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MOSES, THE GOODLY CHILD

– JULY 6. – EXODUS 1:22-2:10. –

"Whoso receiveth one such little child in My name, receiveth Me." – Matthew 18:5.

JOSEPH was the Grand Vizier of Egypt for eighty years – dying at the age of one hundred and ten years. Surely his brethren, the Israelites, suffered no oppression during that time. Shortly thereafter, however, another Pharaoh came into power, who "knew not Joseph" – who ignored his services to Egypt and the tentative covenant with the Israelites. This Pharaoh is supposed to have been Rameses II, a hard-hearted, selfish despot.

This Pharaoh perceived that the Israelites were multiplying much more rapidly than were the Egyptians. Therefore he considered them a menace. At first they had been viewed as a protection to Egypt, because the land of Goshen lay to the eastward, and an enemy advancing against Egypt would encounter the Israelites first. Egypt's only antagonist in those days was Assyria. When the Israelites became more numerous than the Egyptians, a new danger threatened; for an invading army might bribe them, and thus the rule of the Pharaohs be overthrown.

To meet this contingency, various expedients were tried. First, an edict compelled the Israelites to perform arduous labors, which it was hoped would undermine their strength – weaken them. On the contrary, however, they seemed to flourish increasingly with every added burden. The next repressive measure was the edict to the Hebrew midwives – that every male child of the Israelites should be strangled at birth. But this command was disregarded, the midwives claiming that they arrived too late. The final resort was the royal edict that the Israelites must drown every new-born male infant. Failure to do this was made a punishable crime. [R5251 : page 169]

It was under these conditions that Moses was born. The account indicates that both his parents were pious, and hence we are not surprised at the statement that he as a babe "was a goodly child" – fair, beautiful. Comparatively few parents seem to realize that where children are otherwise than "goodly" – graceful in feature and character – a responsibility for the defects rests upon them. We do not mean by this that it would be possible that any human pair could bring forth absolutely perfect children. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" – Job 14:4.

What we do mean is that as careful breeding affects the features, form and character of the lower animals, and improves both fruits and flowers, so also it is potent in respect to humanity. Yea, much more so; for while neither the parent nor the state may ignore the choice of comrades in human marriage, nevertheless the married have in their own control the most wonderful power known in the world whereby to influence the character and form of their children before birth, and not to be ignored after their birth – the power of the mind.

Were this law of nature clearly recognized by intelligent, conscientious people, what a change would speedily be effected! We are assuming that such parents would not only desire to bring into the world children beautiful in form, in feature and character, but that they would feel it a crime not to do their very best in these respects.

If every mother realized that during the period of gestation her mental moods were either blessing or cursing her offspring, how persistent she would be in resisting evil moods and tantrums! How carefully she would guard her reading, her companionship, her mental reflections! How faithfully she would put into execution the suggestions of the Apostle respecting whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are honorable and beautiful – to

think on these things, and thus to birth-mark her child after the highest, noblest conceptions of which she might be capable!

And if the father realized his responsibility, how careful he would be to do his full duty! not merely as a father and life-giver, but as a protector and guardian of the mother, assisting her in the most important function of human life and in the time of her greatest need of assistance, according to his ability. The mother, during gestation particularly, would be surrounded by things suggestive of the good, the great, the noble, the pure, the intellectual, the cultured. He would be especially sympathetic, and would endeavor to keep the mother's mind at ease. Even if too poor to provide luxuries – pictures, art, etc. – he could measurably fill the place by conversing with the mother on noble and ennobling themes, or he could read to her. Ah, when civilized peoples shall finally learn that the same care which they exercise in respect to the breeding of their fast horses, fancy dogs, pigeons and swine can be applied still more successfully in their own families, who will doubt the wonderful results?

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that those who met the infant Moses as he was carried along the stream forgot their business, and stood still to gaze at him. The time is nearing when human perfection of features, form and character will be considered the grandest thing in the whole world. Then the names of the parents of such will be honored on the pages of fame still more than those honored with first prizes for flowers, fruits and dumb animals. It is quite to the point that the parents of Moses are well spoken of in the Old Testament; while in the New Testament we are distinctly told that they were people of faith, and counted in the noble list of Ancient Worthies, who are to share in the "better resurrection" on account of faith. – Hebrews 11:23.

CO-OPERATING WITH GOD'S PROVIDENCE

It is entirely probable that the parents of Moses thought how to advance the plan which proved so successful for the saving of his

life. They knew of the custom of the Egyptian Princess to resort to a certain secluded spot on the Nile for her bath, which is presumed to have been part of a religious custom. They surmised that so beautiful a baby boy would have a special attraction for her. They may even, as tradition claims, have been guided by a dream to take the course they did. But however we shall account for the matter, we perceive that it was co-operation between the parents and Divine providence which brought the results.

A little basket was woven of bulrushes, which grow abundantly along the banks of the Nile. On the outside it was made water-tight with pitch. The babe was placed therein, and at a proper time was left near the spot visited by the princess. Then conveniently near stood Moses' sister, Miriam, about eight years old, ready to suggest the bringing of a nurse. It is even quite probable that the princess herself perceived the ruse and merely co-operated, believing that the little one might as well have as its caretaker its own mother, and that she might be its patron and benefactress.

Thus in God's providence, notwithstanding the opposition of the king, the wonderful Moses was reared in the royal palace, and in Egypt's schools became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Thus God's providence [R5251 : page 170] prepared the suitable person for his great work as the leader of Israel – and more, as the prototype of Messiah who in God's due time will be the Deliverer of all humanity desirous of becoming God's people and willing to be led by Him into the antitypical Land of Promise.

AIDED AND PROTECTED

How much there is of simple, yet wonderful romance in this narrative! Think of the leadings of Divine providence in this case! One day the child Moses was a danger and a menace in the home of his parents. At any moment his presence might be discovered and made known to an Egyptian officer. Then he would be killed, and the home broken up, and possibly the lives of his parents lost for venturing to

disobey the royal edict. The next day, through Divine providence, the child is back in the same home, and its own mother is paid by the Egyptian princess for caring for it, and is every way fully protected by royal favor.

We know not at what age the child was considered weaned, but it is assumed to have been when he was four years old. This interesting child at this interesting age was then claimed by the princess as her own son. He was given the name Moses, of which Professor Sayce says: "The Greek form of the Hebrew *Mosheh* – *Moyses* – is derived by Josephus from the Coptic (ancient Egyptian) *Mo* (water), and *uses* (saved out of it). In other words, the princess made a pun of the name, as though she had said: "This is my son, because I brought him forth – out of the water." Truly, we never know when Divine Wisdom is working in human woof into the Divine web or plan. God's people are ever to remember that in all their undertakings He is "working all things according to the counsel of His own will." While using human instrumentalities, God nevertheless respects the human will and merely co-operates with it. And whoever most zealously co-operates with God receives proportionately the larger share of the Divine blessing.

We are not to understand that God's providences use only His saintly people and their families, nor even that He uses only those who are at least nominally His. In the present lesson we see how God made even the wrath of man praise Him and accomplish some of His purposes for the furtherance of His great Plan of the Ages amongst those wholly ignorant of Him – "aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel." The entire household of Pharaoh, as well as the princess, were used of the Lord in respect to the preservation of Moses and his education and preparation for his great work. Surely this simple lesson, received into good and honest hearts, gives us greater faith in God and greater reliance upon His Wisdom and Power to fulfil all the gracious promises which He has made to the Church, to Israel and to the world.

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