

## The Story of Moses and the Slavery of Israel (31)

### Please read Exodus 1

God had promised Abraham that from him there would one day be a great nation to whom God would give a land (Genesis 12:1-3). God had also predicted that Abraham would not own the land, but his people would enjoy it several generations later.

*Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (Genesis 15:13-16 NIV)*

We have studied in the last three lessons that the promised family of Abraham came to live in Egypt through God's working in the life of Joseph. About 70 descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had moved to Egypt. The king of Egypt had taken Joseph from prison and gave him authority to rule over Egypt. The king gave the people of Israel a separate land (Goshen) and asked them to be responsible for his flocks of animals.

When we leave the first book of the Bible the 70 in Joseph's family are prospering and have a peaceful, honored life in the land of Egypt. However, when we turn one page in our Bible to the second book (Exodus), their circumstances have drastically changed. 200 to 300 years have gone by since Joseph and the people now number at least 2,000,000. Instead of being honored by the king of Egypt, the people of Israel are now slaves of the Egyptian people.

### **What brought on this change?**

The Bible simply says,

*Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies,*

*fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly. (Exodus 1:8-14 NIV)*

We learn from Egyptian history that from 1684-1567 B.C. the Egyptians had been controlled by foreigners. So the king that ruled in Joseph's time was not a native to Egypt. Even though this king (known as a Hyksos king) was favorable to Joseph and gave his family a fertile peace of land in Egypt, he was viewed as oppressive by the Egyptian people. Later after Joseph died, the Egyptian people overthrew this foreign dynasty and began again to appoint their own kings.

So the Egyptians – as the book of Exodus begins (1400-1500 B.C.) are not fond of the people of Israel. In fact, they are afraid that the people of Israel would join other foreigners in fighting against them.

Not only did the Egyptians enslave the people of Israel, they also began killing the baby boys. If it had not been for the faith of several women who loved God more than they feared the king – all the baby boys would have died.

It was into this environment that the next important character in the Bible story is born.

Questions:

1. Which of the following people did God use to allow the people of Israel to move to Egypt?
  - a. Joseph?
  - b. Jacob?
  - c. Moses?
  - d. Isaac?
2. The 70 people kin to Abraham in Egypt at the end of the book of Genesis grew to \_\_\_\_\_ people at the beginning of Exodus.
3. What was different about the king that ruled during Joseph's time and the king that ruled at the beginning of the book of Exodus.