

Exodus Genocide

Chapter 1

1.01.2006

Do you think that inside everyone, there is a pool of good just waiting to be tapped? Do you think that when it's tapped, it flows out, and swamps any built up evil, no matter how crusty it is? Do you seek, search, drill and hope that good will flow from out of the heart of everyone?

As much as I would love to believe that we are all good at the core, and that we need to encourage people to overcome the badness that has built up because of bad things that have happened to them; as much as I want to believe it, my experience of life has shown me that it is hard to find.

And the Bible tells me, that it is hard to find, because at the deepest part of each person, the central pond of goodness has been polluted, by what we call sin.

There may be pockets of goodness locked away, but the flow from inside each one of us will not be as good as it should be. and in some, it will be positively foul.

Exodus 1 shows one of the foul leaders in history. We saw some last century. There were Russia's Stalin, Germany's Hitler, Spain's Franco, Uganda's Idi Amin, Cambodia's Pol Pot, Iraq's Saddam Hussein. History is full of foul leaders who resorted to evil to keep in power, to establish their own reign, and to quell opposition.

Today we focus on Genocide in Egypt. Many years earlier, Israel and his sons were invited by Pharaoh to settle in the most fertile part of Egypt. God blessed them, giving them more than they needed. Exodus 1:7 *"the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them."*

But after 400 years, the shine of Egypt had been well and truly rubbed off: *"a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."*

This Pharaoh could see the problem brewing in fertile Goshen. Egypt must be preserved in all her glory. These foreigners would soon outnumber the Egyptians, or maybe join forces with an attacking army.

So he tried to eradicate the problem by making them all slaves.

He had no parliament to force it through; no legal watchdogs to bark about the impropriety of it; no independent senators to keep him honest; no

tribunals to justify whether the action was constitutional or not.

He was Pharaoh, the son of the god Re. What he said, was law! Who would argue against him?

So in one foul swoop, he enslaved them. They were whipped and forced to build the two vast warehouse cities of Pithom and Rameses. The brutal slavery lasted a long time.

We are told more of the feelings of the Israelites in Exodus 2, but in chapter 1 we are given the Egyptians' feelings. The facts are presented baldly, almost as if it were natural for people to be enslaved. v12-14 *"But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks they imposed on them."*

Pharaoh's plan was not working. He thought slavery would crush their spirit, but it seemed to spur them on, and they kept having more children. He could not crack their defences.

So in desperation he applied new tactics. It was a very delicate situation that needed kid gloves. He organised a death squad. The members of this death squad were represented by two midwives, Shiphra and Puah.

In a secret meeting, he instructed them to kill every male baby at birth, but the girls could live. They were to do it in such a way that the mothers would not realise what had happened. I suppose that if it had succeeded, it could have been called a plague, which only affected Hebrew boys.

But once again Pharaoh's evil was foiled. This time the ladies feared God, so did not kill the boys. God foiled Pharaoh's plans through the faithfulness of two ladies.

But Pharaoh was not going to take this lying down. He had given a command that should have been obeyed. The two ladies were in a dangerous situation. *"The king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"* Their lives were hanging by a thread, and they lied to protect the boys, and themselves. They said:

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“Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women, for they're vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” Pharaoh believed them. Maybe he was gullible. But God was bringing a good result from the ladies' lies.

The Israelites saw God was thwarting Pharaoh's evil. (v19-21) *“God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. and because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.”*

But frustrated Pharaoh was not going to let a few ladies stop him. He was convinced that the Israelites were vermin, and vermin needed squashing. *“Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, ‘Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.’”*

Can you imagine the outcry it would make on the news? Cameras rolling as mothers wail while their baby boys are flung into the Nile to drown. Alligators swishing in the water, waiting for feed-time. It would be a massive disaster.

Imagine how you would feel if our government forced you to kill all male babies? How soon would they be forgiven by you? Would you call out to God for help? Would you yearn for justice? Would you seek help? Would you risk death to protect your children? Would God thwart this evil, or let it continue?

God brought an answer to this evil. It's a surprising answer, for our 1st reaction to intense pain is to cry for it to stop immediately. Yet God's answer wasn't an immediate stop.

His answer was to... come next week and find out.

But some questions to think through...

[1] If you were put into the position of the midwives, and were told to do an ungodly act, would you risk everything to say no?

[2] How do you think a faithful Israelite should have responded to Pharaoh's order?

[3] How should a faithful Christian respond to evil now?

[4] What does this add to your thinking about why God lets evil occur?