

Jochebed

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Historical setting

Jochebed is a famous woman with a not-so-famous name. She was the mother of Moses.

Exodus 1

a. v.1-7 Israelites populate Egypt.

This is the end of the story about Joseph.

¹ When Jacob [Joseph's father] went to Egypt, he took his sons [Joseph's brothers], and each son took his own family with him... ⁵ There was a total of seventy people who were descendants of Jacob. Jacob's son Joseph was already in Egypt.

⁶ Some time later, Joseph and his brothers died, along with all the people who had lived at that same time. ⁷ But the people of Israel had many children, and their number grew greatly. They became very strong, and the country of Egypt was filled with them.

b. v.8-14 Egypt's plan #1 for population control:

Slavery for building projects & farm work.

⁸ Then a new king began to rule Egypt, who did not know who Joseph was. ⁹ This king said to his people, "Look! The people of Israel are too many and too strong for us to handle! ¹⁰ If we don't make plans against them, the number of their people will grow even more. Then if there is a war, they might join our enemies and fight us and escape from the country!"

¹¹ So the Egyptians made life hard for the Israelites. They put slave masters over them, who forced the Israelites to build the cities Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king. ¹² But the harder the Egyptians forced the Israelites to work, the more the Israelites grew in number and spread out. So the Egyptians became very afraid of them ¹³ and demanded even more of them. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter. They forced the Israelites to work hard to make bricks and mortar and to do all kinds of work in the fields. The Egyptians were not merciful to them in all their painful work.

c. v.15-21 Egypt's plan #2 for population control.

¹⁵ Two Hebrew nurses, named Shiphrah and Puah, helped the Israelite women give birth to their babies. The king of Egypt said to the nurses, ¹⁶ "When you are helping the Hebrew women give birth to their babies, watch! If the baby is a girl, let her live, but if it is a boy, kill him!" ¹⁷ But the nurses feared God, so they did not do as the king told them; they let all the boy babies live.

These nurses specialized in helping women during childbirth. Often these kind of nurses are called "midwives."

d. v.22 Egypt's plan #3 for population control.

²² *So the king commanded all his people, "Every time a boy is born to the Hebrews, you must throw him into the Nile River, but let all the girl babies live."*

Jochebed & her famous children

e. Exodus 6:20

²⁰ *Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, who gave birth to Aaron and Moses.*

f. Numbers 26:59

...Amram, ⁵⁹ whose wife was named Jochebed. She was from the tribe of Levi and she was born in Egypt. She and Amram had two sons, Aaron and Moses, and their sister Miriam.

Jochebed's dilemma & solution

g. Exodus 2:1-10

¹ *Now a man from the family of Levi married a woman who was also from the family of Levi.* ² *She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw how wonderful the baby was, she hid him for three months.* ³ *But after three months she was not able to hide the baby any longer, so she got a basket and covered it with tar so that it would float. She put the baby in the basket. Then she put the basket among the tall stalks of grass at the edge of the Nile River.* ⁴ *The baby's sister stood a short distance away to see what would happen to him.*

⁵ *Then the daughter of the king of Egypt came to the river to take a bath, and her servant girls were walking beside the river. When she saw the basket in the tall grass, she sent her slave girl to get it.* ⁶ *The king's daughter opened the basket and saw the baby boy. He was crying, so she felt sorry for him and said, "This is one of the Hebrew babies."*

⁷ *Then the baby's sister asked the king's daughter, "Would you like me to go and find a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for you?"*

⁸ *The king's daughter said, "Go!" So the girl went and got the baby's own mother.*

⁹ *The king's daughter said to the woman, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took her baby and nursed him.* ¹⁰ *When the child grew older, the woman took him to the king's daughter, and she adopted the baby as her own son. The king's daughter named him Moses, because she had pulled him out of the water.*

h. Hebrews 11:23

²³ *It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born. They saw that Moses was a beautiful baby, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's order.*

And this is the end of Jochebed's story. This is all we know about her. (Movies about Moses make up a lot of things about Jochebed that are not true, or are not in the Bible.)

Civil Disobedience

i. In the story of Moses' birth, who disobeyed the King's command?

[1] The Hebrew nurses

[2] Jochebed & Amram

[3] The King's daughter!

j. When is it necessary to disobey the law?

The Bible teaches that we must obey the government, because God establishes government.

Romans 13:1-5

All of you must yield to the government rulers. No one rules unless God has given him the power to rule, and no one rules now without that power from God. ² So those who are against the government are really against what God has commanded. And they will bring punishment on themselves. ³ Those who do right do not have to fear the rulers; only those who do wrong fear them. Do you want to be unafraid of the rulers? Then do what is right, and they will praise you. ⁴ The ruler is God's servant to help you. But if you do wrong, then be afraid. He has the power to punish; he is God's servant to punish those who do wrong. ⁵ So you must yield to the government, not only because you might be punished, but because you know it is right.

The Fourth Commandment -- "*Honor your father and mother...*" -- applies to all who are under authority, including the authority of government.

However, there are times when the rules of government are clearly against the Law of God. When Christians must choose between obeying government or obeying God, their choice is obvious.

Acts 4:18-19

¹⁸ *So they [the Jewish high council] called Peter and John in again and told them not to speak or to teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "You decide what God would want. Should we obey you or God?" ²⁰ We cannot keep quiet. We must speak about what we have seen and heard."*

Acts 5:27-30

²⁷ *The soldiers brought the apostles to the meeting and made them stand before the Jewish leaders. The high priest questioned them,²⁸ *saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in that name [of Jesus]. But look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are trying to make us responsible for this man’s death.”**

²⁹ *Peter and the other apostles answered, “We must obey God, not human authority!”*

k. Are there other examples from the Bible?

l. **1 Kings 18**

² *...By this time there was no food in Samaria.* ³ *King Ahab sent for Obadiah, who was in charge of the king’s palace. (Obadiah was a true follower of the LORD.* ⁴ *When [Queen] Jezebel was killing all the LORD’s prophets, Obadiah hid a hundred of them in two caves, fifty in one cave and fifty in another. He also brought them food and water.)*

m. **Daniel 1** tells about Daniel and his three friends refusing to obey the king's command that they eat the king's food. According to Jewish law, the kind of food the king ordered for them was unclean. Rather than openly defy the king's order, Daniel and his friends appealed to the one in authority to give them permission to eat only vegetables and drink only water. The young Jewish men offered to submit to a test to prove that their diet was just as healthy as the king's food.

“Please give us this test for ten days: Don’t give us anything but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ *After ten days compare how we look with how the other young men look who eat the king’s food. See for yourself and then decide how you want to treat us, your servants.”*

¹⁴ *So the guard agreed to test them for ten days.* ¹⁵ *After ten days they looked healthier and better fed than all the young men who ate the king’s food.* ¹⁶ *So the guard took away the king’s special food and wine, feeding them vegetables instead. (Daniel 1:12-16)*

n. The Apostles of Christ also faced a choice to obey God or obey the government. See *Acts 4:18-19 & Acts 5:27-30*, cited above under topic letter (j).

o. Are there modern examples of this principle?

During World War II, Christians in Europe who were under Nazi rule disobeyed the government by hiding Jews and helping them escape.

Every place where Communism rules a country, the Christian church suffers terrible persecution. The government often puts on a false face of religious tolerance by allowing a few government-run churches to meet in public. Those preachers are paid by the government and can only preach what the government allows. People who attend worship are in danger of exposing themselves to official persecution. Most true believers meet in secret house-churches. When the authorities catch leaders of the secret churches those pastors are thrown into prison... or worse.