

# Exodus 2:11-15

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-2/exodus-211-15/>

*Moses' sudden departure from Egypt.*

This incident in Moses' life occurs *in those days*, meaning the days of bondage and oppressive labor imposed on the Hebrews, also *when Moses had grown up*. Acts 7:23 states that Moses was about 40 years old at this time, so there is about a 40-year gap between verses 10 and 11.

Moses had grown up as an Egyptian, being part of the Egyptian royal family, receiving an Egyptian education, and enjoying all of the benefits of the Egyptian way of life. He must have, however, been aware of his Hebrew heritage because *he went out to his brethren*. Because he was Egyptian royalty, he had access to the Hebrew camp and *looked on their hard labors*.

During his inspection, *he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren*. The Hebrew word for "beating" can refer to killing, but it can also mean "striking" with no idea of causing death. The use of "brethren" shows that Moses identified with the Hebrews and not the Egyptians at this point.

The phrase *he looked this way and that* could be seen either as hoping that he would not be seen or that there was no one else who could do something about the situation. Then, *when he saw there was no one around*, at least he perceived such, *he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand*. The Hebrew word for "struck down" is the same as for "beating" in the previous verse, except that here it does result in death. It could be that Moses intended to give the Egyptian "a dose of his own medicine" so to speak, not to kill him. In any case, he struck the Egyptian in such a way as to cause his death, intentionally or unintentionally. Here Moses became (at least in his own mind) the deliverer he was meant to be.

Moses *went out the next day* (verse 13), maybe to look for another opportunity to act as deliverer. But on this day he experienced a different situation, because *behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other*. Moses intervened and *he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?"* The Hebrew word for "striking" here is the same as "struck down" in verse 12 and "beating" in verse 11. Notice how Moses' confrontation is verbal instead of physical as with the Egyptian. This is another indication that Moses identifies with the Hebrews and was thinking of himself as their deliverer and not executioner. He had delivered a Hebrew from mistreatment by an Egyptian the day before, and now he is delivering a Hebrew "brother" from mistreatment from another Hebrew "brother." Instead of receiving praise as a peacemaker, Moses gets a stern confrontation when the attacker *said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are*

*you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?*” Notice there are two questions here. The first one questions Moses’ authority over them, and the second one seeks to strike fear in Moses. They already had taskmasters (see 1:11), and Moses (probably adorned as Egyptian royalty) did not look like a taskmaster. The question shows that Moses was out of place and not welcome there. The second question reveals to Moses that his murder of the Egyptian was indeed known to many.

Moses apparently reasoned that if this Hebrew knew what he did, it stood to reason that it was reported to the Egyptian authorities, even Pharaoh himself. Because of this, *Moses was afraid and said, “Surely the matter has become known.”*

As Moses suspected, *when Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses* (verse 15). Knowing his life was in danger (he knew what Pharaoh would do, being raised in the royal household), Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh.

Having now exited Egypt, *Moses settled in the land of Midian*. The founder of the Midianites was one of the sons of Keturah (a wife of Abraham) named Midian. In Genesis, it is said that Abraham sent his sons and their families (not including Isaac, but including Midian and his family “to the land of the east” (Genesis 25:1-6). As result, the Midianites lived in southeastern Sinai and northwestern Arabia on both sides of the Gulf of Aqaba. To get here from Egypt, Moses would have had to travel a long way.

The phrase *he sat down by a well* sets the stage for the next section of Exodus 2. The Hebrew word for “sat” can also be translated “dwelled”, meaning that Moses could have made this place by the well his home instead of just a temporary stop on this journey.

Moses’ method of delivering the Hebrews obviously was not successful. Moses still needed to learn how to become the deliverer God wanted him to be.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>11</sup> Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. <sup>12</sup> So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. <sup>13</sup> He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, “Why are you striking your companion?” <sup>14</sup> But he said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and said, “Surely the matter has become known.” <sup>15</sup> When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.**