

## THE BIRTH OF SARGON (Ex. 2:1–10)

The birth story of Moses (Ex. 2:1–10) resembles a familiar theme in the ancient Near Eastern folklore: the exposure and rescue of an infant son, and his subsequent ascent to a position of royalty. One of the most famous versions of this theme is the birth legend of Sargon of Accad, a ruler in central Mesopotamia around 2350 B.C.

Although many legends of Sargon abound, the earliest record of these is from the late 8th century B.C. Some scholars maintain that the text was composed to commemorate the feats of a namesake of the Accadian Sargon—Sargon II of Assyria (721–705 B.C.).

According to the story, Sargon was born to a high priestess and an unknown father. Sargon's birth was kept secret, and his mother set him in a basket among bulrushes, where he was found by a drawer of water. From these humble beginnings, Sargon is said to have been granted the love of Ishtar, the goddess of love and war. The goddess's love is regarded as a token of Sargon's title to the throne. The apparent similarities between the Sargon and Moses birth accounts, though fascinating, are nevertheless superficial.

So Moses feared and said, “Surely this thing is known!”<sup>15</sup> When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

### TRANSITION

#### Moses in Midian

Within the official boundaries of the Egyptian empire, in Palestine and the arid Sinai Peninsula, lived a diverse group called the Midianites. These people appeared sometime around the 13th century B.C. and were known as traders (cf. Gen. 37:36) and metalworkers. Less clearly known is their religion, but there is some evidence that they worshiped in tent shrines in the desert. The tabernacle that Moses was commanded to build (Ex. 26) may be related to Midianite practices. Moses' father-in-law Reuel (Ex. 2:18) was, after all, a priest of Midian. Elsewhere the names Jethro (Ex. 3:1) and Hobab (Judg. 4:11) are also given for the father-in-law of Moses.

• Exodus 2:16—6:30

### Exodus

**2:16** Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock.<sup>17</sup> Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

<sup>18</sup>When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “How *is it that* you have come so soon today?”

<sup>19</sup>And they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock.”

<sup>20</sup>So he said to his daughters, “And where *is he*? Why *is it that* you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.”

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.

<sup>22</sup>And she bore *him* a son. He called his name Gershom,<sup>a</sup> for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”

<sup>23</sup>Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.<sup>24</sup> So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.<sup>25</sup> And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*.

#### Moses at the Burning Bush

**3**<sup>1</sup>Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.<sup>2</sup> And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed.<sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.”

<sup>4</sup>So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!”

And he said, “Here I am.”

<sup>5</sup>Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover He said, “I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

<sup>7</sup>And the LORD said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.<sup>8</sup> So I have come

2:22 <sup>a</sup>Literally *Stranger There*

