

Our passage today finds Moses starting all over again. He has just murdered an Egyptian taskmaster, and since it became known, he had to flee from the reigning Pharaoh. It is quite possible that Moses was adopted by Hatshepsut who was married to her half brother, the young Thutmose II. She reigned with him as co-regent until she declared herself the first female Pharaoh. She reigned for 20 years until her other half brother, Thutmose III, took the throne. There is no record of how she died. Did the situation with Moses cause Thutmose III to arrange her assassination? Had Thutmose III dispatched her years before? No one knows. If Moses was her adopted son, then he was in a very precarious situation in this battle for the right to rule Egypt. The murder of a taskmaster would be just the excuse that Thutmose III needed to eliminate his competition. (Hebrews 11:27)

Moses arrived in Midian as a refugee from Egypt. (Acts 7:29) The Midianites were probably a nomadic people who traveled seasonally to find pasture for their flocks. Our passage last week ended with Moses arriving at a well. His ancestors Isaac and Jacob's wives were both first encountered at a well. (Genesis 24:11; 29:2) This wasn't that unusual as wells were meeting places, but it does remind us of the sovereignty of God in orchestrating the times and places that influence our lives. (Acts 1:7)

Apparently the shepherd daughters of Reuel had a regular confrontation with another group of shepherds. Reuel expected them at a certain time because of this dispute. It could be that, in the contention over the well, the shepherds would make the women draw water for their sheep before allowing them to draw water for their own. Moses wandered in on this dispute and stood up for the oppressed women. If Moses was being groomed to potentially be Pharaoh one day, he had to learn to lead out in combat. Pharaohs were respected for being warriors. He dispatched the shepherds but exercised a little more control in doing so than he did with the taskmaster. No one died. This is great movie material. If Chuck Norris was a little younger he could play the role.

Moses had begun God's Preparatory Academy. **He had learned how to confront injustice without the excessive use of force.** He still had a heart for the weak and abused, but he was learning how to react without losing control.

The daughters returned home and Reuel asked why they arrived so early. *They answered "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock."* They relayed the story of the Egyptian that had helped them by chasing off the shepherds and drawing the water for the flock of Reuel. A man drawing water for women was unusual, but it reminds us of the story of Rebecca who had drawn water for Abraham's servant's camels as he sought a wife for Isaac. (Genesis 24:19) Women were a little more highly regarded in Egypt than in other cultures, but for this prince to humble himself and serve them was another sign that God was changing his heart. Godly leaders must learn humility and service. (Matthew 20:28) We don't have a lot of details about these 40 years of Moses being away from Egypt, so the details that are given are important points in his transformation.

**Commented [Paul Wall1]:** Hebrews 11:27 (NIV)  
27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

**Commented [Paul Wall2]:** Acts 7:29 (NIV)  
29 When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

**Commented [Paul Wall3]:** Genesis 24:11 (NIV)  
11 He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.

**Commented [Paul Wall4]:** Genesis 29:2 (ESV)  
2 As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large,

**Commented [Paul Wall5]:** Acts 1:7 (ESV)  
7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

**Commented [Paul Wall6]:** Genesis 24:19 (ESV)  
19 When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking."

**Commented [Paul Wall7]:** Matthew 20:28 (ESV)  
28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Shocked that these 7 daughters had let such a chivalrous man get away, he asked, <sup>20</sup> "And where is he?" ... "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat." The nomadic people are very hospitable even today. But even more importantly, you don't get too many opportunities to find an acceptable suitor wandering around in the desert. Here was a man who in one encounter had showed that he cared for the weak, stood up for the rights of women, and was able and willing to protect them. He's a good catch.

<sup>21</sup> Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. <sup>22</sup> Zipporah gave birth to a son... **Moses next lesson in servant leadership was a family.** This is God's great training ground for most of us. Some are blessed with the gift of singleness and can devote their whole affections to the Lord. But most of us need a family to help us learn to put others first, to learn to be able to yield our demands to the desires of others. It's where we learn to cooperate and sacrifice. The New Testament speaks of leaders of the church as being men who are married and have obedient children. (1Timothy 3:2-5) They have their house in order. How can they bring order to the household of God if they cannot bring order to their own household? This comes by earning the respect of their family by being a loving servant leader.

Moses named his son Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land." I think we tend to misunderstand this passage. Rather than referring to being an outcast in Midian, he was saying that he had become alien in Egypt. Moses is speaking in the past tense. It would be more accurate to translate the passage, "a stranger I have been there." By associating himself with his people, the Hebrews, he became an alien in the very place he was raised. He joined his ancestors the patriarchs in realizing this world is not our home. (Hebrews 11:13) You may have lived here all your life, but if you are a believer, it's a foreign land. We just can't be comfortable in a world that is fallen and unjust. We can't get used to people abusing one another. We can't ignore the sin that causes such suffering in our world. (2Peter 2:8)

**Parenting children is one more lesson Moses will learn in God's Preparatory Academy** for it is in facing the selfishness of children that we are faced with our own selfishness. We must learn to discipline in love and guide by example. We learn when to be lenient and when to draw the line. They break our hearts, and they fill them with love. Children are God's gift to help shape us even as we learn to gently shape them. (1Thessalonians 2:7)

But perhaps the greatest lesson of all was just referred to in passing. Reuel was called a priest of Midian. What kind of priest was he? He was descended from Abraham through Keturah. (Genesis 25:4) He was a cousin of Moses. There is archeological evidence that this region to which Moses fled was one of the first to worship Yahweh! This would have been passed down from Abraham. (cf. Exodus 6:3) As a priest of Midian, Reuel would have reminded Moses of the stories that were surely told to him as a child by his mother Jochabed. **He would have reinforced the greatness of a God who honors His promises and who made a covenant with their forefather.** (cf. Genesis 15) He prepared Moses for Moses' own encounter with the God named Yahweh.

The name Reuel means "the friend of God". Later we will learn that he is also called Jethro. Jethro may be a title similar to "his excellency". His forefather, Abraham, was

**Commented [Paul Wall8]:** 1 Timothy 3:2-5 (ESV)  
2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,  
3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.  
4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,  
5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

**Commented [Paul Wall9]:** Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)  
13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

**Commented [Paul Wall10]:** 2 Peter 2:8 (ESV)  
8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);

**Commented [Paul Wall11]:** 1 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)  
7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

**Commented [Paul Wall12]:** Genesis 25:4 (ESV)  
4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

**Commented [Paul Wall13]:** Exodus 6:3 (ESV)  
3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.

also referred to as "the Friend of God". (James 2:23) So we see a direct link to Abraham and the likelihood that God sent Moses to this wilderness to be under the tutelage of this priest. God was getting into Moses while getting Egypt out of Moses.

But there is one more factor; Moses became a shepherd. Since the Midianites made their living raising flocks, Moses did what was detestable to the Egyptians. He became a shepherd. (Genesis 46:34b) **Many of God's great leaders took this class, Shepherding 101**, in God's Preparatory Academy.

People are said to be like sheep in a number of passages. (Psalm 77:20; 78:52; Isaiah 63:11) It is really a humiliating comparison, but so true. Sheep can't care for themselves. They need guidance. They can't discern good plants from poisonous ones. They can't groom themselves. They usually stink unless the shepherd has bathed them. They tend to wander into dangerous situations. They are vulnerable to predators.

Moses spent the next 40 years of his life in the wilderness tending these creatures, caring for his family, learning about YHWH, until the day of his call. It took 40 years to learn the wisdom of the world, and 40 years to put that wisdom in its proper place and learn the ways of God. He went from palace prince to desert wandering shepherd. What a fall! Or was it? God's way up is often down. His lessons are rarely learned in a classroom. They are lessons of the heart and will. They are about the priority of a relationship with God.

An unknown person wrote this paragraph about Moses' decisions to this point in his life. *"Bred in a palace, he espoused the cause of the people; nursed in the lap of luxury, he embraced adversity; reared in the school of despots, he became the champion of liberty; long associated with oppressors, he took the side of the oppressed; educated as her son, he forfeited the favor of a princess to maintain the rights of the poor; with a crown in prospect, he had the magnanimity to choose a cross; and for the sake of his God and Israel, he abandoned ease, refinement, luxuries, and the highest earthly honors, to be a houseless wanderer."* Anon.

Moses will be 80 years old when he encounters YHWH and gets his commission to do what he had long given up on ever achieving. *Whenever we are tempted to grow impatient with God's timetable for our lives, we should remember Moses, who spent two years of preparation for every year of ministry.* - Preaching the Word – Exodus: Saved for God's Glory. God has a plan for each of our lives. It is probably something far less dramatic than delivering a nation, but it is important nonetheless. Don't forget the importance of Jochabed and Reuel to the life of Moses. We are all in God's Preparatory Academy, learning through life's lessons to be people of humble service and love. (Psalm 25:9)

Moses and all of us, if we are to be useful to God, must come to that place that John Wesley came in this prayer of his: *"I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal."* John Wesley (1703-1791)

**Commented [Paul Wall14]:** James 2:23 (ESV) 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"— and he was called a friend of God.

**Commented [Paul Wall15]:** Genesis 46:34 (ESV) 34 you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

**Commented [Paul Wall16]:** Psalms 77:20 (ESV) 20 You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

**Commented [Paul Wall17]:** Psalms 78:52 (ESV) 52 Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

**Commented [Paul Wall18]:** Isaiah 63:11 (ESV) 11 Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit,

**Commented [Paul Wall19]:** Psalms 25:9 (ESV) 9 He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

[The Methodist Service Book, (London: Methodist Publishing House, 1975), D10 .] – repeat it-

Now we switch gears in one sense to see what is behind God’s induction of Moses and all of us into God’s Preparatory Academy. <sup>23</sup> *During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.* We need to keep in mind that the Israelites have slowly been adopting the gods of Egypt. It won’t be long after their miraculous deliverance that they will want to reproduce one of the gods, a golden calf. (Exodus 32:24) God still heard them. We will find out in a minute why God would hear the cry of idol worshippers. Surely some of them were still faithful to the God of their forefathers, but most had either added other gods or abandoned Him altogether. Should God hear us when we suffer if we worship false gods, or were we just getting what we deserved?

<sup>24</sup> *God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.* There was one great reason for God to hear them. God had made a covenant with the patriarchs. He had promised Abraham that after 400 years He would bring them out of captivity. (Genesis 15:13-14) He had promised to make them a great nation and give them the land first promised to Abraham. When God hears our cries, he remembers His covenant, His promises.

Now, ask yourself this, **"Has God given us promises?"** The Scriptures tell us that He has given us great and precious promises. (2Peter 1:4) He has promised that whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life. (John 3:36) He promises that if we receive Jesus and believe in His name we will become sons of God. (John 1:12) He has promised us that as believers in Jesus we are heirs of the promises to Abraham. (Galatians 3:29)

We cry out to God in our temporary suffering of this life and God remembers the great promises He has made to us because we have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. He remembers because we have been adopted into the family of God. (Romans 8:15)

These four active verbs have become very important to the Jewish people and they should be to us as well. **God hears, remembers, sees, and knows.** What powerful reminders to cling to in our times of testing. He hears our cries. He remembers His promises. He sees our plight. He knows us personally, intimately.

The NIV misses the translation of the last verse. <sup>25</sup> *So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.* The ESV give us a more literal translation. <sup>25</sup> *God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.* If I tell you I am concerned about your suffering, it doesn’t really give a sense of personal involvement or commitment. In Hebrew, the word "to know" is used of intimate relations. God is not just concerned; He knows what you feel, what you are enduring, and the particulars of your suffering. He feels toward you like you feel for your hurting child, only He knows exactly what you are enduring. He knows that you are His child and He sees in you the righteousness imparted to you by your Savior Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:22) He knows our light and momentary afflictions are working for us a far exceeding weight of glory. (2Corinthians 4:17)

**Commented [Paul Wall20]:** Exodus 32:24 (ESV)  
24 So I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.'

**Commented [Paul Wall21]:** Genesis 15:13-14 (ESV)  
13 Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.  
14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

**Commented [Paul Wall22]:** 2 Peter 1:4 (ESV)  
4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

**Commented [Paul Wall23]:** John 3:36 (ESV)  
36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

**Commented [Paul Wall24]:** John 1:12 (ESV)  
12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

**Commented [Paul Wall25]:** Galatians 3:29 (ESV)  
29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Commented [Paul Wall26]:** Romans 8:15 (ESV)  
15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

**Commented [Paul Wall27]:** Romans 3:22 (ESV)  
22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

**Commented [Paul Wall28]:** 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)  
17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

**Commented [Paul Wall29]:** Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)  
5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Commented [Paul Wall30]:** Psalms 34:17 (NIV)  
17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

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