

ISRAELITES OPPRESSED IN EGYPT

Exodus 1:1-22

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Pharaoh

Key-location: Egypt

Key-repetitions:

- Israelites kept on reproducing and constantly grew in number (Ex 1:7, 9, 10, 12, 20).
- Israelites suffered in Egypt (Ex 1:7, 11-12, 13-14, 15-18, 22).

Key-attitudes:

- Pharaoh's fear of the Israelites.
- Israelites' agony and suffering.

Initial-situation:

Jacob, with seventy of his descendants, went to Egypt. Joseph was already in Egypt. Joseph was the governor of Egypt, second in command to Pharaoh. The generation that included Joseph and his brothers all died. The descendants of Israel kept on reproducing and became exceedingly numerous.

Initial-problem:

A king who did not know about Joseph came to power and said to his people, "The Israelites have become too numerous for us."

Final-situation:

Pharaoh issued an order to all his people, "You must throw into the Nile River every Hebrew boy that is born, but let every girl live."

BIBLE STORY

Jacob, with seventy of his descendants, went to Egypt. Joseph was already in Egypt (Ex 1:1-5).

The generation that included Joseph and his brothers all died. The descendants of Israel kept on reproducing and became exceedingly numerous. The land was filled with them. A king (*Pharaoh*) who did not know about Joseph came to power. Pharaoh said to his people, "The Israelites have become too numerous for us. We must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous. If war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." He elaborated plans to destroy the Israelites (Ex 1:6-10):

1st Destroy the Israelites through slavery

Egyptians put slave masters over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. They built cities for Pharaoh. The harder the Egyptians worked the Israelites, the more children they had. The Egyptians feared the Israelites and made their lives miserable with hard labor, making brick and mortar, and with work in the fields (Ex 1:11-14).

2nd Hebrew midwives ordered to kill Hebrew baby boys

Pharaoh spoke to the two Hebrew midwives, "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe the sex of the baby. If it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives feared God and refused to obey the king's orders. They let the boys live. Pharaoh called the midwives and asked them, "Why didn't you obey my orders? Why have you let the boys live?"

The midwives answered, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women. They are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." God was pleased with the midwives. The Israelites continued to increase in number. God gave the midwives families of their own because they feared God (Ex 1:15-21).

3rd Israelites ordered to throw baby boys into the Nile River

Pharaoh issued an order to all his people, "You must throw into the Nile River every Hebrew boy that is born, but let every Hebrew girl live" (Ex 1:22).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Pharaoh become afraid of the Israelites?
2. How did Pharaoh deal with the increased population of the Israelites?
3. How did Pharaoh try to destroy the Israelites?
4. How did the Israelites react to Pharaoh's enslaving them?
5. How did Hebrew midwives react to Pharaoh's order to kill Israelite baby boys?
6. When Pharaoh was making plans to destroy the Israelites, where was God and what was he doing?
7. Today, who are some people who are trying to destroy God's people?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God's people become over-comers by facing problems and overcoming them.**
The Egyptians tried to wear down the Israelites by forcing them into slavery and

mistreating them (Ex 1:11-22). God used their mistreatment to ignite their longing for freedom. The Egyptians' mistreatment made them stronger, and developed qualities that would prepare them for the future.

2. **People may feel that God has forgotten them in their troubles, but God's time schedule is different from theirs.** God had promised to bring the descendants of Abraham out of Egypt (Gen 15:16; 46:3-4). But, the people had to wait in Egypt 430 years for God to keep his promise (Ex 12:40-41).
3. **God's laws have priority over a government's law that would require citizens to disobey God's laws.** The midwives showed that they feared God rather than Pharaoh (Ex 1:17). See Proverbs 1:7 and Acts 4:19; 5:29.
4. **The person who fights against God will be unsuccessful.** Pharaoh's schemes to reduce the number of Israelites by enslaving them resulted in more Israelites and more fear among the Egyptians (Ex 1:11-12).
5. **The fearful person will make irrational conclusions.** Pharaoh feared that if war broke out, the Israelites would join their enemies and fight against them (Ex 1:10). Pharaoh's concerns were irrational. Later God declared that if the Israelites faced war on the way to Canaan, they would flee back to Egypt for safety (Ex 3:17).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Chant:**
 - Tell the story one time.
 - Teach listeners the chant: "Help! Help us God. Pharaoh is trying to destroy us."
 - Give listeners a hand signal that is a sign for them to repeat the chant. Retell the story, giving listeners the signal to chant at the appropriate places.

Teller:

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Listeners chant: "Help! Help us God. Pharaoh is trying to destroy us."

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2. **Role-playing Drama:**

Invite two listeners to imagine that they are Egyptians talking about why Pharaoh needs to control the Israelites.