

Study Questions Exodus 1 and 2

The Figure of Moses

1. The Jewish people have long been the object of persecution. Can we learn anything about anti-Jewish persecution from the first chapter of Exodus?
2. In 1776 Benjamin Franklin proposed that the Great Seal of the United States should show Moses with his rod lifted and the Egyptian army drowning in the sea. Jefferson wanted a more peaceful design. Franklin's design never came into being. Did America's founding fathers choose rightly?
3. The multiplication of Jacob's descendents is described in language similar to the multiplication of the frogs. Might the rise of Israel be viewed as an eleventh plague?
4. Why does God choose the condition of bondage under Pharaoh as the circumstance when the promise of many descendents is fulfilled?
5. At what point do you think the condition of slavery really kicked in? What was it like for Israel in Egypt before slavery kicked in.
6. Wouldn't a slave keeping society be pleased that the men were multiplying? Why not kill the women? Why kill anybody?
7. Why doesn't the Pharaoh's daughter share her father's concern for the multiplying numbers of Hebrews?
8. What can be inferred in the early chapters about the Biblical view of kings and centralized government?
9. How exactly did the Pharaoh think that hard labor would suppress population growth?
10. The opposition to Israel's population growth is opposition to God's creative purpose. Can we say that today, hard labor or even oppression are direct assaults on God's work?
11. Was the population problem of Israel a threat that warranted the brutal response of killing male babies?
12. How is it that Pharaoh knows and is conversant with the Hebrew midwives?
13. The Pharaoh's oppression of Israel is fear-driven. Is fear a common motivator of oppressors?
14. If oppression dehumanizes both oppressor and victim, how is Pharaoh dehumanized here?
15. Why are the midwives the only ones or the first ones to attempt to frustrate the Pharaoh? Why wasn't rebellion more widespread? This entire section is thoroughly feminized. Women

dominate the action and preserve Moses' life. Where are the men? Is their absence something to criticize?

16. The midwives are quite wily and deceptive. Is such behavior acceptable for Christians?
17. Note the accelerating imposition of oppression. Pharaoh seems obsessed with the midwives. In the end, all of Egypt is enlisted in the project of eliminating the Hebrews. Do oppressors over-focus on their slaves?
18. What was Moses' mother seeking to accomplish by placing the basket on the Nile?
19. In an ironic way, Moses' mother was obeying the Pharaoh's decree. Do you think she was conscious of this fact?
20. God's work of deliverance here has very frail beginnings. The contrast between baby Moses floating on the water and the full power of the Egyptian state make quite a contrast. Does God always put at risk his plans?
21. What little or weak thing in our world might bring about our own deliverance?
22. Where do we experience in our own lives forms of oppression?
23. Tell of a time when sneakiness enabled you to dodge the full force of an evil oppressor.
24. Are there little forms of rebellion and subversion that we're called to enact in order to modify the power of an oppressor.
25. If the class is able to identify an oppressor at large today, consider some small act of subversion of that oppressor that everyone can agree to participate in.