

## Exodus 2

### The Purposeful Preparation of a Man Named Moses

#### I. Family situation

**A.** *2:1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and took to wife a daughter of Levi. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. 3 And when she could hide him no longer she took for him a basket made of bulrushes, and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river's brink. 4 And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him.*

**B.** Note Moses' levitical origins. Later he will exercise a priesthood in Israel and here are his credentials. At this point in Israel every firstborn male is a priest, but in the desert passage this will change to only Levites. We can discuss why in class.

1. Ex 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Put every man his sword on his side, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. And Moses said, "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day."

**C.** Note again the focus on women and their initiative in this chapter. Moses mother, his sister and Pharaoh's daughter are all mentioned as standing in the gap against the injustice of their day. The men are not mentioned! This provides a key insight into the word of God. In situations of oppression it is often the weakest who show themselves most powerful<sup>1</sup>:

1. **1 Cor 1:27 but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.**
2. **2 Cor 12:8 Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**
3. This reflection also helps us to understand Moses' set back in a few verses to come. As a young (40) and strong adult he is too "strong" to be used by God. God must first humble and age him, weaken his human power, to make him useful.

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<sup>1</sup>Perhaps because they have the least to lose and are the least invested in the "way things are."

## II. Fantastic Sovereignty

- A. *5 Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, and her maidens walked beside the river; she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to fetch it. 6 When she opened it she saw the child; and lo, the babe was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" 8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. 10 And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son; and she named him Moses, for she said, "Because I drew him out of the water."*
- B. In some ways their measure shows both desperation and decisiveness. Floating Moses downstream is quite chancy but notice the mother and daughter monitor the situation to see what will come and be able to respond to whatever occurs. Hence they remain actors in the drama not merely hapless victims of the situation.
- C. The similarities to the story of Noah and the Ark cannot be overlooked.
1. A wooden ark covered with pitch
  2. Moses floats to salvation on the very waters that meant death for others.
  3. Noah "saved" the human family by surviving and leading forth the family of God through the waters.
- D. God is sovereign in that he works his purposes out despite human sinfulness and stubbornness. In fact, he even uses human sin to accomplish his purposes as we saw in the story of Joseph and in the story of Jesus. Human sin becomes the launching pad for divine action: *Romans 5:20 but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,...6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* The point is not to say sin is OK. Rather, it is to say that God's plans cannot be thwarted despite it.
- E. Note the list of ironies and divine sovereignties we can observe in this short passage:
1. Pharaoh's chosen instrument of destruction (the Nile) is the means for saving Moses.
  2. The daughters who are "allowed to live" (presumably because they are less a threat) now proceed to oppose Pharaoh and deal a serious blow to his plans of suppression
  3. The mother of Moses saves him by following Pharaoh's order (with a twist).
  4. A member of Pharaoh's own family undermines his policies and saves the very person who will defeat Pharaoh.

5. Egyptian royalty (through Pharaoh's daughter) heeds a Hebrew girl's advice and receives the seed of it's own destruction
6. Moses' mother gets paid to do what she most wants to do and from Pharaoh's own budget
7. Moses is educated to be an Israelite leader within the very court of Pharaoh
8. Pharaoh's daughter gives Moses a name that is prophetic: true she drew from the water, but Moses would draw Israel out of the water too!

### III. False Start

- A. *11 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. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together; and he said to the man that did the wrong, "Why do you strike your fellow?" 14 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." 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh, and stayed in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.*
- B. The problem here is that Moses appoints himself. The Hebrew man may be rude and in the wrong but he speaks rightly: ***Who made you a prince and a judge over us?*** This is at the heart of the matter. God needs to work with Moses for forty more years before he is ready.
- C. We cannot avoid the clear indictment that Moses is a murderer. Despite feeling righteous indignation well up within him, he has no right to kill. It remains a truth that our most of our Biblical heroes have "pasts" and struggle with sin and weakness in their lives. We are dealing with human beings here, not epic heroes. We already saw this in Genesis with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rachel, Leah. All of them had "issues." Looking ahead, we shall see other examples, David, Elijah, Jonah, Peter, Paul, just to name a few. Regarding Moses, imagine God making a past murder the great leader of his people!
- D. It should be stated that the New Testament comments on this incident in more glowing terms than we have. We saw back in Genesis that this was also done with Abraham. His faith was glowing recalled but his struggles were "overlooked."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it is God's way of saying he "remembers our sins no more."<sup>3</sup> Here is what

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<sup>2</sup>This does not mean that God's word is inaccurate or slanted. It simply means that God's word emphasizes the end of things and sees the journey in light of the destination. Thus Abraham became a man of enormous faith and this is how we should fundamentally see him: as what he became. Another example: Jesus called Simon "Peter" (Rock) long before he was a rock. God "sees what the end shall be."

<sup>3</sup>Ps 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember

the Word of God “remembers” of Moses’ experience:

1. **It is an indictment of Israel’s stubbornness:** Acts 7:23 "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian. He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand. And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and would have reconciled them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other?' But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons...<sup>35</sup> "This Moses whom they refused, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' God sent as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush.
2. **It is a sign of Moses justice and courage** - Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

#### IV. Formative Sojourning

- A. ***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. 17 The shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. 18 When they came to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?" 19 They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and even drew water for us and watered the flock." 20 He said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." 21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. 22 She bore a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."***
- B. Moses will now live humbly. He will have a desert experience. He will learn to shepherd. He will learn patience and, with age, his own limits. (As we shall see, perhaps he learns some of his lessons too well!)
- C. What do Moses’ experiences have to say?
  1. Through these difficult experiences Moses begins to embody Israel in a number of ways and experience it’s oppression in a number of ways:
    - a. Moses is at first accepted into Pharaoh’s house after an initial set of difficulty, like Joseph and Israel of old.
    - b. But Moses, like Israel, enters into conflict with Egypt and becomes subject to a murderous edict of Pharaoh
    - c. He must flee from Egypt (like Israel will) and encounter God at Sinai.

- d. He experiences being a sojourner in a foreign land.<sup>4</sup>
- 2. Moses' action and experience also anticipates and foreshadows God ultimate action.
  - a. Moses sees their oppression (v. 11). God will see it later in this chapter (v. 25) also in 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19 etc.
  - b. Moses strikes the Egyptian as God will later strike Egypt
  - c. Moses confronts wrong in Egypt just as God will do later
  - d. Moses saves or delivers the daughters of Jethro and provides water for them as God will later do again through Moses for Israel
  - e. Moses Confronts wrong in Israel and God will later do through Moses in the desert at the foot of Sinai.
- 3. Moses experience helps to clarify leadership issues
  - a. The initial rejection he experiences from a fellow Jew in this chapter foreshadows the later resistance he will experience prior to the Exodus and in the desert.
  - b. He learns first hand the lay of the land into which Israel will later escape.
  - c. He is able to build alliances and even enters into marriage with the Midianites that will later be helpful in the Exodus.
- D. This passage also indicates that Moses has a keen sense of justice and a zeal for it. This zeal God needs to refine and direct but God is clearly able to tap into it! Here are the roots of Moses' mission. We have already seen three illustrations of his zeal for Justice:
  - 1. His anger at the Egyptian beating and oppressing the Jew
  - 2. His anger at the two Jews fighting
  - 3. His anger at the harassment of Jethro's daughters.

#### V. Foreseeing Strategy

- A. ***23 In the course of those many days the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition.***
- B. In a strange way God has almost been in the background up to this point. Now finally he is mentioned. He hears, remembers, sees and knows their condition.
- C. We know from what follows and also from what we have already discussed, God is not a passive observer here. He is laying the groundwork for their deliverance and working his purposes out. All this time God has been silently at work.
- D. There is no puzzlement or panic in heaven, just plans and performance.

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<sup>4</sup>Moses as an "Egyptian" must leave Egypt to experience this reality and be able to identify with those he will one day leave.