

EXODUS

Chapter 2

The Birth of Moses

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. 3 When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. 4 And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. 5 Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” 8 And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. 9 And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”

2:1–2 What follows Pharaoh’s order to kill is a report not of death but of marriage and conception. (TLSB)

2:1 *a man ... a Levite woman.* Perhaps Amram and Jochebed. (CSB)

The Levites became the priestly tribe of Israel. (TLSB)

2:2 *a fine child.* Moses was “no ordinary child” (Ac 7:20; Heb 11:23), “fair in the sight of God.” The account of Moses’ remarkable deliverance in infancy foreshadows the deliverance from Egypt that God would later effect through him. (CSB)

Hbr *tob*. Same word is used in Gn 1 to describe God’s “good” creation. (TLSB)

2:3 *basket made of bulrushes.* Each of the two Hebrew words lying behind this phrase is of Egyptian origin. The word for “basket” is used only here and of Noah’s ark. Moses’ basket was a miniature version of the large, seaworthy “papyrus boats” mentioned in Isa 18:2. (CSB)

Same Hbr word is used for Noah’s ark. Many ancient cultures practiced infant exposure, or leaving unwanted children without care (e.g., the Mesopotamian “Legend of Sargon”). Pharaoh’s ruling forced a version of this despicable practice on the Israelites. (TLSB)

bulrushes. Papyrus, a tall stalk or reed used to construct small boats. (TLSB)

bitumen and pitch. These tars made the basket watertight. This detail shows the mother’s intense care. (TLSB)

reeds. A word of Egyptian derivation, reflected in the proper name “Red Sea.” (CSB).

Tall grass along the Nile hid the basket. (TLSB)

2:4 *his sister.* Miriam (see 15:20). (CSB)

2:5 *daughter of Pharaoh.* Perhaps the famous 18th-dynasty princess who later became Queen Hatshepsut. (CSB)

bathe at the river. The princess may have bathed in the Nile believing the water imparted fruitfulness and long life. (TLSB)

young women. They stayed on the river bank to bathe the princess. (CSB)

2:6 Hbr indicates that Pharaoh's daughter knew she was breaking her father's law when she became Moses' protector. No explanation, apart from care, is given for her actions. (TLSB)

2:7 *nurse.* A wet nurse, who suckles another's child. (TLSB)

2:9 *I will give you your wages.* Moses' mother (v 2) is paid from Pharaoh's treasury to nurse her own son! This was not the only time Pharaoh was plundered to benefit God's people (cf 12:36). (TLSB)

2:10 *he became her son.* Throughout this early part of Exodus, all the pharaoh's efforts to suppress Israel were thwarted by women: the midwives (1:17), the Israelite mothers (1:19), Moses' mother and sister (vv. 3–4, 7–9), the pharaoh's daughter (here). The pharaoh's impotence to destroy the people of God is thus ironically exposed. (CSB)

Indicating adoption. (TLSB)

Moses. The name, of Egyptian origin, means "is born" and forms the second element in such pharaonic names as Ahmose (see note on 1:8), Thutmose and Rameses (see note on 1:11). (CSB)

Authentic Egyptian name found in historical records ("Mose"). (TLSB)

drew him out. A Hebrew wordplay on the name Moses, emphasizing his providential rescue from the Nile. Thus Moses' name may also have served as a reminder of the great act of deliverance God worked through him at the "Red Sea" (see 13:17–14:31). (CSB)

Hbr *mosheh* (Moses) and *mashah* ("draw out") sound alike. The name worked in Hbr and Egyptian. (TLSB)

2:1–10 Moses, born of believing Hebrew parents (Heb 11:23), is raised in Pharaoh's household and "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Ac 7:22), enjoying the best of two worlds. Although God is not mentioned, He is accomplishing His purposes to redeem Israel. Even when God does not seem to be at work in our lives, we can be certain that His good and gracious will is being done among us. • Lord, help us to provide well for our children and their instruction, especially in the Christian faith, and to celebrate Your redemption for us. Amen. (TLSB)

Moses Flees to Midian

11 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" 14 He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you

mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well. 16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. 17 The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. 18 When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, “How is it that you have come home so soon today?” 19 They said, “An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock.” 20 He said to his daughters, “Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.” 21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. 22 She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”

2:11 *Moses had grown up.* He was now 40 years old (see Ac 7:23). (CSB)

his people. As an adult, Moses identified with his people when he saw their burdens and one of them brutally beaten. Moses may have grown up knowing his Hebrew heritage since he was nursed by his own mother. He may also have been circumcised. (TLSB)

2:12 Moses tried to hide his deed because he had no authority for his action. (TLSB)

2:13 Moses again became angry with someone “in the wrong” and demanded an explanation. (TLSB)

2:14 *Who made you prince and judge ... ?* Unwittingly, the speaker made a prediction that would be fulfilled 40 years later (see Ac 7:27, 30, 35). The Hebrew word for “judge” could also refer to a deliverer, as in the book of Judges (see Ac 7:35); it was often a synonym for “ruler” in the OT. (CSB)

2:15 *Pharaoh.* Probably Thutmose III. (CSB)

Pharaoh would not tolerate someone living in his palace and acting against his authority. (TLSB)

Midian. Named after one of Abraham’s younger sons. Midian was located in southeastern Sinai and west central Arabia, flanking the eastern arm of the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba) on either side. Dry and desolate, it formed a stark contrast to Moses’ former home in the royal court. He lived in Midian 40 years (see Ac 7:29–30). (CSB)

The Midianites (cf Gn 25:4; 37:36) were nomadic tribes. Moses fled into the Sinai Peninsula, east of Egypt. (TLSB)

2:16 *priest of Midian.* Reuel (see v. 18), which means “friend of God.” His other name, Jethro (see 3:1), may be a title meaning “his excellency.” (CSB)

Just as Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem (Gn 14:18; Heb 7:1), was a mysterious figure, so was this priest of Midian (cf Ex 18). The gods he worshiped are never described. (TLSB)

water their father’s flock. They had done the hard work of filling the water troughs, and then they were attacked (v 17). (TLSB)

2:17 *saved them.* A third time, Moses stood up for people being wronged, acting as the rescuer of the weak and mistreated (cf vv 12–14). (TLSB)

watered their flock. Moses showed further mercy. (TLSB)

2:18 *Reuel*. The priest of Midian likely had more than one name; his more common name was Jethro. (TLSB)

2:20 Their father showed irritation at their failure to show hospitality to a stranger. (TLSB)

2:21 *gave ... his daughter*. In marriage (Hbr expression). Cf Gn 29:28. (TLSB)

2:22 *Gershom*. Combining the Hbr words for “stranger” and “there.” (TLSB)

have been a sojourner. A Hebrew man, raised as an Egyptian, married a Midianite priest’s daughter. Moses was a foreigner everywhere. (TLSB)

2:11–22 God humbles Moses before calling him to lead Israel out of Egypt, letting him feel the sufferings of his people and making Moses realize how totally inadequate he is to save them. This former prince must live as a fugitive in the household of a Midianite priest. Luther: “God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, the desperate, and of those who have been brought down to nothing at all” (AE 26:314). God humbles us as He humbled Moses. He does this so that at the proper time He may raise us up in Christ (1Pt 5:6). • Lord, teach me to trust Your guidance even when days are dark. Amen. (TLSB)

God Hears Israel's Groaning

23 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. **24** And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. **25** God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

2:23 *During many days*. Thutmose III enjoyed a long reign. (CSB)

many days. During Moses’ absence from Egypt, the king died. (TLSB)

groaned ... and cried out for help. The change in rulers did nothing to change Israel’s slavery. (TLSB)

2:24–25 *God heard ... remembered ... saw ... knew*. Four verbs catalog God’s response to Israel’s cry for rescue. God’s knowing always brings about an effect. God understood what Israel felt. After seeming to be out of touch and unconcerned, He was about to act. (TLSB)

2:23–25 God hears Israel’s cry for deliverance. Sinful humans forget the promises they make, but God never forgets. He does not forget Israel but remembers His covenant with their fathers. In Holy Communion, we remember God’s new covenant in Christ. Holy Communion is God’s promise of forgiveness to us and assures us that He will never forget us. • Rescue us, dearest Jesus, from the slavery of sin, and deliver us to the Promised Land. Amen. (TLSB)