

Exodus Story

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Source:

At the end of the biblical book of Genesis, Joseph brings his family to Egypt. Over the following centuries, the descendants of Joseph's family (the Hebrews) become so numerous that when a new king comes to power he fears what might happen if the Hebrews decide to rise against the Egyptians. He decides that the best way to avoid this situation is to enslave them. According to tradition, these enslaved Hebrews are the ancestors of modern day Jews.

Despite pharaoh's attempt to subdue the Hebrews they continue to have many children. As their numbers grow, pharaoh comes up with another plan: he will send soldiers to kill all newborn male babies who were born to Hebrew mothers. This is where the story of Moses begins.

In order to save Moses from the grisly fate pharaoh has decreed, his mother and sister put him in a basket and set it afloat on the river. Their hope is that the basket will float to safety and whomever finds the baby will adopt him as their own. His sister, Miriam, follows along as the basket floats away. Eventually it is discovered by none other than pharaoh's daughter, Batya (sidenote: Even though Batya is Egyptian, her name in the Torah isn't an Egyptian name, but a title, meaning daughter of God in Hebrew, showing how God is proud to call all good people his children, regardless of religion). She saves Moses and raises him as her own, so that a Hebrew child is raised as a prince of Egypt.

When Moses grows up he kills an Egyptian guard when he sees him beating a Hebrew slave. Then Moses flees for his life, heading into the desert. In the desert he joins the family of Jethro, a Midian priest, by marrying Jethro's daughter and having children with her. He becomes a shepherd for Jethro's flock and one day, while out tending the sheep, Moses meets God in the wilderness. The voice of God calls out to him from a burning bush and Moses answers: "Hineini!" ("Here I am!" in Hebrew.)

God tells Moses that he has been chosen to free the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. Moses is not sure he can carry out this command. But God reassures Moses that he will have help in the form of God's aide and his brother, Aaron.