THE ISRAELITES OPPRESSED

Exodus 1:1-22
The Israelites Oppressed

Text:

Exodus 1:1-22,

1. These are the names of the sons of Israel who entered Egypt—each man with his household entered with Jacob:
2. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,
3. Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,
4. Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.
5. All the people who were directly descended from Jacob numbered seventy. But Joseph was already in Egypt,
6. and in time Joseph and his brothers and all that generation died.
7. The Israelites, however, were fruitful, increased greatly, multiplied, and became extremely strong, so that the land was filled with them.
8. Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power over Egypt.
9. He said to his people, “Look at the Israelite people, more numerous and stronger than we are!
10. Come, let’s deal wisely with them. Otherwise they will continue to multiply, and if a war breaks out, they will ally themselves with our enemies and fight against us and leave the country.”
11. So they put foremen over the Israelites to oppress them with hard labor. As a result they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh.
12. But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread. As a result the Egyptians loathed the Israelites,
13. and they made the Israelites serve rigorously.
14. They made their lives bitter by hard service with mortar and bricks and by all kinds of service in the fields. Every kind of service the Israelites were required to give was rigorous.

15. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah,

16. “When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe at the delivery: If it is a son, kill him, but if it is a daughter, she may live.”

17. But the midwives feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.

18. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this and let the boys live?”

19. The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women—for the Hebrew women are vigorous; they give birth before the midwife gets to them!”

20. So God treated the midwives well, and the people multiplied and became very strong.

21. And because the midwives feared God, he made households for them.

22. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “All sons that are born you must throw into the river, but all daughters you may let live.” (NET)

Introduction:

I. Jacob and his descendants when they entered Egypt numbered seventy (70).

II. The Israelite population increased to two million (2,000,000) over the next four hundred (400) years.

A. Genesis 1:28, God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule
over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.” (NET)

III. The Egyptians feared the large Israelite population.

A. Exodus 1:10, Come, let’s deal wisely with them. Otherwise they will continue to multiply, and if a war breaks out, they will ally themselves with our enemies and fight against us and leave the country. (NET)

IV. Pharaoh ordered all Hebrew newborn males killed.

A. Exodus 1:16, “When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe at the delivery: If it is a son, kill him, but if it is a daughter, she may live.” (NET)

V. The first chapters of Exodus set the stage for the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt and their journey to the land promised by God.

Commentary:

I. Exodus 1:1-4, These are the names of the sons of Israel who entered Egypt—each man with his household entered with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. (NET)

A. Exodus is the record of God’s continuing revelation to and birth of Israel as a nation.

B. Exodus 1:2-4 lists eleven of the twelve sons of Jacob whose descendants would form tribes which would compose the tribes that will make up the nation of Israel.
C. Joseph was already in Egypt from whose descendants, Ephraim and Manasseh, later formed two tribes.

II. Exodus 1:5, All the people who were directly descended from Jacob numbered seventy. But Joseph was already in Egypt, (NET)

A. Numbers 1:45-46, All the Israelites who were twenty years old or older, who could serve in Israel’s army, were numbered according to their families. And all those numbered totaled 603,550. (NET)

1. The census was only of males of military age. By the time of the book of Exodus, the population, including women and children, could have grown to over two million. To reach this figure the population would have had to double about every 25 (twenty-five) years.

B. Genesis 17:3-6, Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you. (NET)

III. Exodus 1:9-14, He said to his people, “Look at the Israelite people, more numerous and stronger than we are! Come, let’s deal wisely with them. Otherwise they will continue to multiply, and if a war breaks out, they will ally themselves with our enemies and fight against us and leave the country.” So they put foremen over the Israelites to oppress them with hard labor. As a result they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities
for Pharaoh. But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread. As a result the Egyptians loathed the Israelites, and they made the Israelites serve rigorously. They made their lives bitter by hard service with mortar and bricks and by all kinds of service in the fields. Every kind of service the Israelites were required to give was rigorous. (NET)

A. Pharaoh sees the increasing Hebrew population as a threat.

1. Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews 2.9.1:204, “For they strove one against the other which should get the mastery, the Egyptians desiring to destroy the Israelites by these labors, and the Israelites desiring to hold out to the end under them.”

2. Israelites still continue to multiply and spread by God’s grace.

IV. Pharaoh attempts to eliminate Israelites by infant genocide.

A. Exodus 1:15-16, The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, “When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe at the delivery: If it is a son, kill him, but if it is a daughter, she may live.” (NET)

1. Two of the Hebrew midwives were named Shiphrah and Puah.

   a. Shiphrah and Pauh may have acted as representatives for the Hebrew midwives.
b. Hebrew population would require more than two (2) midwives.

c. Or, they may have been the midwives most faithful to God.

d. Did Pharaoh really think Hebrew midwives would kill Hebrew babies?

II. Exodus 17-22, But the midwives feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this and let the boys live?” The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women—for the Hebrew women are vigorous; they give birth before the midwife gets to them!” So God treated the midwives well, and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he made households for them. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “All sons that are born you must throw into the river, but all daughters you may let live.” (NET)

I. The midwives did not obey Pharaoh.

A. They feared God and let the male babies live.

1. God rewarded them for their faithfulness by blessing their households.

2. Shiphrah and Pauh risked their lives by being faithful to God.

   a. Job 42:10, 42:12a, So the Lord restored what Job had lost after he prayed for his friends, and the Lord doubled all that had belonged to
Job. So the Lord blessed the second part of Job’s life more than the first. (NET)

b. Daniel 3:17, If our God whom we are serving exists, he is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will rescue us, O king, from your power as well. (NET)

c. Psalm 31:23, Love the Lord, all you faithful followers of his! The Lord protects those who have integrity, but he pays back in full the one who acts arrogantly. (NET)

d. 2 Thessalonians 3:3, But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. (NET)

Conclusion:

I. Chapter one tells us three (3) things: First, God’s people increased in Egypt even under very harsh conditions. Second, the Egyptians feared them. Third, God’s plan for his chosen people was going to be fulfilled.

A. The Hebrews were fruitful and multiplied as God had commanded.

1. Genesis 1:28, God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.” (NET)
B. Because of this increase, the Egyptians changed from welcoming hosts to suspicious, cruel masters.

1. Pharaoh decided to kill Hebrew males at birth.

   a. Exodus 1:16, “When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe at the delivery: If it is a son, kill him, but if it is a daughter, she may live.” (NET)

   b. Compare to Matthew 2:16, When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he became enraged. He sent men to kill all the children in Bethlehem and throughout the surrounding region from the age of two and under, according to the time he had learned from the wise men. (NET)

C. God uses average people to accomplish his goals.

1. Moses did not feel worthy to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

   a. Exodus 3:11, Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, or that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt.” (NET)

2. David was a young shepherd boy, yet he was chosen by God for greatness.

   a. 1 Samuel 16:13, So Samuel took the horn full of olive oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. The Spirit of the Lord rushed
upon David from that day onward. Then Samuel got up and went to Ramah. (NET)

3. Jesus told his disciples that HE chose them.
   
a. John 15:16, You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. (NET)

D. Can you name “average people” that you know whom God has chosen, and through whom he works?
Questions

Exodus 1:1-22

1. At the beginning of Exodus, how many of Jacob’s direct descendants were in Egypt? ____________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

2. In the next 400 years, to what number had the Hebrew population grown? _________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. What was Pharaoh’s two (2) solutions to the increasing Israelite population? ________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

4. How did the Israelite midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, respond to Pharaoh’s questions regarding their allowing newborn boys to live?________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
5. What was Pharaoh’s response to their answer? ____________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

6. Why did the Egyptians fear the Israelites? ____________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

7. Were the newborn Israelite females treated differently than the males? If so, how? ____________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

8. Why did the Hebrew midwives disregard Pharaoh’s order to kill the newborn males? ____________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

9. The names of the Israelite midwives were __________ and _______________________.
10. Because the midwives disobeyed Pharaoh’s command to kill the babies, God

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

.