

Futile Opposition

PASTOR MIKE YODER • EXODUS 1

Too many people view the Old Testament as a confounding first draft of the New Testament.

Michelle Van Loon

We are now part of God's people, in line with the redemptive promises that God has made all the way back to Moses, indeed back to Abraham. And these Scriptures are for our benefit and blessing as well.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

1 Corinthians 10:2

They all ate the same spiritual food

1 Corinthians 10:3

and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

**The Spectacular Birth & Growth
of God's People (1:1-7)**

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher.

The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died,

but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

You can't read this multiplication language without thinking of Genesis 1:26–28 and later God's promises to Abraham.

God's promises are coming to fruition as Jacob's family in Egypt grows prolifically.

**The Existential Threat Felt by
an Opposing People (1:8–10)**

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.

“Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far 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.”

Exodus 1:10

For any land or major portion thereof to be filled with people of external origin and allegiance is bound to threaten those who regard themselves as its rightful citizens. In a fallen world, hostility to foreigners is unfortunately a common human sin.

Douglas Stuart

If a regime wishes to be given freedom to oppress a given group within a nation, it defines that group as an undermining force, a real danger, and potentially the agent of overthrow of the established order. The Pharaoh was spouting ethnic hate propaganda of the sort still widely employed in the modern world.

Douglas Stuart

We need to honestly ask ourselves: Do I view the (ethnic) foreigners in our midst as a Gospel opportunity or a cultural threat?

Like Israel in Egypt, we find ourselves sojourners in a foreign land. Our citizenship is in heaven but we are on the earth. Though we are in the world, we are not, and must never be, of the world. We are in contact with the world daily. But we realize that its values must not be our values, that its goals are not the same as our goals.

Tom Julien

**The Outrageous Attempts to
Suppress God's People (1:11–22)**

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

Exodus 1:12

and worked them ruthlessly.

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.

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah,

“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.”

The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

*Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them,
“Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?”*

Exodus 1:18

The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.”

So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.

And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families of their own.

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.”

The Approach of Hard Labor (1:12–14)

There is an apparent irony: The more the king tries to thwart God's blessing, the more that blessing increases.

John H. Sailhamer

Over the generations the greater the oppression, the greater the growth. If one analyzes this result as the Egyptians did, apart from the eyes of faith, one has no real explanation for how it could happen. God was turning the Egyptians' oppression policy against them. However, the Israelites were certainly not enjoying it.

Douglas Stuart

The Approach of Male Infanticide (1:15–21)

The midwives bravely defied the unquestioned leader of the greatest nation of their day, risking everything to do what was right instead of what was easy.

Douglas Stuart

The Approach of Male Drowning (1:22)

**The Fear of God, the Plan of God, &
the Precursor from God (1:17, 20–22)**

The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.

And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families of their own.

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.”

My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.

Abraham Lincoln

The whole vain attempt to wipe out the people of God finds its parallel in the New Testament attempt by Herod to destroy a generation of babies at Bethlehem (Mathew 2:16). But, as in the New Testament, God's chosen agent is protected: neither Pharaoh nor Herod can stand in the way of God's plan.

R. Alan Cole

**To oppose what God has chosen
is an exercise in futility.**