

EXODUS

From Slavery to Service

3. Moses as Wanderer
**Search for Identity (Exodus
2:11-25)**

References

- **Exodus (from series Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching)**
Terence E. Fretheim, Westminster / John Knox Press, 1991
- **From Slavery to Service: A Study of Exodus**, by Diane L. Jacobson, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1996 ISBN 0-8066-2978-9 (out of print)
- “The Book of Exodus. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections.” Walter Brueggemann. In: **The New Interpreter's Bible, A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume I**. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1994. ISBN 0-687-27814-7
- **The Book of Exodus**, by Brevard S. Childs, Westminster, 1974

Exodus 2:11-22

- Links 3 incidents in Moses' young adult life with 3 distinctive ethnic groups
 - Egyptians
 - Hebrews
 - Midianites
- Focus of all 3 events is to demonstrate Moses' response to injustice
- Begins without answering questions regarding Moses' relationship to the Hebrews and the extent of his acculturation to Egyptian ways

Embodies Israel in His Life Experience

- “Moses both *relives the fate of his people and anticipates their near future.*”
(Fretheim)
 - Engages in conflict with the Egyptians
 - Subjected to Pharaoh’s death-dealing edict
 - Flees into the wilderness
 - Becomes a sojourner
- Wilderness experience
 - Allows Moses to come to terms with his own identity
 - Is more hospitable than Egypt

Anticipates/Foreshadows God's Action

- “Moses ‘*sees*’ Israel’s oppression.”
(Fretheim)
 - Like God’s seeing (Ex. 2:25; 3:7, 9; 4:31; 5:19)
 - Seeing acknowledges a deep relationship with the other

Anticipates/Foreshadows God's Action

- “Moses ‘*strikes*’ the Egyptian.” (Fretheim)
 - Word for strike is *nakah* – implies violence with the intent to kill
 - The actions of the Egyptian and Moses are equivalent
 - Moses often characterized as an impulsive youth
 - God’s actions against the Egyptians will be described with the same verb: *nakah* (Ex. 12:12,13,29; 9:15; 3:20; 7:17, 25)
 - Moses’ activity escalates the resistance to the Egyptians from the non-violent to the violent
 - Echoes God’s own escalation in the plagues that culminates with the killing of the firstborn

Anticipates/Foreshadows God's Action

- “Moses ‘*saves*’/’*delivers*’ the daughters of Jethro and provides water for them.”
(Fretheim)
 - Verse 17 uses *yasa* for helps
 - Verse 19 uses *nasal* for delivers
 - God’s salvation (*yasa*) found in Ex. 14:13,30 and 15:2
 - God’s deliverance (*nasal*) found in Ex. 3:8; 6:6; and 12:27
 - God provides water for the Israelites in Ex. 17:1-6

Anticipates/Foreshadows God's Action

- “Moses *confronts a wrong* (2:13, *rasa* ’)
 - God will confront Pharoah (Ex. 9:27)

Anticipates Issues Facing Leader in Israel

- Justice is not only an issue with other ethnic groups, but also within the community of faith
- Moses' authority to resolve disputes within the community are questioned
 - Echoes later challenges to the Moses' authority in the wilderness (Ex. 5:21; 6:9-11; 14:11-12)
 - Accusation that Moses is trying to kill them will recur (Ex. 16:12-14)

Anticipates Issues Facing Leader in Israel

- In contrast, Moses' relationship with Jethro and his daughters is one of hospitality and appreciation
 - Ruel's (Jethro's) daughters extol the actions of Moses
 - The outside daughter is in proper relationship to God's creation (like Pharaoh's daughter)
 - Moses' marriage to Zipporah incorporates an outsider into the community of faith
 - Israel is not racially or genetically pure
 - Israel is intended by God to incorporate the "other"

Anticipates Issues Facing Leader in Israel

- Central issue of this text is justice/injustice
 - 3 types of victims
 - Hebrew slave beaten (to death) by Egyptian master
 - Hebrew quarrelling with neighbor
 - Women prevented from watering their flocks by nomadic males
 - Moses responds to all victims and incidents of injustice
 - **Note that Moses' keenly developed sense of justice is the result of his Egyptian upbringing (Acts 7:22)**
 - “By his actions Moses furthers the creational work of God in giving life and blessing.” (Fretheim)
 - Moses' own actions anticipate God's salvific activity (Ex 14:13, 30 and 15:1-2) and God's legal statutes (Ex. 22:21-2)

Anticipates Issues Facing Leader in Israel

- 2 midrashim of this narrative in the New Testament
 - Acts 7:23-29, 35
 - Hebrews 11:24-28

More Echoes in the New Testament

- See John 4:1-42
- Betrothal scene by a well
- Like Jacob's meeting with Rachel

And God Knew (Jacobson)

- Use of Haggadah in Passover seder
- Leader says, “And God Knew. What did God know?”
- Response: “When the Israelites had grown accustomed to their tasks, when the Hebrews began to labor without complaint, then God knew that it was time that they be liberated.”