

## Reformation Fellowship Notes • November 1, 2015

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### Handout #5

### Exodus 2:11-2:25

#### I. Introduction

- A. Moses was saved from infanticide.
- B. He was raised, in his early years, by his own mother.
- C. He was educated in the house of Pharaoh to be a ruler.
- D. But he identifies with the Israelites.
- E. Raised to believe he would play a key role in the life of his people.

#### II. Exodus 2:11-14

- A. Education of Moses
  - 1. Egyptians took princes from Canaan and raised them as royalty in Egypt.
  - 2. Moses received a great education about the history and culture of the region.

“What is surprising about Moses’ deep sympathy for those who suffered oppression is that he had been raised to show utter contempt for slaves. One of the primary goals of Pharaoh’s educational system was to reinforce the pride of those in power. After reviewing the ancient Egyptian curriculum, Göran Larsson notes, ‘Among these documents one category of educational materials is particularly conspicuous, namely, texts that express a deep contempt of manual labor while stressing the value of study. Studies lead to a life far away from dust, dirt, and toil under harsh taskmasters. These texts emphasize the extremely low status of the working class in ancient Egyptian society.’” (Ryken p. 61)

- a) He received the best education of the time.
    - (1) How to rule
    - (2) Culture of the region
  - b) But he identified with the Hebrews.
- B. Moses goes out to see the society in which he has a privileged status.
  - 1. Two choices:
    - a) Reject his Hebrew heritage and be Egyptian
    - b) Embrace his Hebrew heritage and work on their behalf
      - (1) Must have been tremendous feelings of guilt
  - 2. 40 years old
    - a) He had probably done this many times before.
  - 3. He voluntarily identified with sufferings of Israelites.
    - a) His own brothers
    - b) “To see with emotion”
      - (1) He looked on the hard labors of his people with empathy.
  - 4. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew.
    - a) Moses was driven to action in defense of the Hebrew slave.
      - (1) He looks both ways (this is not spontaneous rage).

- (2) He struck the Egyptian (a strike for a strike).
  - (a) Killed him
  - (b) Buried his corpse
    - (i) He thought he had committed the perfect crime.
- 5. He did not want to come out openly against Egyptian society.
  - a) That may have been too scary.
  - b) He may have thought he could do more good working from a position of privilege.
  - c) Moses was carrying out his vocation.

“And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand.” (Acts 7:25)

- 6. He went out again the next day.
  - a) Two Hebrews were fighting.
    - (1) One was clearly in the wrong.
  - b) “Why are you striking your companion?”

“The first dialogue assigned to a character in biblical narrative typically defines the character. Moses’s first speech is a reproof to a fellow Hebrew and an attempt to impose a standard of justice.” (Alter p. 314)

- (1) Moses had a keen sense of justice.
- c) The offender responded, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us?”
  - (1) Unwillingness to submit to authority
    - (a) This was why Moses was reluctant to take on the assignment God gave him.
    - (b) This anti-authoritarianism will show up many times in Exodus.
  - d) Then he said, “Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?”
    - (1) This was a threat.
      - (a) He knew something he could use to get Moses in great trouble.
      - (b) He wanted to use this as power.
    - (2) This guy was stupid.
      - (a) He was undermining Moses, who was in a position to benefit Hebrews as a whole.
      - (b) But he feared Moses would use that power to his personal detriment.
        - (i) This is the same kind of irrational fear that we see in the Egyptians.
        - (ii) It leads to actions that just make matters worse.
    - (3) This alarmed Moses.
      - (a) Now he knew that his murder was public knowledge.
      - (b) His own people would betray him.
        - (i) This had a huge impact on him.
      - (c) This was providential warning.
        - (i) Moses had time to escape.

**III. Exodus 2:15-22**

- A. Pharaoh was furious.
  - 1. He wanted to kill Moses.
  - 2. Moses may have acted in a way that worried Pharaoh earlier.
- B. Moses fled from Egypt.
  - 1. Went to Midian
- C. Who were Midianites?
  - 1. Descendants of Abraham by Keturah
  - 2. Lived in Sinai
  - 3. Later bitter enemies of Israelites
    - a) This account must be old.

“The friendly relations between Israel and the Midianites that are reflected in the story of Moses are consonant with the account in Genesis 25:2 that traces the lineage of Midian back to Abraham. They also accord with the later report in Exodus Chapter 18 of Midianite influence upon the organization of the Israelite judiciary system. This amicable situation must be both authentic and quite early because toward the end of the period of the wilderness wanderings, and during the period of the Judges, relations between Israel and Midian were thoroughly hostile. No one, therefore, would likely have invented such stories depicting the Midianites in so favorable a light with very close kinship ties to Israel.” (Sarna p. 35)

- D. Who were Kenites?
  - 1. Clan specializing in metal working
  - 2. Closely affiliated with Midianites
  - 3. Exodus tradition of the Kenites being friendly with Israelites
- E. Moses sat down by a well.
  - 1. He had just experienced a huge setback and scary situation.
  - 2. He was out of his element.
- F. Priest of Midian
  - 1. Appears to have been a worshipper of YHWH.
    - a) He was a descendant of Abraham.
  - 2. Jethro, Reuel, Hobab (Sarna p. 36)
- G. The priest’s daughters had filled the troughs for their sheep to drink.
  - 1. Other shepherds drove them off.
    - a) Cutting in line
    - b) Taking advantage of the girls’ labor
    - c) They must have done this regularly.
  - 2. Moses acted on behalf of the girls.

- a) Drove off the shepherds
- b) Watered the sheep
- 3. Has a passion for justice
- H. Daughters told their father what happened.
  - 1. An **Egyptian** delivered us.
    - a) They mistook him for an Egyptian.
  - 2. Reuel sent them to invite him to join them eating.
    - a) Moses came and lived with them.
    - b) Reuel gave his daughter to Moses as a wife.
      - (1) She bore a son.
        - (a) Gershom (foreigner there)
        - (b) “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”
        - (c) Related to *garash*—to drive out
          - (i) Moses was driven out of Egypt.
          - (ii) Moses drove out the shepherds.
          - (iii) Pharaoh drove out the Israelites.

#### IV. Exodus 2:23-25

- A. Many days passed (about 40 years).
- B. The king of Egypt died.
  - 1. Sons of Israel cried out.
  - 2. God took notice.
- C. Piling up of terms
  - 1. Sons of Israel:
    - a) “sighed,” “cried out,” “cry for help rose up,” “groaning”
  - 2. God’s response:
    - a) “heard,” “remembered his covenant,” “saw,” “took notice”
- D. A new king means a possibility of pardon.

“It was established practice in Egypt for a new king to celebrate his accession to the throne by granting amnesty to those guilty of crimes, by releasing prisoners, and by freeing slaves. An extant hymn composed in honor of the accession of Ramses IV illustrated the custom. It records “a happy day” for Egypt when “fugitives returned to their towns” and when “those in hiding emerged” and “those in prison were freed.” This being so, the Israelites had good reason to expect that the change in regime would bring with it some amelioration of their condition. But this was not to be. Hence the stress on the intensified misery of the enslaved Israelites. Moses, however, did benefit from the amnesty personally, as 4:19 confirms.” (Sarna, p. 13)

**V. Conclusion**

**A. Rootless intellectuals (Revolutionaries)**

1. Background of the Russian Intelligentsia
  - a) Russian by birth
  - b) Western European by education
  - c) But didn't belong in either setting
  - d) Had a sense of obligation to serve society
  - e) No means by which to do so
  - f) Many became revolutionaries
2. This phenomenon has been replicated in third-world countries everywhere.
  - a) Revolutionaries are the privileged.
3. Moses fits the pattern.

**B. Moses experienced a crushing disappointment.**

1. He had very high expectations (Acts 7:25).
  - a) His birth was a testament to this.
  - b) His privilege placed him perfectly to help his people.
2. All this was destroyed.
  - a) By the very people he had hoped to help
3. He fled to the desert.
  - a) Spends forty years wasting his life
  - b) It must have seemed as though his life had ended.
4. But he was receiving his second education.
  - a) Learned geography
  - b) Learned desert survival skills
  - c) Developed important character qualities
    - (1) Humility
      - (a) He became a shepherd.
    - (2) Compassion
      - (a) He was a stranger in a strange land (in Egypt he was of the privileged class).
    - (3) Patience
      - (a) He had to cool his heels for 40 years.
5. A lot of important things were happening over those 40 years.
  - a) But it must have seemed like nothing was happening and he had no future.

**C. God took notice, just as Joseph had said at the end of Genesis that God would.**

1. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." (Genesis 50:24)
2. Death of Pharaoh marks the beginning of God's activity to free Israel.

- a) God is working on a completely different time scale from ours.
  - (1) The Israelites suffered decades of enslavement before God finally began to take action to save them.
- D. God is not reticent to put us in morally difficult situations.
  - 1. Midwives
  - 2. Moses' parents
  - 3. Moses and the Egyptian
  - 4. Moses and the Israelite