

## An Egyptian In Midian

*Exodus 2:10-19*

*10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.*

*11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren*

*12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.*

*13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?*

*14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.*

*15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.*

*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 And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.*

*18 And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day?*

*19 And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.*

In the beginning of the book of Exodus, we learn that about 400 years have passed since Joseph brought his brothers into the land of Egypt to save them from 7 years of famine.

Their time in Egypt must have been pretty good because in all that time, they never felt the need to return to their ancestral homeland.

Think about that: the famine ended after 7 years, but they never left. The famine was over, but the people decided to stick around and raise sheep in Egypt for another 400 years.

In the course of time, however, a lot of things changed in 400 years. The Bible says:

*Exodus 1:8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.*

...But I think there was a lot more that changed in that time than just a new king.

During the course of 400 years there appears to have been an industrial revolution of sorts. In the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, you saw lots of people move from being farmers to factory workers.

They went from working for themselves to working for someone else. Today very few of us raise our own food; most of us work for a job that pays us money and then we use that money to buy food raised by someone else.

The same thing can be seen in the time between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus.

At the end of the book of Genesis we see the 12 sons of Israel moving to Egypt as shepherders.

Pharaoh puts them in the land of Goshen because the Egyptians don't like sheep. The Bible never tells us why the Egyptians don't like sheep, but I suspect it either had something to do with the smell or with the hair.

The Egyptians were fanatical about shaving their head, their beard, and everything else because they were fanatical about lice.

The Hebrews, on the other hand, had long hair and beards. Even the sheep they raised had all this wool that would get dirty, matted, and full of sticks and other debris.

To the Egyptians the Hebrews and their animals were a bunch of unkempt hicks. That is why they put them as far away as they could in Goshen.

By the time of Exodus, however, the Israelites aren't living in Goshen any more.

Now they are building Egyptian treasure cities of Pithom and Ra'amses (Gen 1:11). They aren't raising sheep but they are making bricks.

When Moses' parent put him in a basket of reeds, they don't put him into a river in Goshen; they put him into the Nile: the holiest river in all of Egypt.

Not only that, but he isn't placed in some backwater location on the Nile, he is dead center of a place where Pharaoh's daughter can find him.

All of these facts tell me that Israel had changed in 400 years from being Bedouin sheep herders to being more like mainstream Egyptians.

- They worked for Egyptians.
- They build cities for Egyptians.
- They most certainly knew how to speak Egyptian.

In most regards it seems that the Israelites had assimilated into Egyptian culture quite a bit.

How did the Egyptians react to this? They tried to kill them.

Pharaoh told the midwives to kill the males that were born to the Israelite women. When the Israelites moved closer to what they thought the Egyptians wanted to be, the Egyptians tried to kill them.

### **The World Wants To Kill You**

You and I will find that the world is just like the Egyptians.

- We live in the world.
- We learn to speak their language.
- We do the jobs they want us to do.

Yet we find that after we have changed to become more like the world wants us to be, all the world wants to do is kill us.

Most of the time the world doesn't even want to kill us all at once; it wants to kill us slowly. Sometimes it tries to kill us so slowly that we don't even realize that we're dying.

Our coworker's say, "Come out with us for a drink." We think we are making connections and forming bonds with our friends. Little do we realize that we are being tricked into killing ourselves slowly through alcoholism.

Years ago my mom worked at a factory.

What she found was that people on the assembly line who smoked were given a 10-minute break every hour, but people who did not smoke had to work straight through.

She took up smoking expressly for the purpose of getting a break. The World encouraged her to get addicted to cigarettes and slowly die of lung cancer.

Luckily for her, she only smoked for a short time because the factory went on strike and she quit after they went back to work.

Apple comes out with a new iPhone.

We want to be the envy of our friends, so we buy a new set for everyone in the family.

We want to get them cheap, so we sign up with new 2-year contracts for everyone.

But the phones and the service don't come for free, so we have to work a few extra hours at work every week to pay for it.

Every day we adapt to become more like what the world around us wants us to be, but little do we realize that that world wants us dead.

### **Moses was a Killer**

Not only does the world want to kill you, but also if you stay in the world too long, it will teach you how to kill others.

Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house as the grandson of Pharaoh (v. 10).

As a member of the royal house, Moses was trained to be a killer. He was trained to be a soldier to act in Pharaoh's army; probably the most advanced military power in the world at that time.

The Bible doesn't say this for certain, but we can infer it because of two scriptures:

*Exodus 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:*

There are people who claim that the Israelites were actually living as mercenary soldiers in Pharaoh's army.

I find this highly unlikely because of this scripture. If the Israelites had lived as mercenaries, then there would have been no need for God to send them on a route that avoided the Philistines.

In fact it would have been much easier for them to escape Egypt if they had been mercenaries, because all they would have had to do is change their allegiances to the Philistines.

If they had changes sides and joined the Philistines, then Pharaoh never would have sent his army after them. They could have easily walked to the Promised Land with the blessing of their new allies the Philistines.

But because God sent them on another way, it tells me that these were not trained soldiers in any sense.

On the other hand look at what happens a few years later:

*Joshua 4:13 About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.*

Forty thousand men crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

All of them were prepared for battle. This begs the question, "Who got them prepared? Who trained them?"

They left as a band of slaves that new nothing about war, but they emerged from 40 years of wandering in the desert with a vast army of trained and equipped soldiers.

I highly suspect that it was Moses himself who trained them in the art of war based his own education in the house of Pharaoh.

So in Exodus 2:12 when Moses kills the Egyptian, he seems to be simply using the skills he learned in Pharaoh's army.

He would later use those skills to teach Israel how to fight, but for right now he is using those skills to try and save a few of his Israelite brothers from his Egyptian brother. Unfortunately for him the act is not nearly as secret as he thought it was. His crime is discovered and he has to flee to the land of Midian.

### **Midian Is A Refuge**

Midian was about as far away from Egypt as Moses could get both physically and spiritually.

While Egypt was rich, Midian was poor.

While Egypt had abundant crops because of the Nile River, Midian was in the desert.

But by going to Midian, Moses was also running back into the covenant of Abraham.

Moses meets some young girls who are tending sheep. Some local men chase these girls and their sheep away from the well.

But this young, dashing Egyptian man does what he was trained to do: he uses his fighting skills to drive them all away.

One Egyptian (Moses) drives away an entire band of shepherds and then draws water for the seven daughters of Reuel.

Reuel is not introduced in the story; it is almost as though the Bible expects us to know who he is.

If we do a little research, we find the name Reuel listed among the names of the descendants of Esau in Genesis 36:4.

Now it is unlikely that this same Reuel in Genesis 36 is the same person that Moses meets in Exodus 2 because remember that something like 400-500 years have passed.

But some Bible scholars believe that Reuel (friend of God) was a family name rather than a personal name.

That would mean that God led Moses, a descendant of Jacob, into the family of Reuel, a descendant of Esau.

So when Reuel gives his daughter Zipporah to Moses as a wife, both of them are descendants of Isaac and Abraham.

In other words, Midian is like the church today.

Moses was a descendant of Abraham and Isaac and protected by the covenant with God, but he had become a backslider and had gotten too close to the world (Egypt).

Moses thought that he was doing fine in the World without the protection of God, but after a time he found out that the World wanted to kill him.

Moses the Egyptian ran away and sought refuge but he didn't know exactly where to go. God provided a landing space for him under the covenant of Abraham in the land of Midian.

But Moses didn't become an Israelite right away.

When he came to Midian he still acted like an Egyptian. His first reaction when meeting some aggressive shepherds was to drive them off like an Egyptian would do.

When Reuel's daughters went to their father, they even described Moses as an Egyptian.

*Exodus 2:19 And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.*

Many people who come to church have also run to us out of fear.

They have come to realize that the World is trying to kill them, just like Pharaoh was trying to kill Moses.

Moses wasn't running to Midian so much as he was running away from Pharaoh.

Likewise many of the people who come to church are running away from something more than they are running to church.

They don't know what they need; all they really know is that they need to get away from what they were.

Like Moses those people don't instantly become standards-keeping Pentecostals.

Moses' first reaction upon reaching Midian was to act as an Egyptian.

Likewise many of the people who come to this church from the world are going to have a reaction that is shaped by their experience in the world.

They are going to be brash. They are going to dress provocatively. They are going to do the things the world taught them to do.

The question is, "What are we going to do?"

Reuel sets the example for us. Even though he has no idea that Moses is a distant relative and fellow recipient of Abraham's covenant with God, he invites him into his house anyway.

*Exodus 2:20: And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread*

Likewise the Lord expects us to do the same to those who show up at our door.

These people are running away from something, but most of them have no idea where to go.

The Lord directs them to us and we are expected to bring them in.

We are the land of Midian; God sends the lost and the dying of the world to us.

### **Teach The Shepherds To Lead**

It is Reuel who teaches the Egyptian Moses to be a shepherd in the land of Midian.

- Moses was trained as the grandson of Pharaoh.
- Moses learned to speak Egyptian in addition to Hebrew.
- Moses probably learned to read and write hieroglyphics.

But the one thing that Pharaoh would not have taught him how to do is tend sheep.

In fact since most of his fellow Hebrews in Egypt worked as brick makers, it is possible that they did not work with sheep much either.

Reuel (friend of God) would have taken Moses into his house and taught him the ways of the sheep.

Later we find that Reuel is called Jethro (which is a title meaning “Your Excellency.”)

Reuel is a Jethro: he is a leader. Like any good leader, he teaches those under him how to be leaders themselves.

Jethro teaches Moses the Egyptian how to be Moses the Shepherd. He teaches him so well that Moses the Shepherd doesn't even want to leave the sheep when God calls him away later.

After Moses does become a leader, it is Jethro who teaches Moses how to lead others.

*Exodus 18:19-23*

*19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:*

*20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.*

*21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:*

*22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.*

*23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.*

Jethro Reuel is a friend of God as well as a leader.

He speaks on God's behalf to Moses and educates him on how to transition from being a shepherd of sheep to a leader of leaders.

He is the one who prepares the brash Egyptian Moses and turns him into the Israelite Leader Moses.

We as a church are also directed to teach the Egyptians that God sends to our Midian (church) to teach them how to be shepherds, but then teach them how to be leaders of leaders.

We must not only provide a refuge from the world and its desire to kill them, but we bind their wounds, allow them to heal, and then start preparing them to lead.

## **Those Who Want To Kill You Are Dead**

Moses fled to Midian because Pharaoh wanted to kill him. But there came a day when the people who wanted to kill him were dead.

*Exodus 2:23: And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and*

Moses had lived in Pharaoh's house. He knew the proper protocol for how to approach a Pharaoh.

He knew the ins and outs of the courts.

God needed a trained Egyptian who was also a trained shepherd and leader.

Years of work had led Moses to this unique point in time. In the entire world, he was the only one specially trained in the exact skills that it would take to free the Israelites from bondage.

But Moses could not have done that job on the day that he ran from Egypt into Midian.

It was only after Moses had learned to be a shepherd and a leader in the land of Midian that he was equipped to do that job.

But there was another factor that was possibly more important than that: Moses was a wanted man. Pharaoh wanted him dead.

Moses could only do his job as leader of the Israelites when he was no longer in danger of being killed by Pharaoh.

- You may have come to the Lord while fleeing from something that wanted to kill you.
- You may have been an alcoholic.
- You may have been a drug abuser.

Something in your past was trying to kill you just like Pharaoh was trying to kill Moses.

Just like Moses, you realized in time that it was trying to kill you and ran away to your own Midian; you escaped and the Lord saved your life. Now you know more about the Lord than when you first ran away.

But there may come a day when the Lord will come to you and say, "The thing that was trying to kill you is now dead."

We cannot determine this on our own; only the Lord can reveal that to us and our spiritual leaders.

But if the thing that tried to kill us no longer is a threat, it is the Lord Himself that will come to us and draw us into his service.

We cannot rush to try and convert others from alcoholism if that same alcoholism has a hold on us, if it is still trying to kill us.

We cannot try to enter the drug dens if our bodies still crave the rush of narcotics.

Like Moses we need to stay hidden on the backside of the desert, in Midian, for as long as it takes.

But should the Lord call us, it is because he knows that we are uniquely qualified to fill that role.

Moses was the most qualified to go to Pharaoh. It could be that you, as a former drug dealer, are the most qualified to go to the drug dealers. It could be that you, as a former alcoholic, are the most qualified to go to the alcoholics.

We are all Egyptians in Midian; we are all hiding on the backside of the desert in the safety of the Lord.

We wait and we worship and we learn what the Lord would teach us.

We may find our final rest here in Midian, but we may also find that one day the Lord sends a burning bush into our lives and says to us, “The things that tried to kill you are dead. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”