nile into the fields to irrigate them (see Dt 11:10). (CSB)

1:15 *Hebrew midwives ... Shiphrah and ... Puah*. Two representative Hebrew midwives are named, whereas the Egyptian pharaoh is unnamed. God exalts “those of humble estate” and brings down “the mighty” (Lk 1:52). These women served both Egyptians and Hebrews, though they would have had other midwives serving with them to care for such large populations. (TLSB)

Shiphrah and Puah. Semitic, not Egyptian, names. Since the Israelites were so numerous, there were probably other midwives under Shiphrah and Puah. (CSB)

1:16 *birthstool*. The Hebrew term means lit. “two stones”; a woman sat on them while giving birth. (CSB)

Rare Hbr word (lit, “two stones”) suggests items like modern medical stirrups used in childbirth. (TLSB)

son ... kill him. Ancient empires could choose to kill, enslave/control, or assimilate foreign populations. Pharaoh’s plan has elements of each approach. Eliminating daughters would be a surer form of population control. However, girls were better able to cross cultural boundaries through concubinage or marriage and therefore could be adapted to Egyptian life. (TLSB)

1:17 *feared God*. Two obscure women frustrate a powerful ruler because they “obey God rather than men” (Ac 5:29). (TLSB)

1:19 *Hebrew women are ... vigorous*. Midwives bravely stated the truth. Pharaoh showed his naïveté by failing to question the midwives further. (TLSB)

1:20–21 God was pleased with Shiphrah and Puah, who now shared in the blessings of family. Perhaps they selflessly aided others but had not experienced this joy. (TLSB)

1:22 *Every son*. Aaron, three years older than Moses (7:7), apparently escaped the threat imposed by this law. (TLSB)

cast into the Nile. The Nile was regarded as the source of life, bringing fertility to the land. Now it became an agent of death. (TLSB)

1:8–22 As a last resort to halt the growth of Israel, Pharaoh commands all his people to collaborate in the mass killing of Hebrew boys (v 22). Pharaoh imagines that he can thwart God’s will, just as Herod does when he slaughters many infants while trying to slay Jesus (Mt 2:16). But “He who sits in the heavens laughs,” and the Lord holds worldly rulers “in derision” (Ps 2:4). Luth: “Oh, how much strength of faith is demanded by these words!” (AE 14:321). When evil in this world seems to triumph and we struggle on account of our weakness, we can call to mind the women who feared God and were blessed by Him. By God’s grace, we also shall persevere in faith because we will win the victory through our Lord Jesus

Christ (1Co 15:57). • Lord, grant us brave faith like the midwives so that we faithfully serve You in the face of all opposition. Amen. (TLSB)