

Exodus 2:16-22

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-2/exodus-216-22/>

Moses settles at a place called Midian and is welcomed by a family there.

It is not known whether Moses chose to go to Midian or he just ended up there as he wandered in the Sinai wilderness and northwestern Arabia. In either case, he is sitting beside a water well when this event occurred.

The setting of the story begins in verse 16 when we are told that *the priest of Midian had seven daughters*. What religion the Midianites practiced is not exactly known. Since they are descended from Abraham's sons ([Genesis 25](#)), they might have been raised to worship the God of the Bible.

In the Ancient Near East, women were involved in shepherding as well as men, so it was not unusual for these daughters to lead their sheep to a well *to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock*. The fact that there were troughs means that this was a well-known, frequently-used place to provide water to flocks.

While they were watering their flocks, *the shepherds came*. These shepherds (presumably male) wanted to intimidate the daughters so that they would give up their place at the well. It appears that they were successful, because it says that they *drove them away*. This was probably not the first time that this has happened.

But then *Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock*. It appears that the male shepherds retreated, and Moses helped the daughters with the provision of water for their flocks. This certainly aligns with the substantial physical power Moses showed in dispatching the Egyptian guard. The Hebrew word for "helped" can also be translated "saved". This "saving" is more in line with rescuing. Moses rescued the daughters from the harassment of the other shepherds.

With Moses' help, the daughters' job was completed earlier than usual. Upon their return, *they came to Reuel their father*. The father is called Reuel ("friend of God") here, but he is called Jethro in [Exodus 3:1](#) and later in Exodus.

The fact that the daughters finished their chore early is seen when *he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?"* The daughters gave him the news – *"An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock."* Apparently, something about Moses gave away his origins, likely either his dress or the way he spoke.

Moses became their deliverer. Not only did he deliver, he also protected and provided for the daughters by doing most of the work of watering the flocks for them. This pattern – deliverance, protection, and provision – can be seen in numerous cases in the book of Exodus and many other parts of Scripture, for God is the deliverer, protector, and provider for all of His covenant people, Old and New Testament.

Reuel wanted to thank Moses for helping his daughters. He seemed upset that his daughters did not do this and confronts them – *"Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? They were to invite him to have something to eat."*

This invitation to dinner resulted in much more, for *Moses was willing to dwell with the man.* This is an indication that he had no specific place to go to when he left Egypt. Then *he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses,* meaning Reuel, the father now invited Moses to be a part of the family. This certainly seems to make a lot of practical sense, adding a formidable warrior willing to serve as a shepherd among a family with only one other male.

The union of Moses and Zipporah was fruitful, for *she gave birth to a son.* Moses *named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."* The name Gershom is probably related to the Hebrew verb that means "to drive or banish." In spite of his new wife and son, Moses probably thought that he was doomed to a life of obscurity in the Sinai desert.

Biblical Text:

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?" ¹⁹ So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock." ²⁰ He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man

behind? Invite him to have something to eat.”²¹ Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses.²² Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”