

**Study Notes: Exodus 2:11-25**  
**May 17, 2026: "It's Not Yet Time"**  
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***One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people.***

***Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.***

- According to the book of Acts, Moses was forty years old when these events took place (Acts 7:23). Even though Moses had spent his life being raised by Pharaoh's daughter, he identified with his Hebrew lineage. When he witnessed a Hebrew being mistreated and beaten by an Egyptian, he took matters into his own hands and murdered the Egyptian, hiding the body in the sand.
  - Moses had no legal authority to punish the Egyptian at all, because even killing a slave in Egypt was not a crime, since slaves were considered property.
- The description of these events makes it clear that while Moses' intentions and heart for his people were good, his actions were not. He attempted to hide what he had done, clearly indicating that he knew he had committed a crime. The Expositor's Bible Commentary explains, "It is Moses' impetuosity that is wrong, not his sense of justice or his defense of the downtrodden. This costs him another forty years of education before he is ready for the task of delivering Israel...But the very impulse that leads Moses to avenge wrongdoing apart from due process of law is developed to do the work of God when God finishes seasoning him through the experiences of life!"
- The New American Commentary adds, "This was his first attempt at delivering his people—acting alone and in secret and relying on his own strength and wisdom—and though it failed miserably, it certainly shows the strength of Moses' sentiments on behalf of his people."

***The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."***

- The next day, Moses witnessed two Hebrews fighting and he instinctively tried to intervene. The Hebrew man in the wrong questioned Moses' authority as a ruler and judge, and then revealed that he was aware of Moses' murdering the Egyptian the previous day.
- This statement put fear in the heart of Moses. His sin had been found out, and it would now cause problems for Moses.

***When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.***

- The man that Moses murdered was likely a ranking official. The Hebrews likely told Pharaoh that Moses was responsible to avoid punishment themselves. Moses fled to the land of Midian out of fear of Pharaoh.
- The Faithlife Study Bible also gives insight into Pharaoh's desire to kill Moses, "Pharaoh may have viewed Moses' action as a personal affront to his own authority. Alternatively, given his paranoia about the Hebrews (1:10), Pharaoh may have used the crime as a pretense to eliminate Moses, who he perceived as a threat to his administration."

***Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.***

- As Moses sat by the well in Midian, seven daughters came to water the flocks of their father, who served as a priest. As they were trying to water the flock, some shepherds attempted to drive them away, but Moses rescued them from the shepherds, so they could water their flock.
  - Once again, Moses shows his character and instinct to deliver others. The New American Commentary explains, "The account of the encounter at the well in Midian in vv. 16–19 tells several things about Moses' character: his flight from Egypt had not blunted his instinct for intervening against injustice and righting wrongs; he was quick to act against oppression, even alone, isolated, and with the odds against him; he was sufficiently imposing and/or assertive to intimidate several shepherds; he was physically vigorous enough to chase off a group of shepherds and then do work that seven girls were planning to do; he was not easily cowed himself; he was generous and helpful to people he hardly knew, acting from principle rather than merely from personal loyalty; and he did not ask for a personal reward for what he had done."

***When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?" They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock." "And where is he?" Reuel asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."***

- The girls returned to their father, who was surprised that they had been able to return earlier than expected. They told their father that Moses (who is still dressed as an Egyptian), has delivered them, and provided for them.
- Reuel told his daughters to invite Moses to stay with them and share a meal.
  - Reuel is a character who is given a different name, Jethro, later in the Exodus story. The name Reuel, means "friend of God" and may be more of a nickname or title, since he is identified as a priest.

***Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become a foreigner in a foreign land."***

- During his time in Midian, Moses was given a wife, Zipporah. Her name means, "Lady Bird."
- Moses had a son named Gershom, whose name comes from the Hebrew word "to drive out." Gershom literally means "lonely stranger" and his name reflects Moses' own experience during his time in Midian.
- Moses' comment reflects the challenges he faced at this time in his life. The New American Commentary reflects on these, "Moses was a failure as a deliverer of his people, a failure as a citizen of Egypt, unwelcome among either of the nations he might have called his own, a wanted man, a now-permanent resident of an obscure place, alone and far from his origins, and among people of a different religion."

***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. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.***

- While Moses was in Midian, the Pharaoh (called the king of Egypt) who sought Moses' life died. However, the new Pharaoh did not make things any better for the Israelites.
- The Israelites groaned and cried out to God, who heard their cry and remembered his covenant. God looked on the people and was concerned about them. These verses set the scene for what will soon come, the call of Moses to deliver the people.
  - This verse uses four different action verbs to describe God's response to the people's prayers. God heard, remembered, looked and was concerned (or had compassion) on the people.
  - The Faithlife Study Bible explains the significance of the verb remembered, "The Hebrew verb used here, *zakhar*, often appears in conjunction with some activity—referring to a memory that prompts a specific course of action."
- The New American Commentary provides an excellent summary on the theological issues that we must wrestle with around the idea of suffering, "Implicitly, the theological issue here is not whether or how people suffer; the issue is: does suffering go unnoticed? If it does not—and indeed the one doing the noticing is the true, omnipotent, and loving covenant God—his people can properly surmise that their suffering may well be part of a plan, that it is a suffering with a distinct beginning and end, a hardship understood by and watched over by a sovereign who will not let it continue without good purpose and result."