

Exodus Chapter 2 Continued

Exodus 2:15 "Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well."

“Midian”: The Midianites, who were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4), settle in the Arabian Peninsula along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqabah.

Midian was the desert region between Sinai and the Arabian Desert, south of Edom. Its exact location is unknown due to its seminomadic population. Midian is listed as one of Abraham’s sons by his wife Keturah, who was sent into the “land of Qedem” (Gen. 25:1-6). In the Joseph story (Gen. 37:25-36), the designations “Midianites” and “Ishmaelites” are used virtually interchangeably.

During the wilderness journey of the Israelites, the Midianites appear in confederation with the Moabites and Amorites. By the time of Gideon (Judges 6:1-5), the Midianites appear as desert bandits in alliance with the Amalekites. Their recorded devastation by Gideon’s forces may well account for the fact that they disappear from the biblical record thereafter. No substantial archaeological evidence has ever been found of the nomadic Midianites.

We need to take a very long, hard look at this Scripture. How soon the Pharaoh's heart changed when Moses (a Hebrew), killed an Egyptian. There was really bad blood between the Hebrews and Egyptians at this point. The Hebrews were treated as sub-humanity with no rights at all, at the mercy of the cruel Egyptians. Pharaoh approves of this cruel treatment. Even though Moses was raised as his grandson, he wants him killed. Moses' fear of the Pharaoh now came into focus.

The word "Midian" means brawling or contention. This "Midian" was a place of refuge for Moses. In this part of the world, the well was also the gathering place, because there was such a shortage of water.

Verses 16-22: Moses spent most of his first 40 years in Pharaoh’s palace, learning to be a student, a statesman, and a soldier. He then spent the next 40 years of his life in the desert, taking care of his father-in-law’s sheep. From prince to shepherd was a demotion, yet Moses learned the qualities he would need as Israel’s future emancipator, including humility and patience. In the desert, God teaches people who He really is. It is only when we are totally yielded to Him that our gifting become graces.

Exodus 2:16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew [water], and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

Reuel may have been both “priest” and “prince,” like Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18); but there is no reason to doubt that he is here called “priest.” In Exodus 18:12, Jethro is represented as exercising priestly functions. The Midianites, descendants of Abraham by Keturah, worshipped

the true God, and seem to have been at this time, a religious people. The name Reuel, or Raguel, means “friend of God.” Jethro’s sacrifices were “for God,” and Aaron and the elders eat bread with him “before God.”

The custom of these people of the east was for the daughters to care for the flock. Possibly he had no sons; just the 7 daughters were mentioned. This word "priest" here does mean that he was of a priestly order. As I said before, the watering well was a good place to meet, because at least once a day the sheep must be watered. Moses would certainly meet someone here at the well.

Exodus 2:17 And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

The rule of the desert is that those who come to a well take their turns in the use of the water in the order of their arrival. But these rude shepherds declined to wait for their turn. It appears later on, by the question of Reuel, “How is it that ye are come so soon today?” that this rude and unfair conduct of the shepherds was habitual.

Moses stood up and helped them. Here again Moses is the champion of the oppressed, but has learnt wisdom by the past, and uses no unnecessary violence. His air and manner intimidated the wrong-doers, and they allowed the maidens sheep to be watered first.

Here, we see the shepherds forcing these shepherdesses away. Remember, Moses has been trained in fighting as well as being educated in the Egyptian schools. Many Scriptures indicate that he was a healthy man. These men of Midian didn't have as easy a task as they usually did with this strong man to help. Moses helped them water their flock.

Exodus 2:18 "And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How [is it that] ye are come so soon today?"

“Reuel”: He was also known as Jethro (3:1), who may very well have been a worshiper of the true God (18:12-23), notwithstanding his being also the priest of Midian.

We see from this Scripture that probably these daughters had trouble every day with the shepherds, because their dad was used to them being much later coming home. "Reuel" means friend of God. It appears that Reuel and Jethro was the same person. Reuel was probably his name and Jethro showed his rank or title. "Jethro" means his excellence.

Exodus "2:19 And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew [water] enough for us, and watered the flock."

So they concluded from his dress and appearance, perhaps even from his speech. It would be natural for them to make the mistake, and for Moses to remember it. Any other author would probably have said, “a man,” or “a stranger.”

“And also drew water enough”: The shepherds had consumed some of the maidens’ water before Moses’s interference, so that he had to draw more for them; another “little trait,” which speaks for the Mosaic authorship.

These daughters assumed that Moses was an Egyptian because of his attire and because he came from Egypt. Moses had made himself useful, and now is here at the father's home with the seven daughters.

Exodus 2:20 "And he said unto his daughters, And where [is] he? why [is] it [that] ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread."

By the account Reuel's daughters gave of Moses, of his courage and humanity, he was very desirous of seeing him.

"Why is it that ye have left the man?" Behind them at the well, and had not brought him along with them. He seemed to be displeased, and chides them, and tacitly suggests that they were rude and ungrateful not to ask a stranger, and one that had been so kind to them, to come with them and refresh himself.

"Call him, that he may eat bread": Take meat with them, bread being put for all provisions.

The father reprimanded his daughters for not bringing this man so he could show his appreciation for his helping his daughters. He sent them back after Moses so he could show him hospitality for his good deeds.

Exodus 2:21 "And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter."

Much like Jacob with Laban (see Gen. 29), the runaway Moses was not financially able to enter into an independent marriage, so he became Jethro’s adopted son. He then became his son-in-law upon marrying “Zipporah” (4:18). After 40 years of service, the flocks he tended would still belong to Jethro (3:1).

Here we see Moses fled to an uncertain future from Egypt and Pharaoh. If he ever thought of his call to lead his people out of bondage, it had not been mentioned. At any rate, Moses had probably gone to work for Reuel and now had become part of Reuel's family. "Zipporah" means sparrow.

Exodus 2:22 "And she bare [him] a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land."

Which signifies a "desolate stranger"; partly on his own account, he being in a foreign country, a stranger and sojourner. But not by way of complaint, but rather of thankfulness to God for providing so well for him in it. And partly on his son's account, that when he came to years of maturity and knowledge, he might learn, and in which Moses no doubt instructed him. That he

was not to look upon Midian as his proper country, but that he was to be heir of the land of Canaan, and which he might be reminded of by his name.

“For he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land”: So Midian was to him, who was born in Egypt, and being a Hebrew, was entitled to the land of Canaan; this looks as if he had been at this time some years in Midian.

The name "Gershom" means refugee. Moses had settled in Midian and now had a family.

Verses 23-25: “Heard” and “remembered” indicate that the Lord’s time had come: He would return Moses to Egypt and send him as the answer to the people’s prayers (3:7-10). God always has someone ready when His people cry out to Him in their need. More importantly, Yahweh revealed Himself as the One who hears, remembers, sees (looked upon), and knows (had respect), on His children.

The hardship imposed upon Israel finally brought forth a collective cry for relief. The response of God is presented in 4 words: “heard,” “remembered,” “saw,” and “took notice.” This signaled that a response was forthcoming.

Exodus 2:23 "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage."

“The king of Egypt died”: This would have been Thutmose III (1483-1450 B.C.), the Pharaoh of the oppression.

Why do we wait until things are so terribly bad before we cry out to God for help? We see 400 years of misery coming to a climax. The cruelty of the king had caused the Israelites to be pleased when he died. They were hoping for better things. In their need, they cried out to God. God always listens, and this time was no exception. God felt pity toward them.

He hurt too, for their bondage. We Christians too, had been a slave to sin before we cried out for mercy and God heard and sent us a Savior (Jesus). This wicked king had ruled even before Moses left Egypt and now about 40 years later he dies. Moses is now 80 years old. He was 40 when he left Egypt, and he lived 40 years in Midian; and now at 80 had a family and felt that he had settled in to stay.

Exodus 2:24 "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

“Remembered his covenant”: The unilateral covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-22), and confirmed with Isaac (Gen. 26:2-5), and with Jacob (Gen. 28:10-15; 35:9-15), specifically promised a geographically recognizable territory to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Through them too, the world would be blessed.

Jacob (Israel), was called by this name "Jacob", because he was a family head when the covenant was made. He was called "Israel" when the nation was meant. These were the three patriarchs that God had made the covenant with. Their descendants were these 12 tribes of Israel and their families. God had promised to bless them and make them into such a large group that they would be like the sand of the sea. And also, that all nations would be blessed through them.

These last 400 years, and most especially the last 60 to 70 years, they did not feel blessed at all. Even though they had grown from 70 to nearly 3 million people, they were still not an innumerable group. God's Word is good. What He promises, He will do. God remembers His covenant and these promises. Help is on the way.

Exodus 2:25 "And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto [them]."

With an eye of pity and compassion, and saw all the hardships they labored under, and all the injuries that were done unto them.

"And God had respect unto them": Had a favorable regard to them; or "knew" not only them, the Israelites, and loved them, and approved of them. And He owned them as his own, all which words of knowledge sometimes signify; but He knew their sorrows and sufferings, and took notice of what was done to them secretly (see Exodus 3:7).

Probably, the word "respect" here means that God keeps His covenant. We know just as surely as He sent a deliverer to these Israelites, He sent us a Deliverer (one Jesus Christ, our Lord). Just as these Israelites were freed from bondage, so are we. We shall not always suffer, but will truly inherit our eternal life in heaven with Jesus, if we do not faint but hold firm to our faith. We must know that God is the rewarder of those who stay true to the faith.

Exodus Chapter 2 Continued Questions

1. When the Pharaoh heard what Moses had done, what did he want to do to Moses?
2. What did Moses do?
3. Where did he go?
4. When did Pharaoh's heart turn against Moses?
5. What rights did the Israelites have in Egypt?
6. What had Pharaoh's feelings been all the time about this Hebrew child his daughter raised?
7. What does "Midian" mean?
8. How many daughters did the priest of Midian have?

9. Why had they come to the well?
10. Who came and drove the 7 daughters away?
11. Did Moses allow this? Explain?
12. What was the priest's name?
13. What question did he ask his daughters?
14. What does "Reuel" mean?
15. What does "Jethro" mean?
16. Why were both names used for the 7 daughters' father?
17. What did the daughters call Moses?
18. What did the father say to the daughters when they told how Moses helped them?
19. Who did Moses take to wife?
20. What does "Zipporah" mean?
21. What did Moses name his son?
22. What does his name mean?
23. After Moses left Egypt, about how long did this evil king reign?
24. What did God feel toward these Israelites?
25. In what do we see a shadow of Jesus in Moses?
26. How old was Moses when the king died?
27. What covenant did God remember?
28. Why was Israel called "Jacob" here?
29. What had God promised in the covenant?
30. What did respect probably mean in Scripture verse 25?
31. What one thing must we realize in this?
32. Who is God the rewarder of?