

The Pharaoh's Daughter
Bible Study—Week #3

(Please feel free to print this material and write your answers in the spaces provided.)

Look What I Found— Ankhe vs. Jochebed

After completing the last edit of *The Pharaoh's Daughter*, I began formulating this 4-week Bible study. My assistant and I discussed the spiritual themes of the book and which character studies might illustrate them best. Three characters stood out immediately—Anippe, Mered, and Mehy (Moses)—but we couldn't decide on the fourth. Two women seemed locked in a tie for that fourth spot, and as we chatted about the lessons these characters taught us, we realized they were complete opposites. Ankhe and Jochebed teach us by their differences.

Meet Jochebed

Jochebed is a biblical character, the Hebrew mother of Moses, and distinguishes herself as a woman of great faith and endless sacrifice. In *The Pharaoh's Daughter*, Jochebed is willing to give up her motherly rights and trust God to protect her son while he's in the care of an Egyptian princess.

“I was his mother this morning, but you [Anippe] are his ummi now.”

In the story, she's also willing to give up her Hebrew family for three or four years to be sequestered in the Egyptian villa while becoming Moses's wet nurse.

“Jochebed knelt and steadied Miriam's shoulders, an unnatural peace settling over them. ‘You be a good helper... Take care of your father and brother while I'm gone.’”

Meet Ankhe

Ankhe is an historical figure, the younger sister of King Tut, but her role and personality in the story are entirely fictional. From childhood Ankhe has been mistreated by those in authority, and as the story begins she's assigned as handmaid to her sister Anippe. These deep wounds create in Ankhe an air of bitter entitlement and self-centeredness that consumes her. The few times she's given opportunities to act nobly or respond with grace or kindness, she refuses and instead feeds her resentment with scheming. One day Anippe asks what Ankhe would do if she was restored to a royal position.

“‘I would lounge by the river with you. We could talk of travel and marriage and we could curse the old hens at Gurob.’ Pity surged when Anippe heard Ankhe's dream world... She reached for Ankhe's hand. ‘Even as Amira, I must be productive.’”

Choices and Consequences

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been called—in a sense—to be the world's handmaid, to serve as He served, to love as He loved. Will we give sacrificially, trusting God with the outcome—like Jochebed—or will we begrudge every good deed, weighing its personal gain—like Ankhe.

Write **Matthew 16:24-25** on the lines below and discover *the Bible's* perspective on our choices and consequences.

The Biblical Story

Jochebed's story twists our hearts. Caught between the impossible command of an irrational king and the immovable love of a mother's heart, she would not allow her newborn son to be cast into the Nile River:

"...she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus **basket** for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him."

Exodus 2:2-4 (**emphasis** added)

Jochebed chose to hide her infant, but when that was no longer an option, she was faced with an even more difficult decision.

The Hebrew word used for *basket* in v.3 is the same Hebrew word used for Noah's ark—a large boat. The writer of Exodus wanted us to understand that in Jochebed's mind, this pitch-covered papyrus basket would deliver her son as surely as the ark saved Noah and his family.

- *In your opinion*, was Jochebed's decision to place her child in that basket a knee-jerk reaction or a well-thought-out plan? Explain.
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- Put yourself in Jochebed's sandals. What were some potential consequences—both possible positives and negatives—of placing her son in the basket?
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Faith Breeds Faith

We've focused on physical choices and consequences, but what about the *spiritual consequences* of Jochebed's choices?

- In your opinion, how would Jochebed's faith have been affected if her son was NOT rescued?
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- In your opinion, how would Jochebed's faith have been affected after her son WAS rescued and Miriam came to summon her as his wet nurse?
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When we see God's power work on our behalf, our faith and courage are strengthened to make the next difficult choice.

"When the child grew older, [Jochebed] took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son."

Exodus 2:10

- What consequences would her son bear—positive and negative—when Jochebed gave him to Pharaoh's daughter?
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Scripture doesn't tell us how Jochebed responded to the consequences of her decision, but I wonder if we can measure Jochebed's godly outlook by the lives of her other two children.

- READ Exodus 4:14. How did Aaron feel about seeing Moses again?
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Exodus 15 recites the song Moses and Miriam sung after Yahweh destroyed Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. Moses led the whole assembly, and then Miriam grabbed a tambourine and led the women in a dance as they sang the chorus.

- What kind of long-lasting consequences did Jochebed's choices/attitude have on Moses and Miriam's relationship?
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Choices and consequences impact both our physical and spiritual lives. **A spiritual choice has eternal consequences as surely as our physical choices impact our earthly world.**

God's Word For Today

The Bible tells the story of two men who were as completely opposite in character as Jochebed and Anke. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain the elder and his brother, Abel. One made careless choices, and the other chose wisely.

“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ***In the course of time*** Cain brought ***some*** of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—***fat portions*** from some of the ***firstborn*** of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If ***you do what is right***, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.’” **Genesis 4:2-5, 7** (***emphasis*** added)

Though we have no record of God instructing Cain and Abel about their offerings, we know from God's censure that Cain knew right offerings from wrong ones.

- What kind of offering did Abel bring (his physical choice)?
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- What was the heart with which Abel brought it—the *quality* of the offering (his spiritual choice)?
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- What was the heart with which Cain brought it—the *quality* of the offering (his spiritual choice)?
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Scripture clearly tells us that God gave the brothers *time* to consider their offerings, and they knew right from wrong. The consequence of Cain's choices was God's disfavor.

- What was Cain's response to the consequences of *his* choices?
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Like Cain, Ankhe chooses to react with anger to nearly every situation. Granted, Ankhe is treated unfairly, but she *never* accepts personal responsibility for her choices and she consistently shifts blame for the consequences. There is a better way to live.

For Personal Reflection

Today's study began with Jesus' words to his disciples in Matthew 16, *Take up your cross and follow me*. The context of that declaration is Jesus' choice to go to Jerusalem—though He knew he would suffer many things, be killed, and on the third day raised to life. It was both a physical and spiritual choice to submit to the earthly pain and win the eternal prize:

“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.” **Matthew 16:27**

- Are there pillars of faith in your past that can strengthen your trust in God for the future?
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- Are you holding onto anger that is a direct result of your own wrong choices? READ Psalm 51:1-12, and ask the Lord to crush your pride and give you a contrite heart.
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- When you're faced with injustice—when life or someone in your life treats you unfairly—do you respond like Ankhe (bitter and entitled) or like Jochebed (trusting Yahweh)? What practical steps can you take to move in Jochebed's direction?
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- List some of the eternal blessings that can make “taking up our cross” in this life worthwhile.
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Come Back Next Week!

- Please take a moment to ponder today's lesson and [submit a question](#) in the COMMENTS section below.
- Next week, I'll give in-depth answers to some of your questions in a short video clip embedded at the top of the blog post.
- Each question submitted will serve as an entry in the drawing for a necklace, engraved with the Aaronic blessing, “May the Lord Bless and Keep You,” based on Numbers 6:24. We'll give away one necklace each week for our four-week Bible study!