

Exodus 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

Analysis

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock (וַיָּבֹא מִצְרַיִם שְׁבַע בָּנָות, ulkhohen Midyan sheva banot)—**The priest of Midian** is Reuel/Jethro (v. 18, 3:1), keeper of Midianite religious traditions possibly preserving Abrahamic monotheism (Genesis 25:2). **Seven daughters** (שְׁבַע, sheva, number of completion) draw water for **their father's flock**. The scene depicts pastoral life Moses will live for 40 years, learning wilderness survival, shepherd skills, and patience—all essential for leading Israel. The daughters' vulnerability (v. 17) sets up Moses' intervention, showing his character despite his failures.

Historical Context

Shepherding was common in semi-nomadic Midianite culture. That a priest's daughters shepherd flocks indicates either economic necessity or cultural norms (like Rachel in Genesis 29:9). Wells were communal resources often contested (Genesis 21:25, 26:20-21). Jethro's later advice to Moses (18:13-27) shows his wisdom influenced Israel's governance structure.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Moses' 40 years of obscurity as a shepherd prepare him for leading God's flock through the wilderness?
2. What does Jethro's role teach about God's truth preserved even among non-Israelites descended from Abraham?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּלֶךְ	מִדְיָן	בְּעֵשֶׂב	בְּעֵשֶׂב	בְּנֵי-זָהָר	וַיִּתְּבַּאֲנָה	וַיִּתְּדַלֵּן	בָּהּ
Now the priest	of Midian	had seven	daughters	and they came	and drew		
H3548	H4080	H7651	H1323	H935	H1802		

אָבִיהֶן:	כִּי	אָנָה	לְבָשָׂק	זֹת	אָת	וַתִּתְמַלֵּל	אָנָה
water and filled	H853		the troughs		to water	flock	their father's
H4390		H7298		H8248		H6629	H1

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:1 (Parallel theme): Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

Genesis 24:11 (Parallel theme): And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

1 Samuel 9:11 (Parallel theme): And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?

Genesis 41:45 (Parallel theme): And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

