

## Exodus 2

Written by K B Napier  
Saturday, 03 March 2018 11:55

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I usually give my overall thoughts as an introduction to a chapter. On this occasion these thoughts are contained in the text below. These are strange days.

### Verses 1 - 4

1.

“And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

2.

And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

3.

And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

4.

And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.”

The man in this text is the father of Moses. The wife is his mother. Both were from the “house (family) of Levi”. That is, from the tribe of the Levites, **Leviy** (‘joined to’), named after the third son of Jacob.

The wife had a son and saw that he was a “goodly child”, **towb**, pleasant and good, delightful and happy. I am not sure if the wording suggests the child would have been cast out if he had not been ‘goodly’! The mother hid him for three months. ‘Hide’,

**tsaphan**

, can have several meanings, all including ‘to hide’. In this text it refers to hiding from discovery, probably in the house for three months.

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For some reason she could no longer hide the child, possibly because he was now more vocal. It was then that the mother thought about taking the matter to another stage. This was deception in a very legal and secular sense, but was it a 'lie'? To me, it was no less a strategy than was, say, any other strategy used at a time of war or unrest.

She decided to make a hideout for the lad. In the form of a tiny boat, or ark, **tebah**. In this case, a basket woven with bulrushes,

**gome'**

, or reeds. Many years ago I won a design award for a baby pram. The design was based on a basket-woven 'ark'. I went to an expert weaver of reeds, who also built small river boats called coracles, and he used the same techniques as the mother of Moses would have used. And when he had finished the ark or basket, he covered it with pitch. Moses mother used slime and pitch,

**chemar**

(boiled bitumen) and tar,

**zepheth**

. Though both have similar meanings in the English translation, evidently both were different. Perhaps a first seal was put on hot, to fill gaps etc, and a final seal of cold tar, smoothed out to form an outer skin.

The ark was taken to the river nearby, and Moses was placed into it, the whole thing hidden by the 'flags', **cuwph** – the rushes and water plants. His mother then left him floating in amongst the reeds, his sister farther away, observing that he remained safe. The reeds surrounded the tiny craft, so it would not float away.

This chapter is small in words but big in drama. Little is said, but it is the ancient equivalent of hiding Jews during World War Two. Indeed, we can say the Hebrew enslavement of this period was the very first attack on the Jews by a whole nation.

### Verses 5 - 10

1.

"And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

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2.

And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

3.

Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

4.

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

5.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

6.

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water."

We do not know how long it was between placing the basket in the reeds and the time when Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to bathe, but it is unlikely to have been very long. In every likelihood the 'river' was the Nile. She and her female servants went with her, keeping to the bank. The princess saw the basket in the reeds and sent one of her servants to recover it.

We now see that the basket had a cover over it. The princess removed the cover and saw the baby, and he began to cry. She had pity on the child, especially as she knew her father's edict, and commented to her servants that it must be a Hebrew child. It was obvious to her that a Hebrew mother had tried to protect her baby.

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The baby's sister was nearby, watching as before, and she had an idea. "*Shall I find a Hebrew nurse for the child?*" by this she meant a suckling nurse, a woman who had recently had a child herself and so could provide milk. The princess agreed – and the girl went and called for the child's own mother. The princess ordered her to take the boy with her to feed and look after him. On top of that she would be paid a wage! How God provides!

When the boy was old enough to eat solids, his mother took him back to the princess, who adopted him as her own. (She had no idea that God had already moved events so that Moses would be the Nemesis of the Pharaohs). At least the boy's mother had him for her own for a short while! When the boy was taken in to the royal household, he is at last named.

It is possible he already had a name from his mother, but the name he is now given is the famed one – Moses, **Mosheh**, 'drawn'. The Greek form of the name is **Moseus**, meaning 'drawn out'. This agrees with the princess' own reason: "Because I drew him out of the water". From that moment, Moses, though an Hebrew, would not personally know the hardships and cruelty meted out to his fellow tribesmen.

### Verses 11 - 15

1.

"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

2.

And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

3.

And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

4.

And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

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5.

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.”

There is now a long break in the narrative, but we can be assured Moses grew up as a prince in Pharaoh’s palace, with all the attendant pleasures and privileges of the status. The next reference is to Moses as a young man. We do not know his age from this text, nor do we know if he kept in touch with his real family, but it seems that he knew he was himself from Hebrew stock.

We are simply told he went out one day for a walk, “*out unto his brethren*”. We are not told whether he went out deliberately to see how his brethren were, or if he came across them. It does not really matter, for we know God knew. Indeed, the birth of a nation came in the birth of Moses, so God was already moving events and people and situations in such a way as to bring about the change. The work of the Hebrews, plus the cruelty that went with it, was a common sight at that time anyway.

Moses saw an Egyptian beating an Hebrew. Though most Christians think the Egyptian was a taskmaster, there is no evidence of this in the text. Egyptians at this time were familiar with treating Hebrews like dirt under their feet, so the Hebrew might even have been beaten just for being where he was, by an ordinary member of the public.

Moses took exception to this evil and decided to do something about it. He looked all around to see if anyone could see what was happening, then he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. He thought no-one had seen him, but he was wrong.

Next day, Moses went out again. He saw two Hebrews, and one of them hit out at the other. Moses asked the attacker why he had hit his fellow. He was shocked by the response... who said you could judge us, when you have killed a man! Do you now intend to murder me, just as you killed the Egyptian? Moses went away, very scared. How many others now knew what he had done? Before long it would be common knowledge and Pharaoh would learn about it! Indeed, Pharaoh did come to hear of it and tried to find Moses. But it was too late – Moses had

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fled to the land of Midian, **Midyan** ('strife').

Midian was the desert area north of Arabia, to the east of Egypt, over the Nile and the Red Sea. Moses travelled on, alone, until he reached a well in Midian. There, he sat down, weary.

In this whole affair we see God making His plan come about. It began with the birth of Moses, who, obviously, had to remain alive to carry out God's will. Strangely for us, the next great event was that the man chosen by God for His purposes killed another man, not out of immediate anger or danger to himself, but deliberately, with forethought, on behalf of others.

Very often we do wrong, and yet we belong to God! Though my own intentions are always good, I inevitably do wrong in pursuance of that good. It is inevitable, because my heart is still capable of sin. Even so, despite all my wrongdoing and evil thoughts, God graciously uses me for His own purposes. It is both humbling and frightening. It is frightening because I always tell myself I will not do this or that again, but I usually do! I am not alone – Paul had the same problems! It is not our desire, but it happens anyway.

No doubt Moses thought he was doing the right thing at the time. After all, murder is murder, but we were not there with him! He saw an Egyptian beating one of his brethren. Yes, he could have stopped it simply by being a prince and ordering the Egyptian to stop. But, instead, he allowed the heat of the moment to take over rational thought, and a man ended up dead. That's how it goes. You will have to trust me when I say there are times when the adrenaline pumps and the mind leaps into overdrive, and you do things you would not normally do. Mistakes are made that way – but that's life. We cannot judge Moses for what he did, because we were not there at the time. Such events usually rush headlong in a split second.

What Moses did was done in an instant. I am not condoning doing wrong; I am saying that we cannot judge Moses' situation. We only know that God was to use him mightily and yet Moses did something he no doubt regretted. I have been called by God to do His will. But, very often, I do not do what I ought to do, or I do not do what I ought to do. The same awaits us all, whether we admit to it or not! There are even times – I am in the middle of such an episode as I write – when I feel so crushed I only want to give in and stop doing God's will. But, even as I think it, I know it is sin, and have to discard the idea, for I know I cannot turn my hand from the plough. We can expect ourselves to be pathetic! Meanwhile, God looks on compassionately, and offers His hand to me in friendship. This is the position of Moses sitting by the well!

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### Verses 16 - 22

1.

“Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock.

2.

And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

3.

And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day?

4.

And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.

5.

And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

6.

And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

7.

And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.”

As he sat there, seven young girls came to the well, driving a flock, probably of sheep or goats.

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They filled troughs nearby, to water their flock. These were the seven daughters of the “priest of Midian”. It is not clear what meaning we should put to the word ‘priest’ in this text. It could mean a pagan priest, a godly priest, or even a local ruler.

As the girls went about their business, rough shepherds arrived and tried to push the girls aside, so that they could give water to their own flocks. We know that Moses had killed someone, but in this scene we find he was not a weak man. He stood against the shepherds. Evidently there were more than one of them and they probably carried staves, as shepherds usually did. He won the day and the girls were able to water the flock.

In life we can often be attacked or intimidated by others. But, in God’s name, we should never give in to intimidation, but must stand firm. Whether we take a more active part I cannot advise, for each is taken along a different path by God, but we should never give in.

The girls returned to their father, whose name is now given; **Reuel** (friend of God’). He asked them why they were back so early, and they told him what Moses had done. Notably, they told their father that an ‘Egyptian’ had helped them. This is either because Moses spoke to them in that language, or he was still dressed like one. Reuel was grateful and asked where Moses was.

*“Why did you leave him there?”*  
he asked his daughters,  
*“Go back and bring him home, so that I can give him a meal!”*

The girls went back to the well and asked Moses to go home with them, which he did. Then, he stayed with the family. Eventually, Reuel gave one of his daughters to Moses as a wife. Her name was **Zipporah** (‘bird’). Their first son was **Gershom** (‘foreigner’) because Moses was a stranger in the land. He did not yet know that he was to lead perhaps a million Hebrews over the same land, much later.

Speaking for myself, I often feel I am a stranger in my own land, let alone when I am in a foreign place. I no longer feel fully at home in the country of my birth, as it becomes an alien country, made foreign by so many evil changes and a pagan ethos. Perhaps this is just as well, for it prevents me from taking root and doing nothing. Even so, the human side of me is sad. As I grow older I know my human abilities and prospects are now almost zero. Inevitably, people start to see me as ‘old’, though I might be much ‘younger’ in actual years... my hair gives the game away, being now grey! With it comes that infuriating kind of genial and off-putting

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response from others, who now treat you as someone to be coddled or talked to like a feeble-minded fool.

They don't mean it, but it happens to all who no longer have an observable purpose in life, such as a job. I have discovered that even I defined myself in terms of my job! Once that job went I was left high and dry, and my status in the eyes of others changed dramatically. I was now a burden rather than a friend, somehow feeble instead of strong. And the longer I stayed that way the worse it became. I have always noted that a broken leg draws much sympathy, but a long-term problem causes others to look at you differently, if at all. This, added to the changes in society, give me a sense of not belonging anymore.

Do you feel that way? When even your closest do not realise it, it makes the feeling even deeper. Few dare to ask me what is really happening in my life; I can't remember the last time anyone truly asked me how I was. They don't realise it, but they ask in a superficial way, hoping I do not say anything to stir their conscience or sympathies. So I say everything is okay! If I said what I really felt, they would have to think more deeply, and few wish to do that for fear of getting too involved. Almost with amusement I note that when I had a job folks had plenty to talk to me about. Now I have no job, all such talk has dried up, as if I were now a dried old prune in a dark corner! It is far easier to talk about a job than it is to delve into the real needs and thoughts of the heart.

Some readers will remember me talking about a time, many years ago, when I had no hope, no money and no help. Well, it seems God has returned me to a similar spot! Maybe local friends would be shocked to know I feel that way, but I do. I have the distinct realisation that many who receive this study also know what I am talking about. They, too, feel as if they are strangers, even when surrounded by friends. Troubling though it is, I know, deep within, that this is how God wishes it to be, so that we do not attach ourselves to this earth. Is this a sign of depression? I do not think so. We feel as we feel, and that is that!

### Verses 23 - 25

1.

“And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

2.

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And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

3.

And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”

There is now another pause in the narrative, as Moses worked for his father in law, sired a family, and Egypt got on with its cruelty toward the Hebrews. Then came the time when Moses' adoptive mother's father, Pharaoh, died. It made no difference to the state of the Hebrews. One Pharaoh died and another took his place. The cruelty would continue as before, if not get worse. A cruel master who begins a work can at least look back to a time when there was no cruelty. But when a younger person arises, who has been brought up amidst the cruelty, it is second nature to continue in cruelty, and to try and surpass it.

We see that the Hebrews 'sighed by reason of the bondage'. They '*anach*' - groaned in pain and grief. In all their minds was the constant question, "*How much longer?*"

They cried out for help, and the text suggests (but does not actually say it) that they called out to God for help. Such was their dire need and cry, God "*heard their groaning*".

What does this mean? Being God, He already knew their condition. He knew, as He had known for over 400 years, how the Hebrews were suffering. So, why does it say he 'heard' their cries and that He "*remembered his covenant*"? He already knew about His covenant, and already knew what was happening. He did not need 'reminding' in the usual sense of the word!

So what does it mean? In this context 'hearing' means to listen in a judicial sense. And, to 'remember' in this context is to make the matter one of current importance. This suggests that the fairly recent condition of the Hebrews, of slavery and cruelty, was a trial. If the Hebrews had not encountered these awful times at the hands of Egyptians, they might have preferred to stay in Egypt in comfort. But what better way to have them feel ready for a move than to inflict them?

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As we see later, there were still some who wished to remain in Egypt, for all its cruelties! People can even get used to being treated like dirt! But, generally, God wanted to sharpen the edge of His chosen people, and He did so through the vicious hands of Egyptians. But it was now time to start the movement of all movements, the transfer of a collection of tribes to a nation of God, in another country!

And so “*God had respect unto them*”. He **yada’** – acknowledged them as ready and knew it was time to put His global plan into action.

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