

## Study Notes: Exodus 2:1-10

May 10, 2026: "Faithful Women: Jochebed, Miriam and Pharaoh's Daughter"

Prepared by Reverend Robert W. Rice

Pastor, Muncy Baptist Church

*Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.*

- A man from the tribe of Levi, Amram, marries a woman from the same tribe, Jochebed (see Exodus 6:20) and she gives birth to a son, Moses. The New American Commentary explains the importance of the fact that Moses is a Levite, "The verse pointedly tells the reader that Moses was fully a Levite, that is, from Levite stock on both his father's and his mother's side. This means that he was unquestionably of the tribe that would soon be specially designated by God to provide the religious and spiritual leadership for the people of Israel...In other words, the verse assures the reader that Moses was prequalified for the service God later gave him, even in advance of the revelation that would make that qualification necessary"
- Pharaoh has just issued a decree that all male Hebrew children who are born be thrown into the Nile (see Exodus 1:22), but rather than obey this decree, Jochebed hides her child for three months.
  - This verse indicates that Jochebed hid Moses because he was a fine child. The Hebrew word translated as "fine" is *tov* which is used in Genesis 1 to describe God's creative work.
  - The author of Hebrews indicates that the faith of Jochebed motivated her decisions (Hebrews 11:23).
- At the end of three months, it was impossible for Jochebed to hide Moses any longer, so she prepared a basket and put Moses in the Nile among the reeds near the bank. The Hebrew word translated as basket, *tevah*, is the same word used for Noah's Ark in Genesis 6:14.
  - The Faithlife Study Bible adds, "God once again uses a water vessel to preserve life—in this case, that of the baby Moses and his entire people."
- In a sense, Jochebed obeyed the command of Pharaoh, putting Moses in the Nile, but trusting in God's providence for the child.
- Moses' sister, Miriam, stands at a distance to see what will happen to her brother.

*Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.*

- Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to bathe and noticed the basket. She sent a servant to get it and found the baby. She recognized the baby as a Hebrew boy, who had been placed in the river by Pharaoh's order (though carefully as not to drown him directly). Moved with compassion, she did not follow her father's order, but instead chose to let the baby live.
- The New American Commentary notes, "There was surely no attempt to place Moses in his little ark at a location where he was likely to be discovered. The whole intent was just the opposite. Yet he was discovered—and by an Egyptian! In the story's surprising twist, however, the discovery by an Egyptian, under other conditions likely to lead to the boy's death, leads instead to a perfect protection of his life. This is God at work, providing deliverance in an unanticipated yet wonderful way."

*Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."*

- Seeing an opportunity, Moses' sister asks Pharaoh's daughter if she should find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. When Pharaoh's daughter says "yes" she finds Jochebed, who will nurse her son, and be paid for the work.
- Eventually, when Moses grows up, he is taken to Pharaoh's daughter to become her son. He is named Moses, which sounds like the Hebrew phrase for drawn out of the water.
  - Moses' name is already foreshadowing the work that God will use him for, to draw or deliver the people out of Egypt.
- The New American Commentary summarizes the message of this passage in part, "Although this portion of the overall narrative features Moses, it is also the story of how God used three women to save a baby from death. It features two mothers and two daughters, with the daughter of Pharaoh in two roles, initially that of daughter and eventually also of adoptive mother. Moses' biological mother also figures prominently in these events as the one who not only did everything she could to preserve the life of her child, but also as the woman who ended up being able to nurse and thus substantially rear (see vv. 7–10) her own little boy. The final major figure is this woman's daughter, that is, Moses' sister, who will be identified later as Miriam, one of the leaders of the exodus. Miriam's oversight of Moses as he floated among the rushes of the Nile and her quick thinking in proposing an Israelite nurse for the baby (knowing full well she would "recruit" his own mother) helped preserve Moses for her family and for Israel's salvation. The motives of all these women appear to have been pure and appropriate. God used them to do what they were good at and what their culture especially honored in women: preserving and raising a child."