

EXODUS

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

This book is called by the Jews *Veelleh Shemoth*, from the first words with which it begins, and sometimes *Sepher Shemoth*, and sometimes only *Shemoth*. It is by the Septuagint called *Exodus*, from whom we have the name of *Exodus*, which signifies “a going out”; (see ^{<4122>}Luke 9:31 ^{<4122>}Hebrews 11:22), because it treats of the going of the children of Israel out of Egypt; and hence in the Alexandrian copy it is called the *Exodus of Egypt*; and so the Syriac version entitles it the second book of the law, called “the going out”; and to the same purpose the Arabic version. The Jews sometimes give it the name of *Nezikin*, as Buxtorf ^{f1} observes out of the Masora on (^{<4124>}Genesis 24:8) because in it some account is given of losses, and the restitution of them. That this book is of divine inspiration, and to be reckoned in the canon of the sacred writings, is sufficiently evident to all that believe the New Testament; since there are so many quotations out of it there by Christ, and his apostles; particularly (see ^{<4125>}Mark 12:26) and that it was wrote by Moses is not to be doubted, but when is not certain; it must be after the setting up of the tabernacle in the wilderness; the greatest part of what is contained in it, he was an eye and ear witness of; it plainly points out the accomplishment of the promises and prophecies delivered to Abraham, that his posterity would be very numerous, that they would be afflicted in a land not theirs, and in the fourth generation come out of it with great substance. It treats of the afflictions of the Israelites in Egypt, after the death of Joseph, until their deliverance by Moses; of his birth, calling, and mission to Pharaoh, to demand of him to let the children of Israel go; of the ten plagues upon him and his people, for refusing to dismiss them; of the departure of Israel from Egypt, and the institution of the passover on that account; of their passage through the Red sea into the wilderness, and of the various exercises and afflictions, supplies and supports they met with there; of the giving of a body of laws unto them, moral, ceremonial, and judicial; and of the building of the tabernacle, and all things appertaining to it; and throughout the whole, as there is a figure and representation of the passage of the people of God out of spiritual Egypt, through the wilderness of this world,

to the heavenly Canaan, and of various things they must meet with in their passage, so there are many types of Christ, his person, office, and grace, and of his church, his word, and ordinances, which are very edifying and instructing. The book contains a history of about one hundred and forty years, from the death of Joseph, to the erection of the tabernacle.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 1

This chapter begins with an account of the names and number of the children of Israel that came into Egypt with Jacob, (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 1:1-5) and relates that increase of them after the death of Joseph, and the generation that went down to Egypt, (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 1:6-8) and what methods the Egyptians took to diminish them, but to no purpose, as by obliging to cruel bondage and hard service; and yet the more they were afflicted, the more they increased, (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 1:9-14) by ordering the midwives of the Hebrew women to slay every son they laid them of; but they fearing God, did not obey the order of the king of Egypt, which when he expostulated with them about, they excused, and so the people multiplied, (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 1:15-21) and lastly, by ordering every male child to be cast into the river, (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 1:22) and which is the leading step to the account of the birth of Moses, which follows in the next chapter.

Ver. 1. *Now these are the names of the children of Israel which came down into Egypt*, etc.] Of the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, who were heads of the twelve tribes, whose names are here given; since the historian is about to give an account of their coming out of Egypt, and that it might be observed how greatly they increased in it, and how exactly the promise to Abraham, of the multiplication of his seed, was fulfilled: or, “and these are the names”^{f2}, etc. this book being connected with the former by the copulative “and”; and when this was wrote, it is highly probable there was no division of the books made, but the history proceeded in one continued account:

every man and his household came with Jacob; into Egypt, all excepting Joseph, and along with them their families, wives, children, and servants; though wives and servants are not reckoned into the number of the seventy, only such as came out of Jacob’s loins: the Targum of Jonathan is,

“a man with the men of his house,”

as if only male children were meant, the sons of Jacob and his grandsons; and Aben Ezra observes, that women were never reckoned in Scripture as

of the household or family; but certainly Dinah, and Serah, as they came into Egypt with Jacob, are reckoned among the seventy that came with him thither, (^{<0465>}Genesis 46:15,17,27).

Ver. 2. *Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.*] The first sons of Jacob by Leah.

Ver. 3. *Issachar, Zebulun,* etc.] The other two sons of Jacob, by Leah:

Benjamin; the youngest of all Jacob's sons is placed here, being his son by his beloved wife Rachel. Joseph is not put into the account, because he did not go into Egypt with Jacob.

Ver. 4. *Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.*] Who are last mentioned, being sons of the concubine wives.

Ver. 5. *And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls,* etc.] "Souls" are put for persons; of the number seventy, and how reckoned, ((see Gill on "^{<0467>}Genesis 46:27"). This was but a small number that went down to Egypt, when compared with that which went out of it; and that it should be compared with it is the design of its being mentioned, (see ^{<0237>}Exodus 12:37):

for Joseph was in Egypt already; and is the reason why he is not reckoned among the sons of Jacob, that came thither with him; though rather it may be better rendered, "with Joseph who was in Egypt"^{f3}; for he must be reckoned, and indeed his two sons also, to make up the number seventy; therefore Jonathan rightly supplies it,

"with Joseph and his sons who were in Egypt,"

((see Gill on "^{<0467>}Genesis 46:27").

Ver. 6. *And Joseph died, and all his brethren,* etc.] It is a notion of the Jews, that Joseph died before any of his brethren, ((see Gill on "^{<0526>}Genesis 50:26") and they gather it from these words; but it does not necessarily follow from hence, they might die some before him and some after him; and as they were all born in about seven years' time, excepting Benjamin, they might all die within a little time of each other: according to the Jewish writers^{f4}, the dates of their death were these,

"Reuben lived one hundred and twenty four years, and died two years after Joseph; Simeon lived one hundred and twenty years, and

died the year after Joseph; Levi lived one hundred and thirty seven years, and died twenty four years after Joseph; Judah lived one hundred and nineteen years, Issachar one hundred and twenty two, Zebulun one hundred and twenty four, and died two years after Joseph; Dan lived one hundred and twenty seven years, Asher one hundred and twenty three years, Benjamin one hundred and eleven years, and died twenty six years before Levi; Gad lived one hundred and twenty five years, and Naphtali one hundred and thirty three years;”

but though this account of the Jews, of their times, and of the times of their death, is not to be depended upon, yet it is certain they all died in Egypt, though they were not buried there; but as Stephen says, (~~4716~~ Acts 7:16) they were carried over to Shechem and interred there, either quickly after their decease, or, however, were taken along with the bones of Joseph by the children of Israel, when they departed out of Egypt: and it is also evident that they all died before the affliction and oppression of the children of Israel in Egypt began; and this account seems to be given on purpose to point this out unto us, being placed in the order it is. Levi lived the longest of them all, and the affliction did not begin till after his death; and the Jewish chronologers say ^{f5} that from his death to the children of Israel’s going out of Egypt were one hundred and sixteen years; and they further observe ^{f6}, that it could not last more than one hundred and sixteen years, and not less than eighty seven, according to the years of Miriam:

and all that generation; in which Joseph and his brethren had lived. These also died, Egyptians as well as Israelites, before the oppression began.

Ver. 7. *And the children of Israel were fruitful*, etc.] In their offspring; became like fruitful trees, as the word signifies:

and increased abundantly; like creeping things, or rather like fishes, which increase very much, (see ~~000~~ Genesis 1:20)

and multiplied; became very numerous, whereby the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were fulfilled:

and waxed exceeding mighty; were hale, and strong, of good constitutions, able bodied men, and so more dreaded by the Egyptians: a heap of words is here used to express the vast increase of the people of Israel in Egypt:

and the land was filled with them; not the whole land of Egypt, but the land of Goshen: at first they were seated in a village in that country, but now they were spread throughout the towns and cities in it.

Ver. 8. *Now there arose up a new king over Egypt*, etc.] Stephen calls him another king, (⁴⁰⁷⁸Acts 7:18) one of another family, according to Josephus ^{f7}; who was not of the seed royal, as Aben Ezra; and Sir John Marsham ^{f8} thinks this was Salatis, who, according to Manetho ^{f9}, was the first of the Hycsi or pastor kings that ruled in lower Egypt; but these kings seem to have reigned before that time, ((see Gill on "⁴¹⁴³Genesis 46:34")) and Bishop Usher ^{f10} takes this king to be one of the ancient royal family, whose name was Ramesses Miamun; and gives us a succession of the Egyptian kings from the time of Joseph's going into Egypt to this king: the name of that Pharaoh that reigned when Joseph was had into Egypt, and whose dreams he interpreted, was Mephramuthosis; after him reigned Thmosis, Amenophis, and Orus; and in the reign of the last of these Joseph died, and after Orus reigned Acenehres a daughter of his, then Rathotis a brother of Acenchres, after him Acencheres a son of Rathotis, then another Acencheres, after him Armais, then Ramesses, who was succeeded by Ramesses Miamun, here called the new king, because, as the Jews ^{f11} say, new decrees were made in his time; and this Pharaoh, under whom Moses was born, they call Talma ^{f12}, and with Artapanus ^{f13} his name is Palmanotheres:

which knew not Joseph; which is not to be understood of ignorance of his person, whom he could not know; nor of the history of him, and of the benefits done by him to the Egyptian nation, though, no doubt, this was among their records, and which, one would think, he could not but know; or rather, he had no regard to the memory of Joseph; and so to his family and kindred, the whole people of Israel: he acknowledged not the favours of Joseph to his nation, ungratefully neglected them, and showed no respect to his posterity, and those in connection with him, on his account; though, if a stranger, it is not to be wondered at.

Ver. 9. *And he said unto his people*, etc.] His princes, nobles, and courtiers about him, his principal ministers of state:

behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: which could not be true in fact, but is said to stir up his nobles to attend to what he was about to say, and to work upon them to take some speedy measures for the crushing of this people; for that they were more in

number, and mightier in power and wealth than the Egyptians, it was impossible; and indeed it may seem strange, that the king should tell such an untruth, which might be so easily contradicted by his courtiers; though the words will bear to be otherwise rendered, as that “the children of Israel are many”^{f14}; as they were very greatly multiplied, and became very numerous; and they might be “mightier”, that is, more robust and strong, and fitter for war than the Egyptians, and therefore, were formidable, and a people to be guarded against; and it was high time to think of securing themselves from them, before they grew too mighty and powerful; or they might be more numerous and mighty in that part of the land in which they were, in Goshen, though not more and mightier than the Egyptians in general.

Ver. 10. *Come on*, etc.] Which is a word of exhortation, stirring up to a quick dispatch of business, without delay, the case requiring haste, and some speedy and a matter of indifference:

let us deal wisely with them; form some wise schemes, take some crafty methods to weaken and diminish them gradually; not with open force of arms, but in a more private and secret manner, and less observed:

lest they multiply; yet more and more, so that in time it may be a very difficult thing to keep them under, and many disadvantages to the kingdom may arise from them, next observed:

and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies; their neighbours the Arabians, and Phoenicians, and Ethiopians: with the latter the Egyptians had wars, as they had in the times of Moses, as Josephus^{f15} relates, and Artapanus^{f16}, an Heathen writer, also: Sir John Marsham^{f17} thinks these enemies were the old Egyptians, with whom the Israelites had lived long in a friendly manner, and so more likely to join with them, the Thebans who lived in upper Egypt, and between whom and the pastor kings that reigned in lower Egypt there were frequent wars; but these had been expelled from Egypt some time ago:

and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land; take the opportunity, by joining their enemies and fighting against them, to get away from them out of Egypt into the land of Canaan, from whence they came: this, it seems, the Egyptians had some notion of, that they were meditating something of this kind, often speaking of the land of Canaan being theirs, and that they should in a short time inherit it; and though they

were dreaded by the Egyptians, they did not care to part with them, being an industrious laborious people, and from whom the kingdom reaped many advantages.

Ver. 11. *Therefore they did set taskmasters over them, to afflict them with their burdens,* etc.] This was the first scheme proposed and agreed on, and was carried into execution, to appoint taskmasters over them; or “princes”, or “masters of tribute”^{f18}, commissioners of taxes, who had power to lay heavy taxes upon them, and oblige them to pay them, which were very burdensome, and so afflictive to their minds, and tended to diminish their wealth and riches, and obliged them to harder labour in order to pay them, and so every way contributed to distress them:

and they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses; these might be built with the money they collected from them by way of tribute, and so said to be built by them, since it was chiefly in husbandry, and in keeping flocks and herds, that the Israelites were employed; or they might be concerned in building these cities, some of them understanding architecture, or however the poorer or meaner sort might be made use of in the more laborious and servile part of the work; those two cities are, in the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, called Tanis and Pelusium; but Tanis was the same with Zoan, and that was built but seven years after Hebron, an ancient city, in being long before this time, (see ^{<0132>}Numbers 13:22). Pelusium indeed may be one of them, but then it is not that which is here called Raamses, but Pithom, as Sir John Marsham^{f19} and others think: Pithom is by Junius thought to be the same with the Pathumus of Herodotus^{f20}, a town in Arabia Petraea, upon the borders of Egypt, where a ditch was dug from the Nile to the Red sea, and supposed to be the work of the Israelites: Raamses is a place different from Ramesses, (^{<0171>}Genesis 47:11) and had its name from the then reigning Pharaoh, Ramesses Miamun, as Pithom is thought by some to be so called from his queen: Pliny^{f21} makes mention of some people called Ramisi and Patami, who probably were the inhabitants of these cities, whom he joins to the Arabians as bordering on Egypt: the Septuagint version adds a third city, “On”, which is Heliopolis: and a learned writer^{f22} is of opinion that Raamses and Heliopolis are the same, and observes, that Raamses, in the Egyptian tongue, signifies the field of the sun, being consecrated to it, as Heliopolis is the city of the sun, the same with Bethshemesh, the house of the sun, (^{<013>}Jeremiah 43:13) and he thinks these cities were not properly built by the Israelites, but repaired, ornamented, and fortified, being by them

banked up against the force of the Nile, that the granaries might be safe from it, as Strabo ^{f23} writes, particularly of Heliopolis; and the Septuagint version here calls them fortified cities; and with this agrees what Benjamin of Tudela says ^{f24}, that he came to the fountain of “Al-shemesh”, or the sun, which is Raamses; and there are remains of the building of our fathers (the Jew says) even towers built of bricks, and Fium, he says ^{f25}, (which was in Goshen, ((see Gill on “~~471~~Genesis 47:11”))) is the same with Pithom; and there, he says, are to be seen some of the buildings of our fathers. Here these cities are said to be built for treasure cities, either to lay up the riches of the kings of Egypt in, or as granaries and storehouses for corn, or magazines for warlike stores, or for all of these: some think the “pyramids” were built by the Israelites, and there is a passage in Herodotus ^{f26} which seems to favour it; he says, the kings that built them, the Egyptians, through hatred, name them not, but call them the pyramids of the shepherd Philitis, who at that time kept sheep in those parts; which seems to point at the Israelites, the beloved people of God, who were shepherds.

Ver. 12. *But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*, etc.] Became more numerous, “and broke out” ^{f27}, as it may be rendered, like water which breaks out and spreads itself; so the Israelites, increasing in number, spread themselves still more in the land; the Egyptians thought, by putting them to hard labor in building cities, to have weakened their strength, and made them unfit for the procreation of children; but instead of that, the more hard labor they were put unto, the more healthful and the stronger they were, and begot more children, and multiplied exceedingly: and so it is that oftentimes afflictive dispensations are multiplying and growing times to the people of God, in a spiritual sense; who grow like the palm tree, which the more weight it has upon it the more it grows; when the church of God has been most violently persecuted, the number of converts have been greater, and saints under affliction grow in grace, in faith and love, in holiness, humility, patience, peace, and joy; (see ~~412~~Acts 12:1,2,24 ~~418~~Romans 5:3-5)

and they were grieved because of the children of Israel; because of their multiplication and increase, and because their schemes for lessening them did not succeed; they were as thorns in their eyes, as some interpret the word, as Jarchi observes.

Ver. 13. *And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour.* Or with breach ^{f28}, with what might tend to break their strength;

they laid heavier burdens upon them, obliged them to harder service, used them more cruelly and with greater fierceness, adding to their hard service ill words, and perhaps blows.

Ver. 14. *And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage*, etc.] So that they had no ease of body nor peace of mind; they had no comfort of life, their lives and mercies were embittered to them:

in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service of the field; if Pelusium was one of the cities they built, that had its name from clay, the soil about it being clayish, and where the Israelites might be employed in making brick for the building of that and other cities: Josephus^{f29} says, they were ordered to part the river (Nile) into many canals, to build walls about cities, and raise up mounds, lest the water overflowing the banks should stagnate; and to build pyramids, obliging them to learn various arts, and inure themselves to labour: so Philo the Jew says^{f30}, some worked in the clay, forming it into bricks, and others in carrying straw: some were appointed to build private houses, others the walls of cities, and to cut ditches and canals in the river, and obliged day and night to carry burdens, so that they had no rest, nor were they suffered to refresh themselves with sleep; and some say that they were not only employed in the fields in ploughing and sowing and the like, but in carrying of dung thither, and all manner of uncleanness: of their being employed in building of pyramids and canals, ((see Gill on “~~47:11~~Genesis 47:11”))

all their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour; they not only put them to hard work, but used them in a very churlish and barbarous manner, abusing them with their tongues, and beating them with their hands: Philo in the above place says, the king not only compelled them to servile works, but commanded them heavier things than they could bear, heaping labours one upon another; and if any, through weakness, withdrew himself, it was judged a capital crime, and the most merciless and cruel were set over them as taskmasters.

Ver. 15. *And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives*, etc.] It is difficult to say who these midwives were, whether Egyptian or Hebrew women. Josephus is of opinion that they were Egyptians, and indeed those the king was most likely to succeed with; and it may seem improbable that he should offer such a thing to Hebrew women, who he could never think would ever comply with it, through promises or threatenings; and the answer they afterwards gave him, that the Hebrew women were not as the

Egyptian women, looks as if they were of the latter: and yet, after all, it is more likely that these midwives were Hebrew women, their names are Hebrew; and besides, they are not said to be the midwives of Hebrew women, but Hebrew midwives; nor does it seem probable that the Hebrew women should have Egyptian midwives, and not those of their own nation; and they were such as feared the Lord; and the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem are express for it, and they pretend to tell us who they were: “of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah”; the one, they say, was Jochebed, the wife of Amram, and mother of Moses and Aaron, and the other Miriam their sister; and this is the sense of many of the Jewish writers ^{f31}: but whatever may be said for Jochebed, it is not credible that Miriam should be a midwife, who was but a girl, or maid, at this time, about seven years of age, as the following chapter shows, and much less one of so much repute as to be spoke to by the king. It may seem strange, that only two should be spoke to on this account, when, as Aben Ezra supposes, there might be five hundred of them: to which it may be answered, that these were the most noted in their profession, and the king began with these, that if he could succeed with them, he would go on to prevail on others, or engage them to use their interest with others to do the like; or these might be the midwives of the principal ladies among the Israelites, in one of whose families, according as his magicians had told, as the Targum of Jonathan observes, should be born a son, by whom the land of Egypt would be destroyed; of which Josephus ^{f32} also takes notice; and therefore he might be chiefly solicitous to destroy the male children of such families; but Aben Ezra thinks, that these two were the chief over the rest of the midwives, and who collected and paid to the king the tribute out of their salaries, which was laid upon them, and so he had an opportunity of conversing with them on this subject.

Ver. 16. *And he said, when ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women,* etc.] Deliver them of their children:

and see [them] upon the stools; seats for women in labour to sit upon, and so contrived, that the midwives might do their office the more readily; but while they sat there, and before the birth, they could not tell whether the child was a son or a daughter; wherefore Kimchi ^{f33} thinks the word here used signifies the place to which the infant falls down from its mother’s belly, at the time of labour, and is called the place of the breaking forth of children, and takes it to be the “uterus” itself; and says it is called “Abanim”, because “Banim”, the children, are there, and supposes “A” or

“Aleph” to be an additional letter; and so the sense then is, not when ye see the women on the seats, but the children in the place of coming forth; but then he asks, if it be so, why does he say, “and see them” there? could they see them before they were entirely out of the womb? to which he answers, they know by this rule, if a son, its face was downwards, and if a daughter, its face was upwards; how true this is, must be left to those that know better; the Jewish masters ^{f34} constantly and positively affirm it: he further observes, that the word is of the dual number, because of the two valves of the womb, through which the infant passes:

if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; give it a private pinch as it comes forth, while under their hands, that its death might seem to be owing to the difficulty of its birth, or to something that happened in it. This was ordered, because what the king had to fear from the Israelites was only from the males, and they only could multiply their people; and because of the above information of his magicians, if there is any truth in that:

but if it be a daughter, then she shall live, be kept alive, and preserved, and brought up to woman’s estate; and this the king chose to have done, having nothing to fear from them, being of the feeble sex, and that they might serve to gratify the lust of the Egyptians, who might be fond of Hebrew women, being more beautiful than theirs; or that they might be married and incorporated into Egyptian families, there being no males of their own, if this scheme took place, to match with them, and so by degrees the whole Israelitish nation would be mixed with, and swallowed up in the Egyptian nation, which was what was aimed at.

Ver. 17. *But the midwives feared God*, etc.] And therefore durst not take away the life of an human creature, which was contrary to the express law of God, (^{GEN}Genesis 9:6):

and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them; knowing it was right to obey God rather than man, though ever so great, or in so exalted a station:

but saved the men children alive; did not use any violence with them, by stifling them in the birth. The scheme was so barbarous and shocking, especially to the tender sex, to whom it was proposed, and so devoid of humanity, that one would think it should never enter into the heart of man.

Ver. 18. *And the king called for the midwives*, etc.] Perceiving, by the increase of the Israelites, that they did not obey his commands:

and said unto them, why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? not only did not kill them, but did everything for them that was necessary for their future preservation and health; (see ^{צדק}Ezekiel 16:4).

Ver. 19. *And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women,* etc.] Not so tender, weak, and feeble, nor so ignorant of midwifery, and needed not the assistance of midwives, as the Egyptian women:

for they [are] lively; or midwives themselves, as Kimchi ^{f35} says the word signifies; and so ^{f36} Symmachus translates the words, “for they are midwives”; or are skilful in the art of midwifery, as Jarchi interprets it; and so the, Vulgate Latin version is, “for they have knowledge of midwifery”; and so could help themselves; or, “for they are as beasts” ^{f37}, as animals which need not, nor have the assistance of any in bringing forth their young; and so Jarchi observes, that their Rabbins ^{f38} explain it, they are like to the beasts of the field, who have no need of a midwife; or they were so lively, hale, and strong, as our version, and others, and their infants also, through a more than common blessing of God upon them at this time, that they brought forth children as soon as they were in travail, with scarce any pain or trouble, without the help of others: nor need this seem strange, if what is reported is true, of women in Illyria, Ireland, Italy ^{f39}, and other places ^{f40}, where it is said women will go aside from their work, or from the table, and bring forth their offspring, and return to their business or meal again; and especially in the eastern and hotter countries, women generally bring forth without much difficulty, and without the use of a midwife ^{f41}:

and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them; which doubtless was true in some cases, though not in all, because it is before said, they saved the men children alive; and had it been so at all times, there would have been no proof and evidence of their fearing God, and obeying his commands, rather than the king’s; and in some cases not only the strength and liveliness of the Hebrew women, and their fears also, occasioned by the orders of the king, might hasten their births before the midwives could get to them; and they might not choose to send for them, but use their own judgment, and the help of their neighbours, and do without them, knowing what the midwives were charged to do.

Ver. 20. *Wherefore God dealt well with the midwives,* etc.] He approved of their conduct upon the whole, however difficult it may be to clear them

from all blame in this matter; though some think that what they said was the truth, though they might not tell all the truth; yea, that they made a glorious confession of their faith in God, and plainly told the king, that it was nothing but the immediate hand of God that the Hebrew women were so lively and strong, and therefore were resolved not to oppose it, let him command what he would; so Dr. Lightfoot^{f42}, who takes the midwives to be Egyptians:

and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty; became very numerous, and strong, and robust, being the offspring of such lively women.

Ver. 21. *And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God*, etc.] And regarded his command, and not that of the king, though they risked his displeasure, and their lives:

that he made them houses; which some understand of the Israelites making houses for them, being moved to it by the Lord, to preserve them from the insults of the Egyptians; others of Pharaoh building houses for them, in which he kept them, until the Hebrew women came to their time of delivery, who were ordered to be brought to these houses, that it might be known by others, as well as the midwives, whether they brought forth sons or daughters, neither of which is likely: but rather the sense is, that God made them houses, and hid them from Pharaoh, as Kimchi interprets it, that he might not hurt them, just as he hid Jeremiah and Baruch: though it seems best of all to understand it of his building up the families of these midwives, increasing their number, especially their substance and wealth, making them and their households prosperous in all worldly good; but because the word is in the masculine gender, some choose to interpret it either of the infants themselves, the male children the midwives preserved, and of their being built up families in Israel, or by means of whom they were built up; or of the Israelites themselves, whose houses were built up by their means: and others are of opinion that material houses or buildings are meant, built for the Israelites, that the midwives might know where to find them and their wives, when ready to lie in, who before lived up and down in fields and tents: but the sense of God's building up the families of the midwives is to be preferred, there being an enallage or change of the gender, which is not unusual; (see ^{<1252>}Exodus 15:21).

Ver. 22. *And Pharaoh charged all his people*, etc.] Finding he could not carry his point with the midwives, he gave a general order to all his people everywhere:

saying, every son that is born ye shall cast into the river; the river Nile; not every son born in his kingdom, for this would have ruined it in time; but that was born to the Jews, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; and it is added in the Septuagint version, to the Hebrews:

and every daughter ye shall save alive; for the reasons given (See Gill on “^{Exodus 1:16}Exodus 1:16”).