

"Embracing God's Presence, Past, Present & Future!"  
September 20, 2020; 10:00 am  
Exodus 1:8-2:10  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
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Exodus 1:8-2:10 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Then a new king, who knew nothing of Joseph, came to power in Egypt. <sup>9</sup> "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. <sup>10</sup> 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."

<sup>11</sup> So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. <sup>12</sup> But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites <sup>13</sup> and worked them ruthlessly. <sup>14</sup> They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

<sup>15</sup> The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, <sup>16</sup> "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." <sup>17</sup> The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of

Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. <sup>18</sup> Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"

<sup>19</sup> The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

<sup>20</sup> So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. <sup>21</sup> And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

<sup>22</sup> Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

## **I. KNEW NOT JOSEPH**

<sup>8</sup> Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

The new king "knew not Joseph. He knew not the story from the beginning. The selling down the river, the brothers' jealousy—which was somewhat *warranted* due to that youthful arrogance and inclination toward "tattle-talery."

He *knew not* the younger brother's sad tale of betrayal, of being thrown under the bus, left in a pit. Of the father's anguish, regret and fear of dying alone in grief with an estranged family.

Pharoah *knew not* that God was in the middle of this story. That the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was a faithful Presence in this family saga. He likely didn't even *know* this God—Yahweh, Elohim, God of the fathers and mothers from the days of old.

He most definitely did *not know* that *this* story, through all its complexities, family and political dynamics, generations and life-threatening moments, came to a life-giving and important resolution and place of reconciliation—over and over again!

## **II. WHO KNEW NOT THE HISTORY & THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE**

Ever have someone new come on the scene, who doesn't know *the ways things are*? In any community, congregation or organization, a new season might sound a bit like this new chapter in the Hebrew Children's story.

New leaders—not just kings or pharaohs—but all involved, come onto the scene at different times. As folks “get on board” at different stages, they bring differing gifts, insights, ways of doing things and ideas for changing thing with them.

It's **challenging**. As a group or community, it's challenging to welcome fully the gifts and new spirits into the stream—when everyone comes in at a different

stage, and knows their own piece of the history. Has been told a variety of versions for how things have been done in the past. How things are in the present, and what the dreams are for the future.

This is certainly true in our community. Our town of BV, our county, our congregation—all. You might have been here since you were a child, but someone else—someone born here, for instance—considers you a newbie!

Or, you might have come in the last two decades, like many of us, but it was before the significant change in businesses, growth, housing prices, demographics, retiree-influx, and even though you're not a longtimer, you've seen a ton of change just in a few years, and you're not sure if you like all the new ways. You're not sure “what's getting lost” of the good things in so much change.

I laugh at myself, when I get my hackles up about something that may have just happened 5 years ago—a line item in a budget that I and others worked hard to incorporate—being up for discussion or removal.

I realize that I have far more investment than I'm aware of, in things not being forgotten, or someone's

hard work and commitment not being honored or continued. Collective amnesia or reinventing the wheel is a hot-button for me, because it feels like backwards progress. I want to tell Pharaoh the whole history and story—catch him up and tell him how central Joseph and his family are to the Big Picture, and how he'd better pay attention, or God won't be pleased.

I'm starting to act like a long-timer already! I even catch myself saying, "But, this is how we've always done it." Or, "We tried that already and it didn't work!" (Those are the 7 deadly sentiments of the Church, you know.)

### **III. SUSPICIOUS SOLUTIONS—SLAVERY &** But, back to the story.

We might learn some things—helpful and not—for dealing with this challenge of living together in messy, ever-evolving community, over many stages and phases, from these scripture stories of old.

What Pharaoh *did know*, was that they—this little band of brothers, turned into a teeming clan of progeny, had changed the landscape of Egypt. There were too many of them! These relative newcomers posed a threat!

Something must be done about this infiltration, because we don't know their loyalties. If there was a

war, these Hebrew people might rise up and fight *against* the establishment—join the other side.

So, slave labor was deemed the most prudent solution and years of hell ensued for the Children of Israel. Then, when that wasn't enough, infanticide was enacted, but God and the midwives had other plans, and a sleight of hand, or "sleight of womb" as was the case, foiled that evil intent.

And God comes on the scene in a number of amazing ways. Hear:

### **IV. THE REST OF THE STORY—MOSES on the SCENE**

#### **The Birth of Moses**

<sup>2</sup> Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, <sup>2</sup> and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. <sup>3</sup> But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket<sup>[a]</sup> for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup> His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

<sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get

it.<sup>6</sup> She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said.

<sup>7</sup> Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?”

<sup>8</sup> “Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby’s mother. <sup>9</sup> Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him. <sup>10</sup> When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses,<sup>[b]</sup> saying, “I drew him out of the water.”

## **V. GOD DRAWS US OUT OF THE WATER**

God intervenes, and sends human agents to “draw out of the water” and give new life. Over and over again.

When we remember how God acts in our foremothers and forefathers’ lives—how God saves—from the river, from the wine and waves, storms and struggles, we find the strength and renewed faith to go on, step by step.

To ask God to save US, to stay with us, on the journey. To bless us *amidst* the challenges, the oppression, the fearful and chaotic times in which we find ourselves.

When humankind is cruel to one another, God rescues. Yahweh finds another way. Sends a plan. Sends men and women, young and old, to be God’s active agents.

a. In a sense, we are all “**Moses**,” as we are all “drawn from the water.”

b. We are all **Jacob**, touched by the hand of God—in the midst of wrestling through life and left limping and blessed—all at the same time.

We are all Joseph—matured through our youthful chutzpah and pride. Wizedened by the betrayal and banishment—even sold down the river—but never betrayed or abandoned, forsaken or forgotten, by our Maker.

Redeemed out of the pit and given a new calling, encouraged to listen to our dreams and lead God’s people into new place and ways of being together in community.

c. We are all the **Children of Israel**.

Finding ourselves in a new season—where what we’ve known and how we’ve been known in the past is changing.

We are never, even so, “not known” by our Source, the One who brought us to this time and place.

The One who knitted us together in our mother's womb, and counts the very hairs on our heads. Who knows our waking and our sleeping; our joys and our sorrows.

d. We are all **Moses** in the Rest of the Story.

When he is long grown—long after being born into troubled times and drawn out of the river by the most unlikely daughter of a king. When he is plucked up by God and given a profound purpose in life.

Tune in next week for the “Rest of the Moses Story.” Be prepared to take off your shoes! To get heated up a little—maybe a little burned, or set on fire!

For, God meets each of us where we are in the midst of our everyday lives and tasks and reminds us that She is here and everywhere, and has a vocation for us. A call on our lives—every one off us. A job to do for the Kingdom.

Even in COVID Times. Even in our homes, while sheltering in place. Even in winter—or whatever season we're in!

The world has not stopped turning.

God has not stopped calling out and calling forth—men, women, youth and children. Congregations and communities, to be God's agents in this world. Channels of peace and justice; bearers of mercy and compassion, stirrers and disturbers of Good Trouble. Agents of change, working toward healthy and wholeness—shalom!—for all God's children.

Will we answer the call?

Will God find us faithful?

Know us to be here—ready, willing and able to serve and love with all we are, and all we have? All the gifts we have to give—whatever stage and age, era and epoch we are in? May it be so, Amen.