Oppression: The Background and the Birth of Moses

Lesson 1, 3rd Quarter June 28 – July 4, 2025.

Sabbath Afternoon June 28

Memory Text:

"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." KJV — Exodus 2:23-25

"The people of Egypt, in order to supply themselves with food during the famine, had sold to the crown their cattle and lands, and had finally bound themselves to perpetual serfdom. Joseph wisely provided for their release; he permitted them to become royal tenants, holding their lands of the king, and paying an annual tribute of one fifth of the products of their labor. PP 241.1

"But the children of Jacob were not under the necessity of making such conditions. On account of the service that Joseph had rendered the Egyptian nation, they were not only granted a part of the country as a home, but were exempted from taxation, and liberally supplied with food during the continuance of the famine. The king publicly acknowledged that it was through the merciful interposition of the God of Joseph that Egypt enjoyed plenty while other nations were perishing from famine. He saw, too, that Joseph's representatives had greatly enriched the kingdom, and his gratitude surrounded the family of Jacob with royal favor." PP 241.2

Sunday, June 29

God's People in Egypt

Read Exodus 1:1-7. What crucial truth is found here?

"But as time rolled on, the great man to whom Egypt owed so much, and the generation blessed by his labors, passed to the grave. And "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." Not the new king but his successor had received services to the nation, but he wished to make no recognition of them, and, so far as possible, to bury them in oblivion. 'And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." PP 241.3

Read Exodus 1:8-11. What was the situation of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus?

"The Israelites had already become very numerous; they "were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." Under Joseph's fostering care, and the favor of the king who was then ruling, they had spread rapidly over the land. But they had kept themselves a distinct race, having nothing in common with the Egyptians in customs or religion; and their increasing numbers now excited the fears of the king and his people, lest in case of war they should join themselves with the enemies of Egypt. Yet policy forbade their banishment from the country. Many of them were able and understanding workmen, and they added greatly to the wealth of the nation; the king needed such laborers for the erection of his magnificent palaces and temples. Accordingly he ranked them with the Egyptians who had sold themselves with their possessions to the kingdom. Soon taskmasters were set over them, and their slavery became complete. 'And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.' But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." PP 241.4

Monday, June 30

The Historical Background

What was the key to Joseph's amazing success in Egypt after such a rough start? (Gen. 37:26-28 and Gen. 39:2, 21)

Years before Israel went into Egypt, God in His providence (Gen. 45:5) influenced Jacob to make a coat of many colors for his youngest son, Joseph. This seemingly partiality, along with Joseph's dream and his father's interpretation of it (Gen. 37:10), provoked the jealous brothers to sell him as a slave, to be carried away into Egypt so as to prevent his supplanting them in influence or position. But there in Egypt the Lord in His own time raised him to the second throne of the realm, from brought the years of plenty, also the years of famine, as the means to remove the whole household of Jacob into Egypt.

In their desperate endeavor to be rid of Joseph so as to avoid being ruled by him, his brethren succeeded only by stirring up the even attentive potential of Providence in exalting him to the administrative throne of Egypt, and in bringing themselves down in humiliation at his feet. Here is marked evidence that no human attempts to defeat God's purposes succeeds only in defeating his own and in promoting God's.

The troubles which came to Joseph in his life were actually for his good and prepared him to become an interpreter of dreams, a king, and finally doubles the greatest economist the world has ever seen. God had observed that Joseph did everything as if it were his very own, and, moreover, he was constantly sensible to the fact that God was his Master and that nothing could be withheld from Him. It was this conviction that caused Joseph to understand that regardless what men did to him or said about him, God alone had charge of his life. Therefore, in prosperity and false prosperity maintained his loyalty and integrity; and in adversity Joseph did not waste his time ascribing to others the cause of his troubles. Instead, he set about to behave in a way that would commend himself even to royalty, for it is not likely that the Ishmaelites would have been able to sell him to Potiphar had he not been a superior person. —COGS 5.20

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.... And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured." Gen. 39:2, 4, 6. But again it was his lot to suffer reversals over which he had no control, and he landed in prison where his excellent personality and faithfulness once again won him his freedom, and, moreover, he was promoted to the highest position of the land.

Tuesday, July 1

The Hebrew Midwives

Read Exodus 1:9-21. What key role did the faithful midwives play, and why are they remembered in history?

"The king and his counselors had hoped to subdue the Israelites with hard labor, and thus decrease their numbers and crush out their independent spirit. Failing to accomplish their purpose, they proceeded to more cruel measures. Orders were issued to the women whose employment gave them opportunity for executing the command, to destroy the Hebrew male children at their birth. Satan was the mover in this matter. He knew that a deliverer was to be raised up among the Israelites; and by leading the king to destroy their children he hoped to defeat the divine purpose. But the women feared God, and dared not execute the cruel mandate. The Lord approved their course, and prospered them. The king, angry at the failure of his design, made the command more urgent and extensive. The whole nation was called upon to hunt out and slaughter his helpless victims. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." PP 242.1

"But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive." Exodus 1:17..."The name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah;" Verse 15. The meaning of these names are "Beauty" and "splendor." Indeed it is. It would have been impossible for two midwives to wait on the great multitude of women, but the fact is, that there were only two...

Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." Exodus 1:20, 22. The chief object of Pharaoh's scheme was not to reduce the people in number. Had this been his, he should have killed the female, for in those days they practiced polygamy. Had he given an order to cast the female children in the river, and save the males, he could have accomplished his purpose, and also added to his slaves for it was the men who produced the bricks. We read in Patriarchs and Prophets, page 242: "Satan was the mover in this matter. He knew that a deliverer was to be raised up among the Israelites; and by leading the king to destroy their children he hoped to defeat the divine purpose."

Wednesday, July 2

Moses is Born

Read Exodus 2:1-10. What role did God's providence and protection play in Moses' birth story?

"While this decree was in full force a son was born to Amram and Jochebed, devout Israelites of the tribe of Levi. The babe was "a goodly child," and the parents, believing that the time of Israel's release was drawing near, and that God would raise up a deliverer for His people, determined that their little one should not be sacrificed. Faith in God strengthened their hearts, "and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." Hebrews 11:23. PP 242.2

"The mother succeeded in concealing the child for three months. Then, finding that she could no longer keep him safely, she prepared a little ark of rushes, making it watertight by means of slime and pitch; and laying the babe therein, she placed it among the flags at the river's brink. She dared not remain to guard it, lest the child's life and her own should be forfeited; but his sister, Miriam, lingered near, apparently indifferent, but anxiously watching to see what would become of her little brother. And there were other watchers. The mother's earnest prayers had committed her child to the care of God; and angels, unseen, hovered above his lowly resting place. Angels directed Pharaoh's daughter thither. Her curiosity was excited by the little basket, and as she looked upon the beautiful child within, she read the story at a glance. The tears of the babe awakened her compassion, and her sympathies went out to the unknown mother who had resorted to this means to preserve the life of her precious little one. She determined that he should be saved; she would adopt him as her own. PP 243.1

"Miriam had been secretly noting every movement; perceiving that the child was tenderly regarded, she ventured nearer, and at last said, "Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" And permission was given. PP 243.2

"The sister hastened to her mother with the happy news, and without delay returned with her to the presence of Pharaoh's daughter. "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages," said the princess. PP 243.3

"God had heard the mother's prayers, her faith had been rewarded. It was with deep gratitude that she entered upon her new safe and happy task. She faithfully improved her opportunity to educate her child for God. The felt confident that he had been preserved for some great work, and she was anxious that he should be fitted for it. She was careful to surround him with influences that would tend to lead him away from God. All this rendered her more vigilant and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children. She endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice, and earnestly prayed that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. She showed him the folly and sin of idolatry, and early taught him to bow down and pray to the living God, who alone could hear him and help him in every emergency." PP 243.4

Thursday, July 3

A Change of Plans

Read Exodus 2:11-25. What events quickly transpired to change the entire direction of Moses' life? What lessons can we learn from this story?

Reared in the courts of Pharaoh, he [Moses] received the highest education the world then offered. And having understood that he was the one to free his brethren from Egyptian bondage, he felt quite capable for the job...He started out to deliver them although he was not yet told to do so. He killed an Egyptian, fell into a quarrel with one of his Hebrews, and then fled for his life. So it was that in Midian he obtained a job, became a shepherd, and married his employer's daughter. During those forty years of shepherd's life, he forgot the Egyptian language, and with it the Egyptian learning. In its place, though, he learned to tend well to sheep. He therefore dismissed from his mind the idea of ever delivering the people of God from their Egyptian bondage. Then it was that God saw him strong and well able and commanded him to go back to Egypt and to bring out of it His groaning people.

"In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do. It was not God's will to deliver His people by warfare, as Moses thought, but by His own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to Him alone. Yet even this sin had not been overruled by God to accomplish His purposes. Moses was not prepared for his great work. He had yet to learn the same lesson of faith that Abraham and Jacob had been forced to learn—not to rely upon human strength or wisdom, but upon the power of God for the fulfillment of His promises. And there were other lessons that, amid the solitude of the mountains, Moses was to receive. In the school of self-denial and hardship he was to learn patience, to temper his passions. Before he could govern wisely, he must be trained to obey. His own heart must be fully in harmony with God before he could teach the knowledge of His will to Israel. By his own experience he must be prepared to exercise a fatherly care over all who needed his help. PP 247.3

"Man would have dispensed with that long period of toil and obscurity, deeming it a great loss of time. But Infinite Wisdom called him who was to become the leader of his people to spend forty years in the humble work of a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience." PP 247.4

Friday, July 4

Further Thought

"At the court of Pharaoh, Moses received the highest civil and military training. The monarch had determined to make his adopted grandson his successor on the throne, and the youth was educated for his high station. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." Acts 7:22. He was a skillful military leader made him a favorite with the armies of Egypt, and he was generally regarded as a remarkable character. Satan had been defeated in his purpose. The very means condemning the Hebrew children to death had been overruled by God for the training and education of the future leader of His people. PP 245.1

"The elders of Israel were taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was near, and that Moses was the man whom God would employ to accomplish this work. Angels instructed Moses also that Jehovah had chosen him to break the bondage of His people. He, supposing that they were to obtain their freedom by force of arms, expected to lead the Hebrew hosts against the armies of Egypt, and having this in view, he guarded his affections, lest in his attachment to his foster mother or to Pharaoh he would not be free to do the will of God." PP 245.2

"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 recompense of the reward. Hebrews 11:24,26. Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the wonderful force of his mind, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, 'choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." PP 245.4