

Exodus 1:8-22; 2:1-15

Aim of Lesson

To show the faith of Amram and Jochebed, and how God protected their son. To show the foolishness of acting in anger.

Background study

Genesis 46:3; Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59; Acts 7:17-29; Hebrews 11:23-25. Study this period in Egypt's history.

Suggested outline of lesson

Ask the children whether they remember that because of the famine Jacob and his large family had gone to live in Egypt where Joseph held a position of great authority. Pharaoh had welcomed them and they had settled in an area rich in pasture where they could tend their flocks. Fill in the intervening period of history, drawing from the children what knowledge they may have of ancient Egypt, with its fine architecture, Nile-centred development, hieroglyphic writings and the worship of heathen gods. In fact, approximately three hundred and fifty years had elapsed since the time of Joseph, and the Israelite nation had grown enormously, as God and foretold. Although only seventy men had settled with their households in Goshen, this number had now grown to around half a million.

The government of Egypt had undergone changes, and a Pharaoh came to the throne who had no regard for the work of Joseph in times past, or for the foreigners who lived in his land. He felt threatened by their increasing numbers and their exclusivity. In using them as slaves his purpose was twofold: he hoped to keep control of them, whilst exploiting them in a vast building programme. With the aid of pictures, give the children some idea of the physical cruelty the Israelites had to endure at the hands of taskmasters who hated them. God's people, who had been shepherds, were made to hew stone and haul enormous weights, straining every muscle in the searing heat.

When Pharaoh saw that their numbers continued to increase, in spite of extreme hardship, he devised a very cruel plan which was intended ultimately to halt the nation's growth. When the midwives failed to co-operate, he gave all Egyptian citizens the authority to snatch and drown any male babies. This horrified the Israelites and made them afraid of everyone around them. Their sufferings reached an unbearable level. However, God was not ignorant of their anguish; his plans for saving his people were already beginning to operate.

Describe the actions of Amram and Jochebed as they endeavoured to hide their baby son from the Egyptians. Describe the feelings of tension and anxiety in the household whenever the baby cried. They already had two older children, Aaron and Miriam, whose help they enlisted. In desperation, they put all their faith in God, and hid Moses in the Nile. Here, too, Miriam was courageous and conscientious. Tell this familiar but dramatic story, bringing out the compassion of the princess and the overriding care and providence of God in seeing to it that Moses was nursed by his own mother and adopted into the royal household, perhaps the safest place in the land.

In contrast to the poverty-stricken life of suffering which was the Hebrews' lot, Moses would have enjoyed the luxury of the royal court - rich clothing, nourishing food, a high level of education and increased responsibility. We do not know the details of his boyhood in the palace, but it seems likely that his mother continued to have some influence on his thinking, so that he knew about the God of Israel. When he grew up he knew that he was a Hebrew and he felt great loyalty to his own people.

How tempting it would have been for Moses, the royal prince, to take matters into his own hands. He had been trained in leadership and was used to being obeyed. Having been brought up in luxury and had the best education, it must have been difficult for Moses to understand the hardships suffered by his own people. However, his indignation was instinctive when he saw a fellow Hebrew being ill-treated by an Egyptian. His anger resulted in murder, and suddenly into his life came fear, panic and great loneliness. Perhaps he had thought that as a prince of Egypt he could, by his own hand, deliver his people? Several great lessons awaited him. He who had seemed so privileged and secure became a hunted man fleeing for his life.

Relevance to the children's lives

Was Moses wrong to be angry at what he saw? Were his actions right? It is so easy to lose our tempers and do foolish things. How can we learn to stop ourselves acting in anger? What should we do when angry feelings arise in us?

