

Jochebed, the Mother of Moses

Text: Exodus 2:1-10

It has been 17 years since Joseph died and Israel was being blessed in the land of Egypt. Children were being born and they were becoming the mighty nation God intended them to be. Exodus 1:7, 8: “And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.” So Pharaoh decided to make life hard on the Israelites by forcing them to build the treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses (Exodus 1:11). “But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew...” (Exodus 1:12a). Therefore, Pharaoh made them work rigorously with hard bondage and no mercy. Pharaoh did not stop there. He felt threatened by the ever-growing population of Israel. He decided to take the first step to genocide. Exodus 1:15, 16: “And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.” These two midwives become heroic as seen in Exodus 1:17-21. Shiphrah and Puah, the midwives were heeding the warning of Proverbs 24:11, 12 even before it was recorded in the canon: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?” Although Psalm 127:3 had also not yet been recorded in the canon, these ladies seem to have understood the principle, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” Craig D. Lounsbrough stated, “Integrity is the thing that binds together all that is good within us as a means of overcoming all that is bad around us.” Shiphrah and Puah were blessed by fearing God rather than obeying the sinful commands of a wicked king. Acts 5:29 comes into play: “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Amram and his wife Jochebed had two kids, Miriam, and Aaron and one on the way, Moses. It appears that between the birth of the second child and Moses the decree was being enforced. Jochebed, by faith, was able to hide Moses effectively for three months, but after that point, she was not going to be able to keep this kid quiet. She needed to hear from God.

1. JOCHEBED ILLUSTRATES THE SYNERGY OF FAITH AND WORKS

Exodus 3:2: “And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.”

Try to place yourself in this mother's place. If Moses stays in the house, his cries will be heard and eventually the baby Moses would be found out and his execution would be inevitable. No doubt this woman of faith believed God. Hebrews 11:23a says, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents....”

Here is another extreme act of faith. The Bible doesn't give us the details; allow us to use our imagination. The Lord obviously gives Jochebed the message to build an

ark. This reminds us of Genesis 6:14: "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." The Bible says in Hebrews 11:7a: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house...." Noah prepared a large ark for the saving of his family. Jochebed made a very small ark, even using pitch, like Noah, to waterproof it--not just for the saving of her young son's life, but also for the saving of the nation Israel! Never underestimate the power of smallness! Zechariah 4:10a: "For who hath despised the day of small things?" There was another mother centuries later who saw something extremely great from a rather small place. Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

What faith it took for Jochebed to place her little baby in that small ark into the Nile where hungry crocodiles were ubiquitous! We recognize in her deed a combination of her faith and her works by making the ark and then by faith placing her precious son in this environment, not knowing the outcome. James 2:18: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

2. THE DESIRE OF MOTHERHOOD IS EMBEDDED IN THE HEARTS OF MIRIAM AND PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

Exodus 2:5-8

Miriam hovered over Moses like a mother hen. Pharaoh's daughter recognized that here was a Hebrew male child born with a death sentence, but she hears the baby's cry and her heart melts. From our story we see two young ladies, not yet mothers, but having the natural mothering desires. When I see little girls carrying baby dolls in their arms, I am reminded that God makes little girls with a longing desire to be mothers. We mark the desperate yearning for motherhood in Hannah (I Samuel 1:10, 11, 27, 28). Rachel cries in desperation, "...Give me children, or else I die" (Genesis 30:1b). Linguists studying ancient languages and language families from all over the world, from the high Arctic to southern India, have discovered that some words have changed relatively little in the last 6,000 years or so--and one of them just happens to be the word mother!

3. JOCHEBED GETS A NEW JOB

Exodus 2:9

God is on the mother's side and blesses the nuclear family! The Lord expresses some of His most wonderful provision through the family unit: "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains..." (Psalm 68:6). What a blessing! We can imagine Jochebed rejoicing that her baby boy would live. Her happiness increased when she left the fields of strenuous hard labor that Pharaoh had assigned to the Israelites, and became a paid nurse to take care of little Moses.

4. THE TRANSFER OF JOCHEBED'S FAITH

Exodus 2:10

Hebrews 11:24-26: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." The faith that Jochebed had was clearly transferred to Moses.

It is recorded in Jewish narratives that Pharaoh's daughter (in her later years) devoted herself to Moses and to Jehovah; she celebrated the first Passover meal with Moses in the slaves' quarters and for that, her firstborn is the only Egyptian to survive the final of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, and left Egypt with him for the Promised Land. It is more than Jewish custom, because I Chronicles 4:18b reads: "...And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took." The name "Bithiah" means "worshipper of Jehovah." So, the faith of Moses' biological mother was transferred to Moses and Moses transfers the faith to his adopted Egyptian mother.

Mothers are one of God's chief recruiting agents for the Kingdom of God. Billy Sunday said, "The last thing you can take from a boy is that which he learned at his mother's knee." Paul said to Timothy, "...I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (II Timothy 1:5). The word "unfeigned" means genuine and sincere. Even as mothers naturally see to their child's physical needs, the Christian mother gives her children the sincere milk of the Word. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2). Solomon admonishes, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8). "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 6:20). Dad lays down the law and Mom enforces the law. And what is the ultimate goal of the law? "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

-Pastor Pope-