

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



Moses, a special baby

Miriam pretended to be sleeping. She didn't want her parents to know that she was listening to their conversation. Ever since her baby brother had been born, they had quarrelled. The new baby had only made her smile. He was so tiny and beautiful.

When Aaron, her older brother, had been born, Miriam had been too young to help her mother with him. But with this child it had been different. Her mother had allowed her to hold him just after he had been born. Miriam had been afraid to even move, and she had loved this baby immediately.

Miriam didn't know why her mother always became so upset when the baby cried. "Stop him, Miriam," she would say. "Someone will hear!" She would take the baby then and rock him ever so gently, and he would stop. One time, Miriam thought that he even smiled back at her.

Her father's voice grew more anxious now, and Miriam strained to hear. "Jochebed," he said, "I know how much you love this child, but you must consider the rest of us. There is talk at work, and I fear for all of our lives."

"So you would have the baby destroyed as Pharaoh's cruel law dictates? Amran, we are not like these Egyptians," replied Miriam's mother. "We are Hebrews and serve one God who will save us."

"And how will our God save us when Pharaoh begins a house-to-house search for Hebrew baby boys and discovers our secret?" asked Miriam's father.

"Our God is more powerful than any cruel king! Where is your faith?" his wife protested. "Is it not enough for Pharaoh that we are all his slaves and build cities to honor him? Someday it will be different."

"I hope you are right," he answered sadly.

"A house-to-house search!" Miriam shuddered at the thought. "No wonder my parents haven't named the baby yet!"

Miriam was awake all night, thinking of a way to save her brother. She would never let them harm the innocent child. By the time the first traces of dawn were streaming into their small house, Miriam had come up with a plan.

She waited until her father had gone off to work, because she feared he would dismiss her idea as foolish. It wasn't until she was helping her mother bathe the child that she finally spoke of her idea.

"Mother, there's a special place down by the river where, I go often to gather wildflowers. Yesterday when I was there, I heard much laughter," she began.

"And what was the cause of this laughter?" her mother asked without looking up.

"Every afternoon, Pharaoh's daughter goes into the Nile River to bathe. Several servants attend to her needs," Miriam said.

"And so, child, why do you bring this up now?"

Miriam hesitated, despite her mother's perplexed look. "Because I am certain that if the princess saw my baby brother, she would never allow her father to kill him," she blurted out. "If my plan works, this baby will grow up and live to be an old man," she added, smiling.

"Tell me of your plan, Miriam," her mother replied.

All morning, Miriam helped her mother weave a small basket from the papyrus reeds that grew near the edge of the Nile River. When they had finished it, they took tar and waterproofed the little boat. After

the tar had dried, Jochebed kissed her baby and placed him gently into the basket.

"God go with you both, Miriam," she said. "Some day this child will grow and learn that his sister saved his life."

Miriam walked slowly down to the river, near the place where she had seen the princess. Surely enough, she emerged from the palace, attended by her maids. Miriam knelt down by the river's edge and carefully placed the basket in the water. Before she let it float away, she kissed her brother softly on the cheek. Then she hid behind a tree and waited.

In a few minutes, when her brother started to cry, Miriam heard the princess say, "Bring that basket to me." And next, Miriam heard, "Isn't the baby adorable? He must be one of the Hebrew boys."

Miriam saw her chance then, and she emerged from her hiding place and said, "If you need a Hebrew nurse to care for the child, I know of one."

The princess looked at Miriam, and smiled. "Yes, the child is hungry and I want him taken care of. Take the baby to this Hebrew nurse. Tell her that I will pay her well."

Before the princess gave the baby back to Miriam, all of her maids gathered around to admire the child. One of them asked, "What will you name your baby?"

The princess thought and said, "He shall be called 'Moses,' because the name means 'to draw out,' and I drew him out of the water."

This time, Miriam ran as she made her way back home along the banks of the Nile River. By the time she reached home, both her mother and father stood waiting for her.

"Mother, Father!" she called as she approached. "Moses is hungry. He is waiting to be fed!"

"Do you see now, Amran?" His wife turned to him, smiling. "Our God is indeed stronger than any Pharaoh. Some day we shall be free."

God had saved Moses. He had become a grandson of Pharaoh himself.

For discussion:

1) The Book of Exodus in the Old Testament begins with the story of Moses' birth — Chapter 1:2-10. This book was eventually written by Moses somewhere between 1420 and 1220 B.C.

2) Moses' family was descended from Levi, one of Jacob's 12 sons. Can you name any of Jacob's other sons?

3) When Exodus began, more than 400 years had passed since Joseph first came to Egypt, and the new Pharaoh did not look kindly on the Hebrews. He feared they would join with a neighboring country and make war against Egypt. So he imposed a very cruel law: all of the Hebrew baby boys were to be drowned in the Nile River at birth. The rest of the Hebrews became Pharaoh's slaves. As his slaves, they were put to work making bricks and built the cities of Pithom and Ramses in Egypt.

4) The people of Egypt did not worship the one true God as did the Hebrews. They worshipped a whole variety of false gods, including the sun and Pharaoh. They believed that when Pharaoh died, he would become a god. As soon as Pharaoh came to power, work was begun on an elaborate tomb called a pyramid. A good book about the construction of a pyramid is *Pyramid* by David Macaulay. It has excellent drawings by the author, and is available at the library.

5) Moses' mother and sister made a basket for him from the papyrus reeds that grew along the Nile River. Papyrus was also used to make scrolls on which to write. The ancient Jewish writings, which became most of our Old Testament of the Bible, were first written on a scroll.

6) The Egyptian people wrote on scrolls using a type of picture language known as hieroglyphics, which is composed of 24 basic letters. A good book about hieroglyphics, *Hieroglyphs for Fun* by Joseph and Lenore Scott, is available at the library.

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