

1. EXODUS 1

Verses 1-6. First we note the fact that the Author starts His book with the word ‘And’ (literal translation from the Dutch). See the Introduction for the meaning of this.

Especially take note of Genesis 46:1-27, which clearly shows the connection with Exodus 1.

Also compare here Revelation 7:4-8. At Patmos, John was permitted to hear and see that the work of the LORD meets its perfect ultimate objective. In the first verses of Exodus 1, the main message is: the patriarchal *family* of Jacob/Israel, seventy souls, meets death in the foreign land of Egypt.

Through God’s power, in the course of about four hundred years this family, however, grows into a large *nation*. Had this not been promised to the fathers by the Almighty? Read also Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:1-6; 17:1-7; 46:3.

In *verse 7* of this chapter we find the key words of God’s revelation.

The information given here relates to the long period of Israel’s sojourning in Egypt, from the arrival of Jacob and his family until the Exodus under the leadership of Moses.

During this lengthy period the LORD was fulfilling His promise of a numerous offspring to the fathers.

The author uses meaningful verbs to point this out: they *were fruitful*; that means: the families in Israel were noticeably large in comparison with the families of the Egyptians. *They increased abundantly*; they propagated like swarming creatures; the Israelites thus had a remarkably high birthrate. *They multiplied*; they showed great strength; the death rate was exceptionally low. *They grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.*

These words sum it all up and tell us that the land of Goshen became too small. Everywhere in Egypt one would meet Israelites.

When we review the accumulation of these verbs, we should not say: “this is just an example of Eastern exaggeration”. No! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob reveals Himself here “by His holy and divine Word, as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation” (Belgic Confession, Article 2).

To understand this revelation, we must turn to Psalm 105:24, where the poet, inspired by the Spirit, explains the accumulation

of verbs in Exodus 1:7 as follows: “He increased His people greatly”.

Israel’s growth during those four centuries could not be explained as a natural phenomenon. From beginning to end, it was a miracle from Above, a miracle worked by the LORD, according to His promise to the fathers.

He worked four hundred years, divinely and sovereignly, just as He had done in former days in the tent of Abraham (Genesis 18:13-14; 21:1-7; Romans 4:16-25).

Verses 8-22. Where the LORD works towards the accomplishment of Abraham’s nation as He had promised, we also see the reaction of God’s great adversary, the murderer from the beginning.

Verse 8. “Now there arose a new king...who did not know Joseph...” Here we must think of a new royal dynasty; for further details we refer to the commentaries.

In Joseph’s day, Egypt was occupied territory and was governed by a foreign dynasty that came from the East. A ruler, who emerged from Egypt itself, has now ended this situation and sent the hostile rulers back to the East.

The new king had *not known* Joseph. Naturally, this new ruler would have *had knowledge* of the person and the meritorious work of Joseph, but what is meant here is that he did not feel at all indebted to Joseph.

After all, Joseph and his people had come from the East, just like the occupied force he had conquered.

Verses 9-11. To solve the problem and to destroy the people of Joseph, a plan is formulated and sanctioned by the government. Its purpose is to curb the exceptional growth of Israel systematically: *lest they* (continue to) *multiply* (verse 10). Israel’s men must be broken in body and spirit, as well as sexually.

The second aim of the new king is entirely political (verse 10b). If the enemy, which had occupied Egypt before, should ever reappear at the eastern borders of Egypt, Israel could join up with this enemy as a ‘fifth column’ with all the consequences. Hence the royal plan: forced labour to build supply cities on Egypt’s eastern boundaries, under the supervision of ‘an Egyptian SS’; fortified

cities, from which the Egyptian armies in combat could be equipped.

Verse 12. “He Who sits in the heavens shall laugh.” (Psalm 2). He: the God of the fathers, the God Who had promised “I will make you a great nation”. Egypt panics. The enmity aimed at the destruction of the miracle from Above, is increased.

Verses 13-14. We are to understand this to be the enmity against the nation that carried the promise of the Seed of the woman. (Genesis 3:15).

Note here the build-up of words: “serve with rigour”, “bitter with hard bondage - in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field”, “all their service in which they made them serve was with rigour”.

Verses 15-21. Here we find the account of the intensifying battle from the side of Pharaoh. It is an instrument used by the dragon (cf Revelation 12:4b).

Regarding the midwives Shiphrah and Puah, it has to be noted that both must have been in charge of a large number of midwives. They are impressed by what the LORD accomplished in the lives of His people (verse 7). Thus they found courage to defy the king’s command. When they are called to give account of their conduct, they defend themselves with a so-called ‘white lie’; this should not be condemned as ‘lying’. The LORD, in His grace, rewarded both women (verse 21).

Verse 22. Our chapter closes with the report of the last part of the offensive of God’s great enemy against the people of His promise. He employs the service of Egypt: the royal command to throw all boys born in Israel into the Nile. The Nile, Egypt’s great idol, will devour these children of God’s covenant, ensuring that ultimately there would be no future for the people of Abraham, ensuring that the Blessing of Abraham (as found in Genesis 12) would never be born.

In conclusion, we make the following remarks.

1. In the fullness of time, we see that the LORD uses the same method of working as that found in Exodus 1. Not through natural

reproduction, but entirely through the miracle from Above, did God cause THE Son of His promise to be born (Luke 1:35).

We see God work in the same manner when He accomplishes the 'birth' of Abraham's children under the New Dispensation (Matthew 3:9; John 1:13; Galatians 3:7). Compare here Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7, 21 and 25; through His Spirit and Word He works faith in the dead hearts of people. A miracle from Above.

2. While the miracles from Above have not yet ceased, we understand that God's great adversary in this world unceasingly tries to destroy this miraculous work of the LORD. Scripture is full of it. Just refer to Revelation 21:12-15,18. With force, by means of another gospel, which is not the Gospel at all (Galatians 1:6-7, 11-12; 2 John 7-11) time and again Satan tries to break down God's miraculous work.

3. Exodus 1 (and the following chapters) however, show that the work of God's grace continues invincibly. It moves onwards to that great climax: Exodus 40, to Luke 1-2 and finally to the fulfilment of God's promises, described in Revelation 21.

This is how the LORD reveals Himself in the first chapter of the second Bible book. He requests our faith!

QUESTIONS

- 1 Our outline refers to Revelation 7. In this chapter we do not find all the names that are mentioned in Genesis and Exodus. Why not?
- 2 Which great struggle is perpetually the order of the day also in this chapter?
- 3 Based on Exodus 1, what is our answer to a process of ecumenical unity today?