

# Introduction

In many ways, Genesis is a book of beginnings. From the creation to Joseph's death, we see the story not of a great nation, but of individual families. We read of the way God dealt with them, either as whole families or as sons and daughters. When we get to Exodus, the ethos changes to something even grander.

Between the end of Genesis and the start of Exodus is a time-span of about 400 years. In that time a number of generations came into being; Joseph, Abraham, etc., were already historical figures, distant forefathers. Now, in Egypt, there were many thousands of Abraham's descendants, if not close to a million souls. Exodus, then, in its most general form, is the account of a formal grouping of families into well-established tribes who, between them, formed an even bigger group – the Hebrews.

Still only a nation-in-waiting, and oblivious to the coming drama that would propel them into Middle Eastern, and eventually world, fame, these Hebrews knew only slavery. As tribes they had fallen from grandeur and dignity to the very bottom of the social ladder. How many of us, fallen on hard times, can imagine a sudden change so breathtaking, as experienced by these Hebrews? The account does not begin with the change, but gives the background to it, one so colourful and exciting that it continues to attract attention, even today... The birth, adulthood and ignominy of Moses. Hardly a promising start to what was to follow, and no hint of the godly and glorious role he was going to fulfil.

Exodus! A grand name evoking much in the minds of readers! The book has two names, one in Greek and the other in Hebrew. The Greek, *exodos*, meaning 'going out' or 'departure' (referring to the leaving of the Hebrews from Egypt). It is the second book in the

*hattorah*

('the law') or

*torah*

, 'law' (Pentateuch). It is also part of the

*Tanakh*

(in the Hebrew Bible). In Hebrew the name of the book is

*twmv hlaw*

(or,

*Veille Semoth*

: 'these are the names'), or shortened to

*twmv*

('names'). Exodus covers about 145 years.

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Written by K B Napier  
Wednesday, 13 July 2011 19:57

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'Pentateuch', from the Greek, *pentateuchos*, literally means 'five cases', possibly referring to the five boxes that carried the scrolls. It appears that the early Jews did not have such a five-part separation of the Old Testament, but simply referred to it as

*sepher hattorah*

, 'book of the law'. Other names were used, too:

*torath Mosheh*

(law of Moses),

*sepher Mosheth*

(book of Moses) and

*sepher torath Mosheth*

(book of the law of Moses). But, this eventually became the 'law of Yahweh, when the Jews fully understood the divine origin of the contents.

The name 'Pentateuch' was first mentioned in 150-175 AD, in a letter to Flora by the Valentinian, Ptolemy, a Gnostic who wrote commentaries on scripture. Note that Gnostics were heretics, who believed a '*demiurge*' (literally: 'public craftsman') or lower divinity created the world and became the 'foolish god of Israel'. In his letter to Flora, Ptolemy gave his views on the Law of Moses. 'Flora' was Ptolemy's 'sister' (whether this is familial, or religious, I do not know). Ptolemy immediately begins his letter with heresy! The name 'Pentateuch' comes in the sixth paragraph. But, really, it does not matter who said what and when, because the name is not given by scripture!

The book of Exodus was written about 1446 BC, according to a literal interpretation of the information given in the book itself. Observe that we should *always* interpret a text literally, unless the context suggests otherwise. This means we are looking at facts of history and not stories of mythical origin! Some researchers point out that 1 Kings 6:1 places the Exodus of the Hebrews 480 years before the 4

th

year of Solomon's reign. His fourth year is dated somewhere around 966/960/957. This fixes the date of the Exodus. (There are other confirmations). From these figures we can say that Jacob moved to Egypt in 1876 BC.

Some historians, however, place the Exodus later, in the reign of Rameses Second, saying that reference to Rameses is evidenced in the name appearing in Exodus 1:11. But, this does not take Hebraistic custom into account, where places not yet built are mentioned (in Genesis, for example) as already existing, and places not existing anymore being mentioned as if they still were! Other Pharaohs have been suggested, but they do not fit the Biblical account. Rameses is a possible contender as he lived 1304 - 1237.

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Some suggest that the princess who reared Moses as a child was Hatshepsut, but she lived 1490 - 1469, which does not agree with dates arising from scripture. But we do know that this second book carries on 'organically' from the first, Genesis.

As is often the case, secular historians and archaeologists argue against every part of the Old Testament, in an attempt to discredit it as pure history. One example is their claim that the golden-calf worship in Exodus must be wrong, because only bull worship was known to exist at that time in Egypt and Canaan. Their cherished opposition was dashed, though, when a silver calf statue was unearthed in 1991, in an excavation of ancient Ashkelon, Israel. Experts dated it to 100 years *before* the Exodus! Four hundred years later, king Jeroboam offered two golden calves for worship.

Some argue against the seemingly fantastic claim that the wandering Hebrews were sent quails, that filled the ground to a depth of 12 inches. But, experts acknowledge that this tiny bird, just 7 inches long, is the *only* sub-species of pheasant to migrate... taking it over the area marched through by the Hebrews in the desert! In 1920 official figures show that over 3 million migrating quails were killed for food by Egyptians in 1920, thus substantiating the idea that these birds were plentifully supplied to the Hebrews by God.

Continually, unbelievers put forth their worldly ideas, trying to smear the Bible. But they always fail, and confirmations of scriptural places and events are discovered regularly. Exodus, like Genesis, is history. It is real. The people and places are real, as are the events. We will see God starting to deal with all the Hebrew tribes as one nation, thereby fulfilling His promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who are part of our spiritual heritage.

## Exodus 1

### Verses 1 - 6

1.

Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.

2.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,

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3.

Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,

4.

Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

5.

And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

6.

And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

Moses here gives a 'link' between Genesis and Exodus, by repeating the names of the main characters who entered Egypt with Jacob. "70 souls" are mentioned as coming "of the loins of Jacob". Joseph was not counted as 'going in' because he "was in Egypt already". This text is straightforward and does not mention others, who, though part of the Genesis account, are not part of the Exodus account. Joseph died, as did his children and grandchildren.

### Verses 7 - 11

1.

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

2.

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

3.

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And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

4.

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.

5.

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

By the end of Genesis we saw Jacob and his family enjoying wealth and dignity in northern Egypt, a portion given to them by the then Pharaoh. But, this favoured status depended on the status of Joseph who had saved not just Egypt, but other lands, from starvation and ruin.

At the start of this narrative, Joseph was dead 400 years and the Pharaoh then on the throne only knew of him as a distant public memory. However, the families and tribes that arose from Jacob's line were numerous. They "increased abundantly and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty." The basis for a new nation was being built by God! The Hebrews were so numerous, the "land was filled with them." This suggests (though we cannot truly tell) that the Hebrews, by this time, were intermingled in other parts of Egypt.

We see in these verses the first failure of 'multiculturalism'. The Pharaoh at that time had no first-hand dealings with Joseph or Jacob's family. All he saw was a huge number of 'foreigners' in his land, rich and substantial. Though the line of Jacob continued, there is no mention of 'big names' amongst the Hebrews. It was as though the godly line was simply 'ticking over'. The Hebrews, then, seemed to be joined not by a single leader but by their familial bonds. Possibly, many were faithful to the God of Jacob. They certainly had distinctive tribal ways, as the 'midwife' incidents prove. Otherwise, the Hebrews just lived as did the Egyptians, with no bother or trouble.

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Even so, Pharaoh was troubled. Not by anything the Hebrews had done, but by what he perceived they *might* do in the future! Without any reason to do so, he then began to bear down on the Hebrews, though it was unjust and unfair. Even in modern times we see this kind of paranoia, often leading to genocide.

Pharaoh saw there were more Hebrews in the land than Egyptians, and he feared a take-over! In secret talks with his court, he set about to subjugate the Hebrews... which, in any age, is probably the worst thing a king can do to a large number of people! Inevitably, they will arise in anger and wreak bloodshed and mayhem. Fortunately, the Hebrews were not organised, and this did not happen, but it could very well have done so, if God had not held them back.

It should be the way of today: whilst we cannot accept their religions or some ways, those of other beliefs and nations should freely live amongst us. This should be without malice or anger, violence or misdeeds. We should all live as one society, but adhering to our own beliefs. There must be freedom to express those beliefs, so long as they do not impose upon others. Then, Christians, and all people, can live in peace. That is how pre-Egypt Hebrews lived and how Christians lived in the time of Jesus and the Apostles. Any troubles usually arose from unbelievers, not believers.

Pharaoh thought it was 'wise' to socially segregate the Hebrews and to impose a national 'birth control' measure on the Hebrews. In this way he wished to reduce the number of Hebrews in the land over time, making their numbers manageable. In the event of war, reasoned Pharaoh, there would be fewer Hebrews to join the enemy.

With this in mind, Pharaoh placed all Hebrews under the direct command of taskmasters, *sar*. These were rulers or wardens. Probably, given the nature of this sudden enslavement, these rulers were military leaders – captains with army contingents. Their role was to keep the Hebrews down by force, to afflict them,

*'anah*

, with burdens, *c@balah* – forced labour. The root of the word means the Hebrews were so oppressed the loads they carried caused them to drag themselves,

*cabal*

, over the ground.

How much of this was caused by true paranoia, or simply by greed, we cannot know. Was it just a scheme to get free labour to build royal edifices? The Hebrews, slaves, built the royal cities of

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Pithom and Raamses. Almost laughably, though built by injustice, Pithom means 'the city of justice'. Raamses (Rameses) means 'child of the sun'. These were treasure cities, *mick@nah*; used as vast storage cities. This could have been for food, goods, wealth, or weapons. This was the first time the collective tribes of Hebrews were made slaves.

### Verses 12 - 14

1.

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

2.

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour:

3.

And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

But the more the Hebrews were put down and oppressed, the greater became their numbers! This bearing-up under a strict regime of brutality caused the Egyptian rulers to 'grieve', *quwts* – loathe and despise them and yet fear them. It is likely they now realised it was futile to put these people down, but the Egyptians continued to do so. They had put in motion a particular plan, and now they feared they would suffer in the future because of it. Before, the Hebrews were ordinary citizens, causing no problems. Now, they were a potential threat, not because of their sheer numbers, but because they were being treated as animals.

So, the Egyptians increased the oppression 'with rigour', *perek*; with harsh, severe work regimes enforced by cruelty. The Hebrews were made 'bitter', *marar*

. This can mean grief-stricken, but it also embodies the meaning of becoming outraged and to thus become stronger inwardly. It is a very simple rule in life, that when a man is pushed to his limit into a corner, he has nothing to lose by lunging forward to overcome his oppressor. There is, then, a mere hint here that the Hebrews were starting to become angry and ready for some kind of retaliation. Obviously, there are always some who wish to hold back in these situations, fearing the future more than they fear being killed by brutality, 'hard bondage'.

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The oppression included building, agriculture and all kinds of enforced services, all carried out with cruelty and hatred by the taskmasters. The 'morter' was clay or cement or working with asphalt, used together with brick, *l@benah*, meaning bricks, roof tiles, or pavement blocks. Possibly, from the root word, *laban*, it means the products were white in colour. Whatever the tasks imposed upon them, every form of 'service' was performed under immense, increasing viciousness, with no respite.

### Verses 15 - 19

1.

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:

2.

And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

3.

But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

4.

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive?

5.

And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

But this generalised cruelty and oppression was not enough. As we might expect, having now tasted what it was like to brutalise and oppress a whole class of people for no reason, Pharaoh

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decided to embark on systematic murder on a grand scale, by killing all males born to Hebrew women. Obviously, if this was done, the whole race would die out.

He brought two Hebrew (*'Ibriy*; one from beyond, from *Eber*, 'the region beyond') midwives (*yal ad*) to his palace. We do not know if this was by intimidation or if he had intelligence that maybe the two women were willing co-conspirators. They were Shiprah ('fair') and Puah ('splendid'). It seems that both names were well deserved. It is quite possible, with so many Hebrews, that these were full-time midwives, moving from house to house as needed.

Pharaoh's plan was simple, vicious and calculating, but like many others after him to this present day, he wanted to keep his own hands clean as possible, by using Hebrews to do his foul deeds. With no sign of remorse, he ordered the midwives to kill every son born to an Hebrew. We see in this text a social/medical detail, that the Hebrews (and maybe the Egyptians) of the time gave birth on 'stools'. These were 'bearing stools', *'oben*. The word is shared with that of a wheel, so it probably was a round stone seat with a hole in the centre. The midwife would then assist from underneath. Daughters could live, but sons had to be killed, *muwth*  
- executed immorally.

The midwives must have agreed, or at least did not dissent, so that they might live. With so many Hebrews, there would have been many midwives. The two women were therefore to pass on the instructions and so the edict would have been well-known to all the Hebrews. Pharaoh did not care, because he controlled the people brutally anyway. But, the midwives feared God, *'elohiym*

! They feared Him,  
*yare'*

; dreaded disobeying God more than they dreaded disobeying Pharaoh. We cannot deduce from this that all Hebrews were of the same mind. But it does prove that worship of God was common amongst them. The midwives did not carry out their murderous mission, but they all saved the male babies.

After a while Pharaoh summoned the same two midwives to the palace, demanding to know why they disobeyed him. With cleverness, the two complained to Pharaoh that the Hebrew women were not like Egyptian women. When they delivered their young, they were strong and fast! "They are lively", *chayeh*, they said abjectly, and so the babies are being born before the midwives get to them. This is another example in scripture of God-fearing people deceiving others with clever actions and words.

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It is clear to the student of God's word that there is a difference between ordinary deception and lies, and deception carried out under oppression and threat, as we see in verse 20. As we discussed in the books of Samuel, it seems that such deceptions are acceptable under such circumstances.

### Verses 20 – 22

1.

Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

2.

And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.

3.

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

"Therefore", or 'because of this', "God dealt well with the midwives", *yatab*: did good to them, made what they did good and right. He was pleased. Thus the Hebrews continued to multiply and became even stronger.

There are many Christianised legends. One of them is that we must bear our necks to anyone who cares to cut off our heads! We must do so without cry or murmur. But, who says so? Yes, there are times when individuals are called to be martyrs. And some are called to just accept badness from oppressors. But not always. Quite often in their later history, the Hebrews were put under yokes by foreign powers, as a punishment from God for their disobedience. At other times, they did not just rise up against their oppressors, they actively led wars and put many to the sword. Individuals, too, did not just sit back and wait to be killed.

There can be many reasons why Christians will not accept a beating or death at the hands of others. There can be many reasons why men allow their anger to produce certain actions that

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others might, from an armchair, think are wrong. I remember a story my father told us. He was in London, a soldier hospitalised after wounds received in France. As he was almost ready to return to his unit, he was out and about in the city, when there was a blitz. When the bombers had gone, like everyone else he went out from the shelter to try and help those buried under burning rubble.

But, as he worked to free people, most of whom were dead rather than alive, including babies and children, a young woman near him, on top of rubble, started to give a Nazi salute, and shouted out Nazi slogans. Almost instinctively, my father swung the butt of his rifle and hit the woman on the jaw, rendering her unconscious. As he said, he was so incensed, after dragging dead babies from a Nazi-caused disaster, he wanted to silence her awful shouts of victory. Much later in life he became a Christian. Did he regret what he did? No.

Was he wrong? Personally, I can understand his reaction, Christian or not. There are times when Christians must go to war and times they must do what others consider to be 'wrong'. In my own time as a psychiatric nurse, I had to enter into what can only be called 'violent situations', where I had to endure and use violent means to subdue evil men. On many occasions it was to save others from certain death or severe injury.

What hampered me most in the early days were ridiculous pompous 'Christian' beliefs that we should allow others to maim and kill us! Once I realised it was all 'urban legend' and not scriptural, I felt a great weight lifted from my shoulders, and managed to stay alive. I was injured many times, but at no time did I allow anyone to get to the point of killing me, though they certainly tried! Of course, Christians in my church did not really want to hear the truth. Nor did they delve into my job to see exactly what I had to put up with. It was easier to live in ignorance than to deal with something head-on!

Much later, in my ministry, along with just three or four others, I led the fight against the Toronto Blessing. Once again, many shunned us for doing so, and they hid themselves away in corners and churches with closed doors. They did not wish to learn the truth, or about how to tackle such a huge problem. They preferred to shun those who did the work.

Friends, the Hebrew midwives did what they had to do, and God blessed them. Today, there are things we must all do, but we fear to do them. Thus, we lose God's blessings. There are times when we must be crafty and clever, even deceptive. Such times are given clearly by God to individuals. They are not overall laws of God, but given as the situation demands. And only

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the one called to the task will know it. You must go with such a calling, no matter how badly your fellows treat you for it. I know that what I am saying could be deemed controversial, but it is not my intention. I am only telling you what others have done, including myself, so that you may judge and choose for yourself. There might come a day when you will have to do similar things. Today, there are three major evils around us, with very few Christians to tackle them: charismaticism, Islam, and homosexuality. Many will not enter the fray because they think we should not tackle them. They are wrong! If your mind and heart are troubled by these things, then do whatever God calls you to do!

We are told that because the midwives pleased God by their fearless actions, He built them houses. I am not sure if this means actual places to live in, or families/descendants. Whatever it means, we know that it was an act of God, Who was pleased by what they did.

However, the situation angered Pharaoh, so that he did far worse things. Knowing that his first idea had failed, he now instructed all his people to root out and kill every male baby of the Hebrews. They were to be thrown into the river and drowned. Do we not see in this the very things we have witnessed in Hitler's regime, or Saddam Hussein's? Do we not see similar evils coming from homosexuals and others, as hatred for God and His people again emerge like a tide of Satanic power?

Many wish to maim and kill us, even in the West. It is the deep desire of genuine Muslims to do so. Beware of those whose intentions towards God are evil, for they will inevitably turn upon you, no matter how fairly you treat them. It is the nature of Satan. And the nature of those who are his followers. Sadly, it is also becoming a part of weak Christians, whose wills are swayed by evil ones against us.

Remember – scripture does NOT tell us to live at peace at all times no matter what happens. It tells us to live in peace with others SO LONG AS WE ARE ABLE. Think about it, because the time of reckoning is getting closer. For many individuals, such reckoning has already taken place, but our fellows live in fear of men, so they will not stand by us. If you are already under the hammer of evil you will understand what I am saying. We may even be close to 'heading for the hills'... will you be ready when the time of exodus comes?

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