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## Our Pulpit.

# The Story of Moses.

No. 2.

## HIS BIRTH.

SERMON PREACHED BY

### REV. A. J. MOWATT.

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton Sunday  
 evening Jan. 13th 1889.

"By faith Moses, when he was born,  
 was hid three months by his parents, be-  
 cause they saw he was a goodly child; and  
 they were not afraid of the king's com-  
 mandment."—HEB. XI. 23.

I ask you tonight to go back with me  
 thirty centuries, a breadth of years too  
 vast for us easily to grasp. It is like  
 an eternity to us. Those years—what  
 they have done or undone for Egypt  
 and the world! Egypt so low today was  
 then the glory of kingdoms. Rameses  
 the great was on her throne. Returned  
 from his wars with a name that was the  
 world's wonder and terror, he threw all  
 his mighty energy into the development  
 and upbuilding of his kingdom. Upper  
 and Lower Egypt, once separate, united  
 under him into one great Empire. Pos-  
 sessed as he was of almost exhaustless  
 resources in the shape of captives and  
 slaves and wealth, he undertook and  
 pushed forward all sorts of public works  
 Nothing seemed too great for him to do.  
 He built store-cities, developed agricul-  
 ture, erected new temples and remodelled  
 and beautified old ones, constructed  
 walls and fortresses, and filled the land  
 with the glory of his power.

Our story opens tonight with perhaps  
 the sixth year of his own independent  
 reign. He is said to have reigned 66  
 years in all, 36 conjointly with his father,  
 and 36 alone. Memphis is his capital,  
 a magnificent city on the west bank of  
 the Nile, not far from where Cairo  
 stands today. It was founded by Menes,  
 Egypt's first king, and so was quite an  
 old city in the days of Rameses. But  
 in his day it reached the zenith of its  
 splendor. It was full of temples and  
 palaces and splendid monuments. Here,  
 Herodotus tells us, was the beautiful  
 and spacious temple of Isis. Here was  
 the temple of Serapis, in the western  
 part of the city. Here was the temple  
 of Ra or the sun. And here also was  
 the temple of Pthah, the Egyptian  
 Vulcan, the oldest and most famous  
 temple of all. This was the pride and  
 glory of the city. Founded by Menes,  
 and therefore as old as the city, it con-  
 sisted of a grand central edifice, sur-  
 rounded by pillared courts, and adorned  
 by colossal statues, pictured representa-  
 tions of the achievements of kings,  
 sphinxes, inscriptions, tablets, obelisks,  
 the work of many kings and many ages,  
 telling a thrilling story of the past in  
 its architecture and records. On the  
 eastern edge of the city, washed by the  
 waters of the Nile on one side, was the  
 citadel, sometimes called the White  
 Castle, a strong fortress girt about with  
 a lofty rampart.

Memphis too was admirably situated  
 for trade, and at the time we speak of,  
 3000 years ago, was a prosperous busy  
 city. It was also a great city for learn-  
 ing. Here it was where the wisdom of  
 the ancients had its home. What Mem-  
 phis did not know was not worth know-  
 ing. Then it was a city of most salu-  
 bricious climate, and beautiful for situa-  
 tion. From its walls north and south  
 spread out rich green fields, covered  
 with lotus flowers, and intersected with  
 canals, a very paradise of loveliness.

To the west, standing out clear cut  
 against the pale sky was its necropolis.  
 Stretching twenty miles north and south,  
 but with its populous center immedi-  
 ately behind Memphis, this strange City  
 of the dead confronted the living city, at-  
 tracting the eye by the sharp points of  
 its sixty pyramids, and especially chal-  
 lenging attention by those huge monu-  
 ments of kingly vanity, which have  
 never elsewhere been equalled. Such,  
 in brief, is some description of the city  
 within which, or near to which, Moses  
 was born, and as it was in his day.

But Memphis has passed away, its  
 glory utterly perished. A grove of  
 palm-trees grows today on the site where  
 the ancient capital of Egypt once stood  
 so proudly. And of all its splendor  
 there is left but one monument, a mono-  
 lith forty six feet in length, belonging,  
 it is believed, to the temple Pthah, a  
 splendid statue of the warrior-king,  
 but now, fallen from its proud position,  
 it lies face downward in a pool of dirty  
 water, fit emblem of departed greatness.  
 The *Jellalim* call it *Abu-el-Hawl*, the  
 father of terror, referring perhaps to  
 the cruel tyranny of Rameses the great,  
 whose image the prostrate pillar bears,  
 and if so, illustrating the old adage:  
 "The good a man does dies with him; the  
 evil he does lives after him."

### I. THE HOME OF MOSES.

In the straggling suburbs of Memphis,  
 and close to the west bank of the reedy  
 river, thirty centuries ago, might be  
 seen a dwelling of the poorest sort, a  
 mud hovel, in which one of the families  
 of God's people finds a home. Once  
 well-to-do in circumstances, rich and

respectable perhaps, oppression has  
 ground them down to the deplorable state  
 of wretchedness we find them in.

The head of the family, a little past the  
 prime of life, toils as a field-hand, and  
 day by day along with hundreds of  
 others, slaves like himself, may be seen  
 working the rude machinery by which  
 the water is lifted up from the river to  
 irrigate the fields of the tyrant king, or  
 may-hap some of his underlings. He  
 is almost naked, and the hot sun scorches  
 his skin, and the hard monotonous drudg-  
 ery gin-horse work wearies and wears  
 him; but hardest of all are the gruff  
 voice of the task-master and sometimes  
 the lash of his sharp heavy whip across  
 the bare shoulders of this free-born son  
 of Israel. He feels it to be a bitter  
 thing to be a slave. It is something he  
 never can harden to. He submits, be-  
 cause he has to, but he dreams and  
 hopes for the day to come, and he knows  
 it will come, when he and his shall be  
 free. At sunset he repairs to his hum-  
 ble abode, and there in the bosom of his  
 family forgets for the time being that he  
 is a slave, and comforts himself and them  
 with the comforts wherewith the Lord  
 comforts His own.

Amram, for that was the slave's name,  
 belongs to the tribe of Levi, a tribe that  
 afterwards enjoyed the distinction of be-  
 ing specially employed about the Lord's  
 sanctuary and in the sacred services of  
 religious worship, but at the time we  
 speak of it had no pre-eminence above  
 the rest of the tribes. The great crush-  
 ing wheel of oppression rolled over all  
 alike, and the highest were as low as  
 the lowest. Those who had any promi-  
 nence among the people were sure to  
 be made the special objects of the ty-  
 rant's cruelty, and had the distinction  
 of feeling the iron of oppression the  
 keenest.

Some years before this, Amram had  
 married, not only into his own tribe,  
 but into his own house. He had mar-  
 ried Jochebed his father's sister, his own  
 aunt. It was not uncommon both  
 among Egyptians and Israelites, at the  
 time, to marry those near of kin to them,  
 brothers to marry their sisters, and  
 among the Egyptians, it is said, fathers  
 sometimes to marry their own daughters.

The first born of the Amram house-  
 hold had been a daughter, Miriam or  
 Mary they had called her, the first of  
 the Marys who are so dear to the  
 church. Miriam is now a girl of twelve  
 or fifteen, a gentle shrewd little woman  
 who is such a comfort and help to her  
 mother. All day long she fills the hum-  
 ble hut with the music of her sweet  
 voice, for she can sing, and the still  
 sweeter music of her filial devotion.

Some years later another had been  
 added to the family whom they had  
 named Aaron. He is not yet three, a  
 bright chubby little fellow who means  
 to make his mark in the world, and of  
 whom we shall hear more.

About this time the black decree goes  
 forth from the tyrant-king dooming the  
 boy-infants of Israel to the waters of  
 the Nile, and we can readily understand  
 the anxiety and consternation it created  
 in the Amram household. Its dark  
 shadow seemed to crouch like a monster  
 at the door of the little home, waiting  
 for the new life to come. The beloved  
 disciple, in a strange book he calls his  
 Revelation, tells us, among many other  
 weird and terrible things, of the wo-  
 man's seed whose birth a red monster  
 watched for with devouring jaws. But  
 he was disappointed. The Lord knows  
 how to save His own. So, long before,  
 under the shadow of the pyramids, the  
 birth of a son of man is watched for by  
 the same cruel monster, and he whets  
 his teeth in anticipation of the feast he  
 is to have. But when he sleeps the  
 child is born who is to do so much to-  
 wards taking his power from him,  
 breaking even his jaw-teeth, bruising  
 the head that another's heel is to crush  
 to utter death.

Seldom indeed is a child born in more  
 adverse circumstances than those that  
 attend the last-born of the Amram  
 household. His father a poor slave,  
 his home a clay hut, the cruel edict of a  
 tyrant-king dooming his infant life,  
 what can be much humbler-and-harder  
 circumstance than such a birth? It re-  
 minds us of another birth, in later  
 times, that was very similarly circum-  
 stanced, the birth of Jesus. Now, men  
 would say in their wise way, better not  
 be born at all than to be born as Moses  
 was born, and as many another is born.  
 To be born thus is to be born but to die,  
 born to a sort of living death perhaps, born  
 to a life that is a grim struggle for ex-  
 istence, born to be a slave, born to  
 nakedness and hunger, born to be har-  
 nessed like a mule to a wheel and  
 whipped up by the task-master's  
 lash to the fierce rigor of the  
 drudgery-work. Oh better have a  
 stone tied about one's neck the first  
 hour of life, and flung far into the river  
 than live to such a life! And perhaps  
 Amram, when he came home, and found  
 a new life, said, in the bitterness of his  
 soul, "Better away with it at once,  
 wife, than let it live to be what I am!  
 It will have to die at last, and the  
 sooner the better. To spare it is only  
 adding to our misery, and we have  
 enough of it now. It is the will of  
 Heaven, and we can do nothing. Let  
 the fated child die."

But the mother could not consent to  
 that. She sees, or thinks she sees, in  
 his face, a light that is to her a prophecy  
 of what he is to be, and an earnest of  
 the light that years afterwards shone so  
 full upon him that men could not look,  
 and she said to her husband, with a faith  
 that triumphed over his weakness, that  
 the child, she felt so sure, in spite of the  
 king's commandment, would yet be the  
 hope of their home, the help of their  
 people, and he must not die. And  
 drawing the unconscious babe to her  
 bosom with a mother's tender yearning,  
 and kissing him over and over again,  
 and letting her tears baptize him, she  
 said to him, as if he knew all she felt,  
 that if a mother's love and faith could  
 save him, he would be saved, he would  
 not die.

### II. THE LITTLE ARK.

For three months the mother made  
 out, without much difficulty seemingly,  
 to hide the birth of her child from the  
 king's lynx-eyed officials. Not every  
 child can be thus hidden. They make  
 themselves heard, and their presence  
 felt, and all the neighborhood knows  
 that there is a baby in the house. The  
 mother would not be without her  
 anxieties lest her watchful care would  
 fail, and her child would betray itself  
 and her. But the Lord was with her,  
 and for three months she was able to  
 defy the king's commandment.

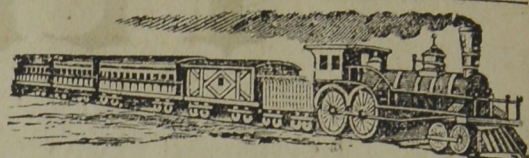
The time was approaching, however,  
 when it would not be possible for her to  
 hide her child, and she saw it approach-  
 ing with growing maternal anxiety.  
 She always hoped that some way of de-  
 liverance would be opened up for her,  
 and she would look up to God with a  
 trust that could not be shaken, and with  
 prayers and tears cry to Him for help.  
 And He helped her. He opened up to  
 her a wondrous way of grace and mercy  
 for her doomed child. O the riches of  
 God's grace! Let us trust Him, and He  
 will help us today in our need, even as  
 long ago He helped the mother of Moses  
 in her need.

Not far from her hut were the royal  
 watering-places, and almost every day  
 she saw the king's daughter with her  
 maids come down to bathe, and she was  
 struck with the benevolence of her  
 countenance and kindly beaming eye,  
 and something seemed to say to her:  
 "Trust your babe to her." At first she  
 could not think of it, but day by day  
 the thought came back to her, as she felt  
 that something must be done, and the  
 more her mind dwelt upon it, the more  
 it seemed best, to throw her child upon  
 the mercy of the fair Egyptian princess.

And with the purpose opened up to  
 her gradually also a plan, by which it  
 could be done in a way to appeal most  
 strongly to the tender-heartedness of the  
 king's daughter. She had often heard  
 the story of Noah's ark, and the idea  
 took shape in her thoughts to make a  
 little ark for her child. So she sent  
 Miriam to gather the papyrus that grew  
 plentifully along the river's brink, and  
 with her skilful fingers she wove them  
 into a most ingenious sort of boat. Then  
 to make it water-proof she used bitumen,  
 and so her ark, that, like Noah's, was to  
 do so much for the saving of her house,  
 was built. It was a work too of faith  
 and prayer, and cost her many a tear,  
 for it might not be an ark, it might be  
 a coffin.

And now comes the day when she  
 must launch her frail craft with its  
 precious freight. The night before  
 would be an anxious sleepless night to  
 her. She did not know how she was to  
 do what she had planned to do, but on  
 her knees before the God of her fathers  
 she had found help where help is always  
 to be found, and in the morning she was  
 strangely calm and hopeful. She felt  
 as if her plan was to be successful. So,  
 taking up her child she washes and  
 dresses him with scrupulous care and  
 neatness. Then leaving Aaron in charge  
 of a neighbor woman, she with the babe,  
 and Miriam with the ark, go forth along  
 the bank of the river to the place where  
 the princess will be sure to come. When  
 there, the mother nurses the child, and  
 then tucks him into the ark as if into  
 his own little crib. He is asleep, and  
 looks so sweet dressed up, as lovely a  
 child as ever queen or princess pressed  
 to her bosom. The mother kisses the  
 babe, perhaps for the last time, as gently  
 as if an angel's lips had touched it, and  
 then Miriam wades out and anchors the  
 little ark securely among the thick tall  
 papyrus plants. This done they retire,  
 Miriam to conceal herself hard by, and  
 the mother to linger within easy reach,  
 and so with no little anxiety they await  
 results. Perhaps they can see Pharaoh's  
 daughter some distance away coming.

O mother, do you know what it is to  
 give up your child to God? Sometimes  
 in one way, and sometimes in another,  
 but in some way. He comes to the  
 mothers of Israel still, and He asks them  
 to trust their little ones to Him.  
 "Suffer the little children to come unto  
 me," said Jesus to the mothers of Salem,  
 "and forbid them not, for of such is the  
 kingdom of Heaven." We may not al-  
 ways realize it perhaps, for we lose sight  
 sometimes of the grand meaning of these  
 sacred symbolic rites; but when, as  
 parents, with our child in our arms, we  
 stand before the sacred front, or mayhap  
 Continued on third page.



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11.35 A. M.—From Fredericton Junction,  
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 3.10 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction,  
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 drew's, St. Stephen, Houlton, Wood-  
 stock and points north.  
 6.30 P. M.—Express from St. John, and inter-  
 mediate points.

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#### ARRIVE AT GIBSON.

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