



WOVEN & KNOWN

Moses Series

Part 2 of 30 - A Mother's Impossible Choice

A deeper study guide for Jochebed, the Nile, the basket, Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter, palace formation, providence, surrender, journaling, and critical thinking.

Use this companion after reading the post. It is designed to take the devotional article deeper - toward careful observation, historical awareness, theological reflection, and lived response.

Name: _____ Date: _____

How to Use This Guide

A slow-study companion for Moses: Part 2

This guide is not meant to replace the article. It is meant to slow it down. Part 2 of the Moses Series focuses on Jochebed's impossible choice: hiding Moses, weaving the basket, placing him among the reeds, and trusting God with what she could not keep. The article also traces Miriam's watchfulness, Pharaoh's daughter's compassion, Moses' adoption into the palace, and the theology of strategic surrender.

Move through this in one long sitting, across a week, or as a group study. Bring a Bible, a notebook, and time to sit with the questions. Do not rush the blank spaces. Sometimes the blank space is where the real study begins.

Learning objectives

- Observe the narrative movement of Exodus 1:22-2:10 with attention to repeated words, reversals, and hidden providence.
- Understand how the Hebrew term *tebah* links Moses' basket to Noah's ark and frames the river as both danger and deliverance.
- Examine the women in Exodus 1-2 as active agents of salvation rather than background characters.
- Explore the tension between surrender and responsibility: Jochebed does not control the outcome, but she acts wisely and courageously.
- Trace how Moses' adoption and Egyptian education become part of God's long preparation for deliverance.
- Practice theological reflection: asking not only what happened, but what the text reveals about God, faith, power, and redemption.

Before you begin

- Read Exodus 1:22-2:10 aloud once.
- Read it again slowly and mark every woman who acts.
- Underline every verb connected to seeing, hiding, placing, finding, drawing out, or naming.
- Pray: Lord, show me what I have read too quickly.

Scripture Map

Primary and supporting passages

Passage	Why it matters in this study
Exodus 1:22-2:10	The core narrative: Pharaoh's decree, Moses' birth, Jochebed's basket, Miriam's watch, Pharaoh's daughter's compassion, and Moses' naming.
Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59	The places where Jochebed is named and located within the Levitical family.
Genesis 6-9	Noah's ark, the other major use of tebah; the waters of judgment become the setting for preservation.
Genesis 50:20	The providence pattern: what humans intend for evil, God can turn toward good.
Acts 7:20-22	Stephen's summary: Moses was beautiful before God and instructed in the wisdom of the Egyptians.
Hebrews 11:23	The New Testament interprets Moses' parents' hiding of him as faith, not mere parental instinct.
1 Chronicles 4:18	A debated reference to Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh; important for later Jewish memory and tradition.

The theological question for this whole study:

What does faithful action look like when you cannot guarantee the outcome?

Observation Worksheet: Exodus 1:22-2:10

Read before interpreting

Observation asks: What is actually in the text? Before asking what it means to you, slow down and notice what the author gives you.

1. What exactly does Pharaoh command in Exodus 1:22? Who is required to participate?

2. What does Moses' mother see in Exodus 2:2? Why might this wording matter?

3. List every action Jochebed takes in Exodus 2:2-3. Which are protective? Which are risky?

4. Where is Miriam positioned, and what is she watching for?

5. What does Pharaoh's daughter see, feel, say, and do?

6. Where do you see irony or reversal in the story?

The Narrative Movement

From death decree to named deliverer

Movement	Human action	Hidden divine reversal
The decree	Pharaoh weaponizes the Nile against Hebrew sons.	The river that was meant to kill will carry the deliverer to safety.
The hiding	Moses' parents resist the edict for three months.	Faith appears first as daily endurance, not public victory.
The basket	Jochebed builds, seals, places, and releases.	The tebah becomes a miniature ark of salvation.
The watching	Miriam stands at a distance, ready to act.	A child becomes part of God's providential strategy.
The discovery	Pharaoh's daughter sees the child and has compassion.	Mercy rises from inside the house of oppression.
The naming	The child is named Moses, drawn out of water.	His name becomes a prophecy: the drawn-out one will draw out a people.

Study note

The text does not say, "And God intervened." Yet everything bends. This is one of the first lessons of Exodus: God may be most present in a passage where He is not explicitly named. Providence often works through ordinary decisions, human compassion, and astonishing timing.

Deep Dive 1: Jochebed, the Hidden Theologian

The woman whose courage forms the deliverer

Jochebed is named only in genealogical passages, but Exodus 2 lets us see her theology in action. She resists Pharaoh, protects life, makes a vessel, studies the riverbank, and releases her son. She does not preach a sermon. She builds one.

Her name is traditionally understood as carrying the idea of the LORD/YHWH and glory or honor. That matters for the story's symbolism: the mother of Moses carries a name that points toward the covenant God whose name will be revealed to Moses at the burning bush. Use this carefully; names can be difficult, but the literary beauty is strong.

What we often miss

- Jochebed's faith is not a feeling; it is a sequence of costly actions repeated over time.
- The three months matter. Faith is often not one dramatic leap, but ninety mornings of deciding again.
- She does not confuse surrender with laziness. She does everything she can do before she releases what she cannot control.
- Her hidden work shapes Moses before Egypt's palace ever trains him.

**Journal: Where have you confused faith with passivity?
Where might God be inviting you to act wisely, then release
the result?**

Deep Dive 2: Pharaoh's Edict and the Logic of Genocide

When empire turns ordinary people into enforcers

Exodus 1:22 intensifies the oppression. Pharaoh is no longer only using overseers and midwives; his command turns the wider population into potential participants. This is how evil often expands: it normalizes participation. It invites ordinary people to treat death as policy.

The Nile becomes theologically charged. For Egypt, the Nile was life, fertility, food, transport, and divine blessing. In the story, the river of life is turned into an instrument of death. Yet God turns that same river into the pathway by which Moses is preserved.

Critical thinking: empire and idolatry

1. What does Pharaoh fear in Exodus 1? Is his fear rational, sinful, political, spiritual, or all of these?

2. How does fear become policy in this story?

3. What modern systems tempt people to protect power by dehumanizing others?

4. Why is it important that the first deliverance acts in Exodus are performed not by warriors, but by women protecting children?

Hebrew Word Study Lab

Key words that deepen the passage

Word	Basic sense	Why it matters
tov	good, beautiful, pleasing	Moses' mother sees that he is tov. This echoes creation language: she sees life as God sees life.
tebah	ark, box, chest, basket	Used for Noah's ark and Moses' basket. Both preserve life through waters of threat.
suf	reeds, rushes	The basket is placed among reeds; later Israel crosses the Sea of Reeds. Moses' life anticipates Israel's deliverance.
chamal	to spare, show compassion	Pharaoh's daughter has compassion. Mercy interrupts a death decree.
mashah	to draw out	Moses' name is linked to being drawn from water; his destiny is to draw Israel out.

Research note

Lexical tools identify tebah as a rare term associated with Noah's ark and Moses' basket, and often connect it with a chest or box. The rarity of the word makes the Noah-Moses echo difficult to ignore. Papyrus itself was a deeply Egyptian material: used for writing surfaces, baskets, ropes, mats, and boats. This means Jochebed uses the material culture of Egypt to preserve the child who will challenge Egypt.

Deep Dive 3: The Theology of the Tebah

Noah, Moses, and salvation through water

The word *tebah* invites us to read Moses' story beside Noah's. In Genesis, the *tebah* preserves a remnant through floodwaters. In Exodus, the *tebah* preserves a child through waters commanded for death. In both cases, God saves not by removing the water immediately, but by making a vessel that can carry life through it.

Noah's <i>tebah</i>	Moses' <i>tebah</i>
A family preserved through waters of judgment.	One infant preserved through waters of Pharaoh's decree.
Sealed with pitch.	Coated with bitumen/pitch.
Carries the future of humanity.	Carries the future deliverer of Israel.
Emerges into a new world after judgment.	Leads toward a new people after deliverance.

The theological pattern

- The waters are real; faith does not pretend danger is harmless.
- The vessel is prepared; faith uses wisdom, craft, and available materials.
- The future is enclosed in weakness; God often hides deliverance in fragile forms.
- Salvation passes through threat, not always around it.

Write a one-sentence theology of the basket:

Deep Dive 4: Papyrus, Craft, and Strategic Surrender

Faith that thinks carefully

Papyrus was not a random detail. It grew in Nile marshes and was used widely in Egyptian material culture. Museum and encyclopedia sources note its use for writing surfaces, skiffs, mats, boxes, baskets, lids, sandals, and ropes. A small sealed papyrus container placed among reeds would have been visually ordinary in the Nile environment, but theologically extraordinary.

Jochebed's action is not panic. She builds. She seals. She places. She stations Miriam. This is strategic surrender: do what wisdom can do, then entrust what wisdom cannot control.

Field notes: What did Jochebed do before letting go?

- She assessed the danger.
- She used available materials.
- She waterproofed the vessel.
- She chose a location.
- She placed a witness.

Reflection: What are the equivalent actions in your own life - the things you can seal, position, and watch over before you release the outcome?

Deep Dive 5: Miriam, the Watching Sister

Children, courage, and wise speech

Miriam is easy to overlook because Exodus 2 does not name her yet. But her action is indispensable. She watches. She waits. She reads the moment. Then she speaks with remarkable courage to Pharaoh's daughter. The story of Israel's deliverance depends, in part, on a girl who knows when to step out of the reeds.

Three dimensions of Miriam's courage

- Attentive courage: she watches long enough to understand what is happening.
- Relational courage: she stays connected to the child, the mother, and the moment.
- Verbal courage: she asks the exact question that returns Moses to Jochebed.

Discussion prompt

In many biblical stories, a younger or less powerful person sees what the powerful miss. Where else do you see this pattern in Scripture?

1. What would Miriam have needed to overcome in order to approach the princess?

2. What does Miriam teach us about participating in God's work before we have status, age, or authority?

3. Who has been a "Miriam" in your life - someone watching, praying, or stepping in at the right time?

Deep Dive 6: Pharaoh's Daughter and Compassion Across Enemy Lines

The unnamed woman who refuses the script

Exodus does not name Pharaoh's daughter. Later Jewish tradition often associates her with Bithiah, a figure mentioned in 1 Chronicles 4:18, and remembers her as a righteous gentile whose compassion crossed the boundaries of law, ethnicity, and royal loyalty. We should hold those traditions respectfully but carefully: the biblical text itself does not identify her by name.

What the text does tell us is enough: she sees the child, hears him cry, recognizes he is Hebrew, and has compassion. She knows the decree. She knows the risk. She picks him up anyway.

Mercy interrupts the machinery of death.

Critical distinction

Compassion is not mere sentiment here. It becomes action. She does not only feel pity; she defies the intended outcome of Pharaoh's policy. Biblical compassion often moves from seeing, to feeling, to costly action.

1. What does Pharaoh's daughter risk by saving Moses?

2. Why might the Bible leave her unnamed?

3. How does her compassion complicate simplistic categories of "insider" and "outsider"?

4. Where do you see God using unexpected people in Scripture?

Deep Dive 7: The Palace and the Formation of Moses

Egyptian wisdom and divine irony

Acts 7:22 says Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Ancient Egypt prized scribal learning, administration, literature, mathematics, ritual knowledge, and statecraft. The British Museum notes that scribal training included copying documentary and literary texts in hieratic. The Met preserves scribal palettes and notes that scribes used wooden palettes to hold ink and reed brushes. These details help us imagine the world Moses entered.

This does not mean Egypt saved Moses. God did. But God used Egypt's palace, education, wealth, and bureaucracy as part of Moses' formation. The enemy's house unknowingly trained the liberator.

Moses' double formation

Formation stream	Possible contribution to Moses
Hebrew household	Covenant memory, family identity, nursing bond, the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and promise.
Egyptian palace	Literacy, administration, diplomatic speech, knowledge of Egyptian religion, proximity to power, and awareness of imperial systems.
Later wilderness	Humility, hiddenness, shepherding, patience, dependence, and encounter with the living God.

Journal: What "Egyptian education" has God allowed in your life - skills gained in hard, unlikely, or even hostile places that He may later redeem?

Theological Depths: The Basket as a Theology of Release

Surrender is not the same as giving up

The article rightly names the basket as a central theological image. The basket is where love, danger, wisdom, and surrender meet. Jochebed does not release Moses because she loves him less. She releases him because she loves him more than her own ability to control the outcome.

Surrender in Scripture is rarely careless. Abraham climbs Moriah. Hannah brings Samuel to the tabernacle after years of prayer. Mary says yes to a path that will pierce her soul. Jesus entrusts Himself to the Father in Gethsemane. Biblical surrender is not emotional resignation; it is active trust under pressure.

A theology of release includes four movements:

- Naming the limit: I cannot keep this by force.
- Faithful preparation: I will do what love and wisdom require.
- Open-handed entrusting: I release the outcome to God.
- Watchful hope: I remain attentive to what God may do next.

Personal practice

Complete this sentence slowly: "Lord, I cannot keep _____ by holding it tighter, so today I place it in the basket by _____."

Biblical Theology Thread: From Basket to Cross

Deliverance through weakness

Moses' basket belongs to a larger biblical pattern: God hides deliverance inside vulnerability. Noah is enclosed in an ark. Isaac lies on an altar. Joseph is lowered into a pit. Moses floats in a basket. David stands before Goliath with a sling. Jesus is laid in a manger, nailed to wood, placed in a tomb, and raised by the Father.

The cross is not a random connection. The story of Moses begins with a vessel of wood/reeds carrying life through death-waters. The story of Jesus climaxes with a wooden cross carrying the Son through death into resurrection. What looks like loss becomes the very means of deliverance.

Trace the pattern

Story	Apparent weakness	Divine reversal
Noah	A family enclosed in a floating vessel	Humanity preserved through judgment
Moses	A helpless infant in a basket	Israel's deliverer preserved
Hannah/Samuel	A long-prayed-for child released to the Lord	A prophet raised for Israel
Jesus	A crucified Messiah	Resurrection and cosmic redemption

Things We Often Miss in This Passage

For deeper reading and teaching

1. Women carry the story before Moses can speak.

The first deliverers in Exodus are not Moses and Aaron. They are Shiphrah, Puah, Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter. The narrative quietly subverts expectations about power.

2. God is not named in Exodus 2:1-10.

The silence is deliberate. Providence is shown through timing, craft, courage, and compassion.

3. Jochebed's surrender is intelligent.

The basket is built and sealed. The location is chosen. Miriam is positioned. This is not throwing a child to fate; it is faithful strategy.

4. Pharaoh's house becomes the means of Pharaoh's undoing.

The palace funds, feeds, adopts, educates, and protects the child who will one day confront Pharaoh.

5. The story begins in grief, not triumph.

The mother walks home with empty arms before she receives wages to nurse her own child. Faith often has a middle chapter that feels unbearable.

Critical Thinking Lab

University-style prompts

Choose one prompt for a one-page response, or use all of them across the week.

Text and ethics

Was Jochebed disobeying the state? How does Exodus 1-2 invite us to think about obedience, conscience, and the sanctity of life?

Providence and agency

If God is sovereign, why do Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter need to act? What does the passage teach about divine providence working through human agency?

Outsider compassion

What does Pharaoh's daughter teach about God using outsiders? How does this challenge tribal or simplistic readings of the story?

Narrative irony

Identify at least four reversals in Exodus 2:1-10. How does irony become a theological signal in the passage?

Formation and identity

Moses is born Hebrew, raised Egyptian, and later formed in Midian. How might each identity shape his vocation?

Guided Journaling: The Basket in My Life

Prayerful self-examination

1. What am I holding so tightly that my hands are no longer open to God?

2. What part of this situation is mine to build, seal, position, or watch over?

3. What part of this situation belongs only to God?

4. What fear rises in me when I imagine releasing the outcome?

5. What would faithful release look like this week in one concrete action?

Prayer Journal: Walking Home With Empty Arms

For seasons when the outcome is not yet visible

Use this space to pray honestly. Do not force triumph too quickly. Jochebed's story gives room for the ache between release and restoration.

My prayer

A breath prayer

Inhale: The river is not in charge. Exhale: You are.

Group Discussion Guide

60-75 minute format

Time	Activity
5 min	Opening prayer and read Exodus 1:22-2:10 aloud.
10 min	Observation: list every person who acts in the passage.
15 min	Discuss tebah: why does the Noah echo matter?
15 min	Discuss strategic surrender: what is faithful action, and what is faithful release?
15 min	Talk about Pharaoh's daughter: compassion across boundaries.
10 min	Silent journaling: what needs to go into the basket?
5 min	Close with prayer for courage, wisdom, and open hands.

Group covenant

- Handle painful surrender stories gently.
- Do not rush people into answers.
- Let the text lead before personal application.
- Protect confidentiality.

Self-Quiz

Check understanding before moving to Part 3

1. What was Pharaoh's command in Exodus 1:22?

- A. To enslave Israel only
- B. To cast every Hebrew son into the Nile
- C. To send Israel out of Egypt
- D. To kill all Hebrew daughters

Answer: _____

2. What word links Moses' basket with Noah's ark?

- A. mishkan
- B. aron
- C. tebah
- D. berith

Answer: _____

3. What does Hebrews 11:23 emphasize about Moses' parents?

- A. They were politically powerful
- B. They acted by faith and were not afraid of the king's edict
- C. They knew Pharaoh's daughter personally
- D. They left Egypt immediately

Answer: _____

4. What is the theological irony of the Nile in Exodus 2?

- A. It is dry
- B. It is never mentioned again
- C. The river meant for death becomes a means of preservation
- D. It belongs to Israel

Answer: _____

5. What does Miriam do?

- A. She forgets the basket
- B. She stands at a distance and then offers to find a nurse
- C. She challenges Pharaoh publicly
- D. She names Moses

Answer: _____

6. What does Pharaoh's daughter feel when she sees the child?

- A. Compassion
- B. Anger
- C. Confusion only
- D. Fear of Miriam

Answer: _____

7. According to Acts 7:22, Moses was instructed in what?

- A. All the wisdom of the Egyptians
- B. Only shepherding
- C. Roman law
- D. Greek philosophy

Answer: _____

8. What is strategic surrender?

- A. Doing nothing and hoping
- B. Controlling everything by force
- C. Doing what wisdom can do, then entrusting what cannot be controlled to God
- D. Denying the danger exists

Answer: _____

Self-Quiz Answer Key

Use after completing the quiz

- 1. B - Pharaoh commands every Hebrew son to be cast into the Nile.
- 2. C - Tebah links Moses' basket with Noah's ark.
- 3. B - Hebrews 11:23 frames their action as faith and courage.
- 4. C - The Nile, weaponized for death, carries the deliverer to safety.
- 5. B - Miriam watches and then offers to find a Hebrew nurse.
- 6. A - She has compassion on him.
- 7. A - Acts 7:22 says Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.
- 8. C - Strategic surrender does what wisdom can do and entrusts the rest to God.

Memory verse

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." - Hebrews 11:23

Further Study and Sources Consulted

For readers who want to go deeper

This guide draws from the biblical text, the uploaded Woven & Known Part 2 article, and a small research base from museum, lexical, and Jewish tradition resources. Use these as starting points, not as replacements for Scripture.

- The biblical text: Exodus 1:22-2:10; Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59; Genesis 6-9; Genesis 50:20; Acts 7:20-22; Hebrews 11:23; 1 Chronicles 4:18.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Papyrus in Ancient Egypt" - notes on papyrus uses including skiffs, mats, boxes, baskets, lids, sandals, ropes, and writing surfaces.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Papyrus" - overview of *Cyperus papyrus* in Egypt and its use in ancient writing materials and boats.
- Blue Letter Bible lexical entry for *tebah* - ark/chest/box; a rare term associated with Noah's ark and Moses' basket.
- Sefaria, Megillah 13a - rabbinic discussion of Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh.
- Jewish Women's Archive, "Daughter of Pharaoh: Midrash and Aggadah" - overview of Pharaoh's daughter in rabbinic tradition.
- The British Museum, "Page turners: literature in ancient Egypt" - notes on scribal training and copying literary/documentary texts in hieratic.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Scribe's Palette" - material evidence for scribal tools, ink, and reed brushes.

Suggested academic-style questions for further research

- How does Exodus 2 use narrative irony as theological argument?
- What is the relationship between women's agency and divine providence in Exodus 1-2?
- How does the *tebah* motif shape biblical theology from Genesis to Exodus?
- What is gained and lost by identifying Pharaoh's daughter with Bithiah or Hatshepsut?
- How might Moses' bicultural formation prepare him for mediation between God, Israel, and Egypt?

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Part 2 of 30 - A Mother's Impossible Choice

May the God who watched over the basket teach us to build wisely, release bravely, and trust Him with what the river cannot steal.

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