

# EXODUS

## THE GOD WHO RESCUES

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### **SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 2:11-22**

To understand more about how Moses fled Egypt for the first time.

## **A Skipped Chapter**

For as important as Moses is to the Exodus story specifically and the Old and New Testaments generally, virtually nothing is known about his formative years as a boy growing into a man. Verse 10 of chapter 2 ends with Moses being nursed by his mother and then given to Pharaoh's daughter as a son, presumably around the age of 1. The very next verse, verse 11, abruptly begins: "One day, when Moses had grown up." There is no account of his development from baby to boy and from boy to young man. There is nothing written about the education he received perhaps because he would have been instructed in an Egyptian system given his royal place in the house of Pharaoh. Roughly 36 years pass. It's almost a skipped chapter in Moses' life, unimportant for us to know about and unimportant to the development of who Moses becomes. It might be intentional. Moses is shaped greatly through God's direct revelation to him (e.g. the burning bush, the giving of the Ten Commandments, etc.), and it might be that these details are left out so as to eliminate the possibility that his upbringing played a drastic role in his obedience to God or the decisions he makes as Israel's leader. Moses becomes who he becomes solely through the instruction of Yahweh.

## **A Man of Death**

One detail you'll notice when you pay special attention to Moses is that he is a man of death in a manner of speaking. Death follows him where he goes, either to come after him or others around him. Even at birth, he had a death sentence over him which led his mother to dangerously place him in a basket (or ark) and float him down the river. Even his rescuer was Pharaoh's daughter who could have very easily killed him. Now, some years later "when Moses had grown up," death shows up again. Verses 11 and 12 reads: "One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." This time, rather than avoiding death, he becomes the bringer of it. One interesting detail that's easy to miss is the reality that by this time in Moses' life, he clearly identified more as an *Israelite* than an Egyptian. Though he was raised by Pharaoh's daughter as an Egyptian and clearly appeared to be Egyptian to some extent (Ex. 2:19), he saw himself as an Israelite. He looked at "his people" and the burdens they faced, and he exacted revenge on those who perpetrated such oppression on his people by taking the life of an Egyptian and hiding his body.

### **THE OUTCAST**

This plan to protect his people and more closely identify with his Hebrew heritage does not pan out: "When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, 'Why do you strike your companion?' He answered, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid, and thought, 'Surely the thing is known'"

(Ex. 2:13-14). Though he saw himself as a defender of the Israelites, the Israelites did not view him with the same kindred spirit. After all, he was brought up in Pharaoh's house. The Israelites had no interest in cordiality with him even if he had just murdered an Egyptian. Moses struggled to find "his place" in Egypt. He did not see himself as a true Egyptian and the Egyptians likely shared a similar sentiment towards him. Yet, he also did not receive a warm welcome from his own people because of the Egyptian influence in his life. He was an outcast with nowhere to go.

### ***A SHADOW OF WHAT WAS TO COME***

Verses 13 and 14 also foreshadow the kind of relationships Moses will have with his people in the future as well. There is irony in their response, "who made you a prince and judge over us," because God will one day do just that (Ex. 3:7-20). The irony, however, is that even after bringing the people out of Egyptian captivity and performing numerous supernatural acts, the people will still grumble and complain and see Moses as primarily antagonistic towards them (Ex. 15:24, 16:2; Num. 14:2, 16:41). This whole act of Moses killing an Egyptian and being met with criticism by his own people foreshadows the whole of Moses and Israel's relationship. Moses will continue to struggle to find his place amidst his people. It could be argued, then, that this series of events in Egypt were used by God as God shaped Moses into the man He would eventually call back to Egypt to challenge Pharaoh.

## **Midian**

When Pharaoh learned of Moses' treachery, "he sought to kill Moses," but "Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian" (Ex. 2:15). Midian is the location of next segment of Moses' journey. Below are a couple of important details in verses 16 through 22.

### ***THE PRIEST AND HIS DAUGHTERS***

The "priest of Midian" and his "seven daughters" become main characters in Moses' narrative next (Ex. 2:16). The daughters come to "water their father's flock" (Ex. 2:16) but are met with resistance from other shepherds who "drove them away" (Ex. 2:17a). However, Moses still possesses the virtue of protecting the weak and standing up to injustice, and so he "stood up and saved them" and "watered their flock" (Ex. 2:17b). News of Moses' heroic intervention makes its way back to the priest, a man named Reuel, after he notices his daughters have returned home at a much earlier time than expected (Ex. 2:18). The daughters' response indicates that Moses indeed still at least appears Egyptian: "They said, 'An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock'" (Ex. 2:19). Egyptian or not, the priest is grateful for Moses' efforts and invites him in to eat with them (Ex. 2:20). This leads to Moses eventually staying with them and marrying Reuel's daughter Zipporah and having a son named Gershon (Ex. 2:21-22).

Students of the Old Testament and ones that are particularly aware of Moses' story may scratch their heads when reading in verse 18 that the priest of Midian, Zipporah's dad, and Moses' future father-in-law is named "Reuel" and not "Jethro!" Readers will then soon be further shocked when they get to next week's study guide and read: "Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian" (Ex. 3:1). Is it Reuel or Jethro? This has long been a topic of discussion among Old Testament scholars and many suggestions have been made. The most satisfying answer (and the one this study guide will stand by) is that Reuel was likely his actual name, and Jethro his priestly name. Jethro is a name that means "excellence," and so it might be that he had a priestly name that depicted who he was as a priest.

**AN ABRAHAMIC CONNECTION**

One last note is the subtle connection that Moses likely felt to the Midianite daughters. While it's reasonable to assume Moses would have acted to promote justice towards any women or men for that matter that were being unfairly treated, there was likely some warmth he felt towards these particular women in Midian because of his distant ancestral connection to them. Midian was the son of Abraham. After Sarah died, Abraham took for himself another wife named Keturah and she bore him sons, one of whom was named Midian (Gen. 25:1-2). While they likely didn't speak the same language, they would have spoken semitic variants that were close enough to communicate (think Italian and Spanish). That Moses ends up marrying a woman of Abrahamic descent but that predates the Egyptian residence is almost certainly not coincidental.

**What About Now?**

One of the most obvious takeaways is the fact that God will use past events to prepare us for future endeavors. Moses didn't see himself as an Egyptian and yet didn't fit in with the Israelites. He was an outcast, rejected by all people including his own. This would prepare him for the continual rejection he would face from his people as their leader. God will often "work things together for good for those who love Him" (Rom. 8:28) including difficulties we face in order to better prepare for what He intends to eventually call us to do. Another takeaway is the importance of standing up for what is right despite what it might cost you. Moses stands up for his people despite it costing him his place in Pharaoh's house and his ability to live in Egypt at all.

**Study Questions****Day One**

1. Read Exodus 2:11-12. In your own words, summarize the events in these two verses.

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2. Read Exodus 2:13-14. In your own words, summarize the interaction between Moses and the Israelites.

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**Day Two**

1. Read Exodus 2:15. What was Pharaoh's reaction to the news about Moses murdering an Egyptian? To where did Moses flee?

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2. Read Exodus 2:16. Who is introduced in this verse? How many daughters did he have? What did he send them to do?

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**Day Three**

1. Read Exodus 2:17. Who came and drove the daughters away? How did Moses respond?

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2. Read Exodus 2:18-19. What is their father's name? What did he ask them? Why did he ask them this? What was their response?
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### Day Four

1. Read Exodus 2:20-21. What does the priest ask his daughters? What does he demand they do? What did Moses do in response? What did the priest offer to Moses?
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2. Read Exodus 2:22. What did they name their son, and why did they call him that? What experience does this name likely reference in Moses' life?
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## Week 4 Discussion: Prepared

One of the main takeaways in this week's lesson is the way in which God will use events in our past to prepare us for the future. Moses didn't fit in with his people and was chided by them when he made effort to help them. This same pattern would continue as Moses led his people for the duration of his life. Talk as a group about the ways in which God has used moments in your past to prepare you for your calling.

1. Icebreaker: Talk about a difficult event in your life that God has used to prepare you to live out your calling now as a Christian.
2. Does God *cause* bad things to happen to people? Or simply use bad things for His purposes? Why? Use Scripture to support your answer.
3. What are some skills you have now as a result of your past difficult experiences?
4. Do you believe God will turn your maladies into a ministry if you allow Him?
5. How does this pattern of God using the past to prepare you for the future redeem past hurtful experiences?
6. What steps are you going to take to further walk in the calling of God in your life?

## Takeaways:

1. Moses kills an Egyptian who was being harsh on the Israelite people.
2. The Israelite people reject Moses, and he flees from Pharaoh's wrath into the land of Midian.
3. Moses protects the daughters of the priests of Midian and is invited to live with them.
4. Moses marries Zipporah, one of the daughters of the priest, and they have a son named Gershon.