

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



Many years had passed since Pharaoh's daughter had discovered the Hebrew baby, Moses, floating in a basket on the Nile River. Moses had grown to be a man and still lived in Pharaoh's palace. But his own mother had taught Moses about the God of his forefathers. And, after all this time, Moses had never forgotten the one true God of the Hebrew people.

Moses went to see his family often. One day, when he arrived home, his mother greeted him and said, "Moses, your friend Ephraim is here waiting to speak to you."

Moses had known Ephraim for so long that he thought of him as his own brother. "Ephraim, it's good to see you," Moses said as he entered the room. "It's been too long."

"Perhaps, my friend, you are too busy serving at Pharaoh's court," Ephraim said with a bitterness that surprised even himself. Then seeing Moses' hurt expression, he added, "I'm sorry, Moses. I haven't been myself lately. The new work quotas have worn me out."

Moses observed his friend for a moment before he answered. Ephraim's face was ruddy and weather-beaten like an old ship. His eyes were lined deeply from years of working in the hot Egyptian sun.

"The words of someone close to me do sting," Moses replied, his face saddened. "But your words are true, so there is nothing to be sorry about. I had hoped that things fared better with you since your appointment to supervisor."

"Things seem to get only worse," Ephraim replied. I must report my own

Hebrew brothers who are not able to meet the impossible quotas. If they were to make bricks even as they sleep, I fear they could never meet Pharaoh's demands."

"And so, what does that make me?" Moses cried. "While I live an easy life at court, my own people are Pharaoh's slaves. I am no better than this cruel king!"

"Now you are being too hard on yourself," Ephraim said kindly. "But there is something that you can do for our people."

"What do you propose that I should do, Ephraim?" Moses asked.

"It's no secret that you are well thought of in high places," Ephraim said, smiling briefly. "If you could speak to the right people, the work quotas could be lowered. If not, I fear that many of Pharaoh's Hebrew slaves will die."

Moses hugged Ephraim before he left and said, "I promise that tomorrow I will come to the work camps and see things for myself. Then I can make a full report to Pharaoh. Don't worry."

Moses sat quietly for a long time after his friend had gone. Finally, his mother came in and broke the silence. "Moses, you are so troubled," she said softly. "What is it, my son?"

"I am ashamed of my life, mother," he answered. "How is it that I live in the home of the very person who persecutes my own people?"

"Ah, but you are looking at things through your eyes," she said. "Perhaps God has placed you at the very spot where you can do the most good for our people."

"But I want so much to free them from

Pharaoh's burden! How can I ever do that?"

"It wasn't always like this," she replied. "Long ago, a Pharaoh ruled who looked kindly on our people. Things were good for the Hebrews in Egypt. But even then, God made a promise to Jacob, a promise that is yet to be fulfilled. More than 400 years ago, God promised Jacob that someday He would bring all of Jacob's descendants back to Canaan again."

"I hope that we see this promise fulfilled during our lifetime," Moses said, his voice trailing off.

When Moses arrived at the work camp the next day, he was shocked and angered by what he saw. The people worked continuously, and even women were forced to help carry heavy loads. Some of the Hebrews were making bricks and placing them to dry in the hot sun. Others transported bricks to laborers who worked on the buildings. Nowhere did Moses see anyone rest or stop to take food or water.

He had seen enough. Moses planned to go to Pharaoh immediately. Just before he turned to leave, he spotted Ephraim behind one of the buildings. A heated argument was going on between him and an Egyptian official. As Moses walked toward them, the Egyptian suddenly struck Ephraim and knocked him to the ground.

Moses was so enraged that he rushed over and — without thinking — killed the Egyptian. Ephraim helped him drag the Egyptian's body out of sight, and together they buried it in the sand.

"The blood of the enemy is on my own hands," Moses said, his voice shaking. "I was sick at heart about what I saw here today."

If Pharaoh learns of this killing, we'll have worse trouble than we have ever known," Ephraim cried.

"I don't think that anyone saw us," Moses said anxiously. "Go back to work, quickly now. I must leave."

Moses was frightened and saddened by what had occurred. Instead of going back to the palace, he went straight to his mother's house. "Stay here until morning," she advised. "Maybe this man will not be missed."

During the night, someone pounded at the door. "Moses, come quickly!" a voice cried. "Hurry!"

Moses ran and opened the door to find Ephraim. "Someone has informed Pharaoh about the incident," he said still out of breath. "Pharaoh has ordered that you are to be arrested and executed immediately!"

"Son," Moses' mother cried as she entered. "You have no choice but to go. Quickly now, before the darkness of night no longer hides you."

"I have failed everyone," Moses sobbed. "I have sinned against God by killing a man. And I will leave my people to be slaves. I suppose there is nothing left for me to do but run away in disgrace."

Moses fled alone and with nothing far into the land of Midian. And for a second time in his lifetime, his mother trusted her son to God.

For discussion:

- 1) Why was Moses ashamed of his life?
- 2) What promise did God make to Jacob many years ago?
- 3) Pharaoh had made the Hebrew people his slaves and forced them to work very long and hard hours. Was it wrong for Moses to kill the Egyptian official?
- 4) When was the first time that Moses' mother had trusted her son's well-being to God?

For further reading:

- 1) Moses commits murder and flees from Egypt. The story is in Exodus, Chapter 2:11-15.
- 2) The story of God's promise that He will bring Jacob's descendants out of Egypt is in Genesis, Chapter 46:3-4.

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