

What is the significance of Egypt in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Egypt-in-the-Bible.html>

Egypt, one of the earliest and grandest civilizations of the ancient world, figures prominently in the biblical narrative.

Situated in the northeast corner of Africa, Egypt connects to the Holy Land via the Sinai Peninsula. In Bible times, the life-source of Egypt was the Nile River, which provided the area's only supply of water for drinking and irrigation. At the end of the rainy season, the river would swell and flood the Nile Valley, carrying nutrient-rich silt to replenish the valley's fertility. The main crops produced in the region were barley, spelt, beans, lentils, cucumbers, onions, grapes, and figs.

Egypt appears first in the biblical narrative in the story of Abraham when a severe famine struck Canaan, causing the patriarch and his family to sojourn in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20). While there, the Pharaoh took Sarah into his palace to be part of his royal harem, but he returned her to Abraham after God intervened.

Later, Abraham's great-grandson Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery, and he ended up in Egypt (Genesis 37:28). Eventually, Joseph rose through the ranks to become Pharaoh's right-hand ruler over Egypt (Genesis 41:37-57). Through Joseph's mediation, Jacob and all his family came to settle in Egypt, escaping another famine (Genesis 45-47).

For the next 430 years, the Israelites lived in Egypt (Exodus 12:40), swelling in numbers but slowly declining from a position of favor into one of brutal oppression under Pharaoh (Exodus 1:1-15). When the people could endure their suffering in Egypt no

longer, God raised up Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh and deliver Israel out of bondage and into the Promised Land (Exodus 3–6:13).

A horrifying series of plagues that left Egypt in ruins (Exodus 7:14–12:30), together with one of the most spectacular miracles in the Bible, the parting of the Red Sea, culminate in Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 14). But before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites would wander in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan for forty years. There they would receive the Ten Commandments and the law of God (Exodus 20–23), the specifications for building the wilderness tabernacle (Exodus 25–28), and instructions for the consecration of priests and the administering of sacrifices (Exodus 29–30).

During the period of the kings, Israel interacted with the rulers of Egypt on several occasions. King Solomon married the daughter of an Egyptian king who is thought to be Pharaoh Siamun (1 Kings 9:16). While King Rehoboam reigned, the Egyptian King Shishak invaded both Israel and Judah and ransacked the temple and royal palace (1 Kings 14:25–26). Hezekiah called upon the king of Egypt for help when the Assyrian army besieged him in Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:21). Judah's King Josiah was killed when he tried to stop Pharaoh Neco from passing along the coast to help the Assyrians. Neco also deposed King Jehoahaz and made Jehoiakim king over Judah instead (2 Chronicles 36:2–4).

After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC, the Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, saying that the remnant of Jews still in Judah must stay in their land and not flee to Egypt (Jeremiah 42:19). Despite Jeremiah's track record of accurate prophecies, the disobedient people went to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go with them (Jeremiah 43:1–7). In Egypt, Jeremiah prophesied the demise of Pharaoh Hophra by the

Babylonians—judgment would come against the rebellious Judeans, regardless of their attempt to find safety in Egypt (Jeremiah 44:30).

During the intertestamental period, there were still Jews living in Egypt. Their use of the Hebrew language had declined. Some of the Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt, translated the Old Testament into Greek between 250 and 150 BC. This text, known as the Septuagint, became the Bible commonly used in Israel during the days of Jesus and the apostles.

In the New Testament, Egypt served as a refuge for Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus when Herod the Great attempted to murder all the infant boys in and around Bethlehem (Matthew 2:13–23). While the Bible gives no details about their residence in Egypt or how long they stayed, it was probably only a brief time before they left to settle in Nazareth of Galilee.

Egypt has a tremendous symbolic significance in the Bible. Israel's redemption from Egypt is a picture of our deliverance from sin and death through faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Titus 2:14). While initially seen as a place of refuge in famine or threat, Egypt becomes a place of oppression and slavery. For New Testament believers, Egypt represents our old life of slavery to sin. All people are, by nature, slaves of sin, and Satan is a much harsher taskmaster than the Egyptian overseers. The natural man labors powerlessly under the weight of sin (Romans 7:22–25). God redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt by the blood of the lamb on the first Passover (Exodus 12), and He redeems us from sin by the blood of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18–19). Just as God called His people, the Israelites, out of bondage in Egypt, He calls us, His children, to “come out and be separate” and live holy

lives in His kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:17).