

Exodus 2:1-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-2/exodus-21-10/>

This passage describes the hiding of a Levite baby in the reeds on the Nile River and how Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in the Nile and saw the basket with the baby Moses inside.

The account that started in the previous chapter continues with a marriage. *Now* (Hebrew “And”) indicates that this is the continuation of what is in chapter 1 – the attempts by the Egyptians to limit the population growth of the Hebrews. In spite of this, *a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi*. Notice that both of them are from the tribe of Levi. As will be seen later in the book, the house/tribe of Levi becomes the priestly tribe.

It is interesting that Moses' mother and father are not named here. The fact that only their tribe is mentioned signifies that this is more important to know at this point in the account. Their names are given in [Exodus 6:20](#) and [Numbers 26:59](#) as “Jochebed” (which means “the LORD is glory”) for his mother and “Amram” (which probably means “exalted people”) for his father.

The result of the union is that *the woman conceived and bore a son*. As we saw in chapter 1, Pharaoh's plan was to have this child killed. It is likely that many Hebrew male babies were killed as a result of Pharaoh's decree. This surely troubled the mother *when she saw that he was beautiful*. To say that *he was beautiful* (Hebrew “good”) probably means that he was a happy, healthy child. In [Acts 7:20](#), Stephen said that Moses was “lovely in the sight of God”. The Hebrew phrase is also similar to what is seen in the creation narrative when it says that “God saw . . . that it was good” ([Genesis 1:4](#) et al). It could also mean that the mother saw in him something special beyond his physical appearance.

Keep in mind also that Moses was not the firstborn child of this couple. Aaron had been born three years earlier, and his sister Miriam was already a young girl by this time.

Because the threat was all too real to the mother, *she hid him for three months*. This was a direct violation of Pharaoh's command. [Hebrews](#)

11:23 says that his parents hid their son because they “were not afraid of the king’s edict”, implying that they believed that the God of the Hebrews would take care of them ([Hebrews 11](#) is a chapter about faith).

Apparently, circumstances got to the point *when she could hide him no longer*. What they were is not known. It may have been that their home was no longer a safe haven because *she got him a wicker basket*. The Hebrew word for “wicker basket” is significant in that it is the same Hebrew word used to refer to Noah’s ark ([Genesis 6:14](#)). She made it waterproof when she *covered it over with tar and pitch*. This is what Noah did to make his ark waterproof as well ([Genesis 14:6](#)).

Just as Noah’s ark was the instrument of saving his life and family, Moses’ ark was the instrument in saving his life, and Moses became Israel’s deliverer.

After her “ark” was complete, *she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile*. How Moses’ mother came up with the idea that her son would be safe in the reeds on the banks of the Nile River is not told, although she seemed to have a well thought out plan. Even with the danger from crocodiles and the Egyptians themselves, she apparently thought that her son was safer there than at home. Placing the basket near where Egyptian women (especially royalty) came to bathe seemed to be her only hope of preserving her son’s life.

But this was not an instance of Moses’ mother abandoning him. Instead, *his sister stood at a distance*. Moses’ sister, Miriam, stationed herself a short distance away to find out what would happen to him.

The second part of the story begins in verse 5 and describes how Moses was discovered and delivered. Apparently, Moses’ mother knew that *the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile*. Many think that this is both a physical washing and an act of worship of the god of the Nile. Egyptians worshipped the Nile, and bathing in the Nile might have been a way to pay homage to the Nile god.

The daughter of Pharaoh was not alone – she came *with her maidens*. These were her young female attendants. While Pharaoh’s daughter was bathing, *they were walking alongside the Nile*, probably along a familiar path that they took almost daily. As they walked *she* (Pharaoh’s daughter) *saw the basket among the reeds*. The picture here, it seems, is that when Pharaoh’s daughter was in the water, she saw the basket in the reeds nearby. She then *sent her maid* (a different Hebrew word from the word “maidens” earlier

in this verse – this one stresses the young girl’s role as servant) *and she brought it to her.*

Once she received the basket, *she opened it*, and to her surprise *she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying.* In response to his crying, *she had pity on him* (or, she felt sorry for him) *and said, “This is one of the Hebrews children.”*

In verses 7 through 9, Pharaoh’s daughter could have obeyed her father and simply turned the child over to the authorities, resulting in the child’s death. Instead, *his sister* (probably Miriam, Moses’ sister) *said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?”* Miriam, hearing that Pharaoh’s daughter had identified the baby boy as a Hebrew, jumps into the conversation to suggest that a Hebrew woman nurse the child. *Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go ahead.”* So, in obedience, *the girl went and called the child’s mother.*

When Moses’ mother came to her, *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.* Thus, in a wonderfully miraculous way, and against all odds, the LORD reunited Moses and his mother. Not only that, the mother will receive wages for nursing and caring for her own son.

Some unknown amount of time passed between v. 9 and v. 10. It says that *the child grew*, possibly for as long as it takes for the child to be weaned. At the end of this time, *she* (Moses’ mother) *brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son.* Though giving up her son, Moses’ mother at least had the comfort that her son was in a very safe place and would receive the best of everything. By being Pharaoh’s daughter’s son, he would receive the best that Egypt had to offer.

Up until now, the boy had no name (that we know of, anyway). So *she named him Moses*, and said, “Because I drew him out of the water.” Scholars have debated whether this is a Hebrew or Egyptian name. If Egyptian, the name *Mosheh* derives from the Egyptian word which means “born” or “child”. If Hebrew, the name derives from a verb *mashah* that means “to draw out.” It might be that the name is Egyptian, but it sounds like the Hebrew word. In either case, it is an appropriate name for a “child” that was “drawn out” of the Nile.

The story of Moses' birth and deliverance is an early (but certainly not the last) example of God moving in the hearts and minds of humans to accomplish His sovereign will.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though not mentioned in the account at all, was in control of the situation from start to finish.

Biblical Text:

¹ Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. ³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. ⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had 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 a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" ⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ Then 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 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."