

"He went out to his brothers"

At that time, Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers and saw their burdens. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brothers (Ex. 2:11).¹

Abarbanel, Exodus 2:11

The third question: If Moshe Rabbeinu *alav ha-shalom*² was raised by Pharaoh's daughter in the palace, since she adopted him as her son, why does it say, "At that time, Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers and saw their burdens?" How could Moshe have known that the wretched Jews were his brothers? And why did he leave the palace to associate with the Hebrews who were busy with their forced labor, when most people would distance themselves from the company of slaves, to avoid seeing their suffering? And all the more so Moshe, who was hardly one of them!³

Ibn Ezra, Exodus 2:11

"He went out to his brothers" – the Egyptians,⁴ for he was in the king's palace. And [the phrase] "of his brothers" indicates a Hebrew from his family, similar to "we are kinsmen (אנשים אהים אנהנו)" (Gen. 13:8).

¹ Moshe, who was raised in the Egyptian palace and effectively became an adopted son to Pharaoh's daughter, leaves Pharaoh's palace 'one fine day' and sees the oppressed slaves. He immediately recognizes them as his brothers, and identifies with their pain; in fact, his identification runs so deep that he is willing to kill an Egyptian oppressor (even if human life was not highly valued at that time, the king's property, and those overseeing his work, certainly were; this is evidenced by the fact that Moshe is forced to escape from the palace as a result of his actions). Was this Moshe's first exposure to his Hebrew origin? Did Moshe know that he was a Hebrew? Perhaps the discovery was a gradual process, which came about through touring the kingdom over the course of time? Is the description "he went out to his brothers" the culmination of a process, and not a singular occurrence?

² Abarbanel uses the acronym מרע"ה for Moshe Rabbeinu *alav ha-shalom*; the acronym forms a word that is reminiscent to מרעה – pasture and רועה – shepherd, possibly hinting at Moshe's later role as a shepherd and the events linked with that role; these are explored in [Moshe was shepherding](#).

³ Abarbanel formulates an essential question that emerges from this verse. The midrash largely ignored this question, but Abarbanel and other exegetics attempt to offer a solution. E.g. Yalkut Shimoni (Shemot, 166): "When the child was in the king's palace, he was dressed in crimson, and was raised among the princes, and fifteen years after he was brought to the king's palace, on the eighteenth year of his birth, the lad went out to his father and mother: he went out to them, and he went out to his people, and he saw their forced labor, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brothers." This is one example of the colorful description of a prince who emerges from the palace and identifies his own people, without relating to the question raised by Abarbanel. Earlier midrashic texts (explored below) also seemed to ignore the process embedded in the loaded phrase 'he went out to his brothers,' focusing instead on the description "[he] saw their forced labor."

⁴ Some correct the text of the Ibn Ezra from "Egyptians" to "Hebrews." Reading 'Egyptians' here poses a logical difficulty in the verse, which according to Ibn Ezra reads: "he went out to his [Egyptian] brothers, and saw their forced labor." Since we know it is the Hebrews who are subjected to forced labor, according to this reading the object of the verse is reversed mid-sentence (unless we accept the grammatical possibility that "their forced labor" is the labor inflicted by the Egyptians, instead of suffered by the Hebrews). If we maintain Ibn Ezra's interpretation that the brothers are 'Egyptians,' the comment calls attention to the recurrence of the word "his brothers" (אחיו) in the verse: Moshe goes out **to his brothers** (אחיו), and sees an Egyptian striking a Hebrew **of his brothers** (מאחיו).

Rashi, Genesis 13:8

"Brothers" (אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים) – kinsmen. And the midrash explains: they resembled each other in their facial features.⁵

Ramban, Exodus 2:11

"At that time, Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers" – He grew to be a man. It was previously stated, "and the boy grew up" (verse 10), meaning that he grew up until he no longer needed to be nursed, and then he was brought to Pharaoh's daughter and he was raised as her son, so that he was raised before kings. After that, he grew up to become a man of knowledge.

As to "he went out to his brothers" – he did so because they 'had told him that he was a Jew,'⁶ and he wished to see them, since they were his brothers. And behold, he observed their burdens and toil, and he could not stand it. So he killed the Egyptian who was striking the harried [Jew].⁷

Therefore, according to Ibn Ezra "to his brothers" are Moshe's Egyptian's brothers, his childhood playmates and adolescent companions in the king's court. Ibn Ezra explains several verses earlier why Moshe had to be raised in the king's palace: "Perhaps God had seen to it that Moshe would be raised in the palace to ensure that his spirit was on the highest intellectual and habitual level, and not plain and ordinary as in the house of slaves." This motif is further expanded in [An Egyptian Man](#). Based on this version, Moshe goes out to his Egyptian brothers, notices the miserable and oppressed Hebrews, and internalizes that they are his kin – מאחיי. Moshe may not actually know that he is one of them; instead, his identification with their plight creates a kinship, similar to Abraham's statement to Lot: "we are אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים" (literally: brothers; figuratively: kin). Interestingly, Abraham's statement promotes distance as a means to maintaining kinship, whereas the description of Moshe going out to his 'brothers' intends to bring him close to his people. This distinction between the two occurrences of the word אַחִים further emphasizes the question of the cause behind this transition from "his (Egyptian) brothers" to "of his (Hebrew) brothers." Were multiple outings involved in Moshe's process of self-discovery outside the palace walls?

⁵ Apropos Ibn Ezra's reference of Abraham and Lot's 'kinship,' Rashi on that verse in Gen. 13:8 cites Bereshit Rabbah 41:6, which points to the resemblance in their features (of course Abraham was Lot's uncle!). Is it possible that Moshe's face differed from the features of an authentic Egyptian, since his ancestry was not Egyptian, and if so, could he have noticed a similarity to his Hebrew 'brothers' when he left the palace and went exploring? Alternatively, perhaps others pointed out the obvious similarity to Moshe. Elsewhere, the midrash points out with regard to Moshe in the episode of the Burning Bush: "Because *Moshe concealed his face [fearing to gaze upon God]*, he was privileged to have his countenance glow [...] *behold the likeness of the Lord*" (Berakhot 7a). Perhaps we may collocate these two ideas and say: because Moshe refused to conceal his face when he left the palace, and recognized the similarity to his oppressed Hebrew brothers, he merited to become the leader of the Jewish people, among other gifts (cf. midrashic texts on the verse in Psalms 68:19: "You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people," such as Tanhuma *Haazinu* 3 and more). See also [I must turn aside and look at this great sight](#).

⁶ This is a play on the verse in Esther 3:4: "[...] they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordechai's words would avail; for he had told them that he was a Jew." Nahmanides integrates this verse, where Mordechai announces that he is a Jew to explain why he cannot bow down to Haman, to introduce Moshe's affiliation with his brothers, the Hebrews.

⁷ Later in the same chapter, in his commentary on v. 23, Nahmanides emphasizes that Moshe left to seek out his brothers as soon as he came of age, perhaps indicating that his early childhood memories were intact: "In truth, he escaped in his youth, as it is written *At that time, Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers* – this was immediately, as soon as he was grown and cognizant, and they had told him that he was a Jew, and he yearned to see the forced labor and suffering and oppression of his brothers." While Ibn Ezra emphasizes the transition between the two occurrences of "brothers," Nahmanides turns our attention to the two occurrences of "and he grew" – one

Abarbanel, Exodus 2:11

And it says, "and he went out to his brothers and saw their burdens," because Moshe's soul had always yearned for Yocheved, who had raised him, and for her sons. After he had grown, he knew the truth of his reality, and that he was of the children of the Hebrews, despite the fact that Pharaoh's daughter raised him as a son. So he would go out to his brothers, the Hebrews, who were outside the city in the king's construction sites. And Moshe went out of the palace and went to his brothers the Hebrews, or to his brothers the Levites, or perhaps they were his real brothers, relatives of Amram and Yocheved. For the Hebrews are all called brothers, as it is written, "you may not charge your brother interest," or "they must not demand payment from his peer or brother." When Moshe grew into a conscientious adult and recognized his father and his mother, and recognized his brothers, his heart warmed to their cause. Therefore he left the palace and went to their stations and saw their burdens. This is the answer to the third question.⁸

Yalkut Shimoni, Parashat Shemot, 166

When the child was in the king's palace, he was dressed in crimson, and was raised among the princes, and fifteen years after he was brought to the king's palace, on the eighteenth year of his birth, the lad went out to his father and mother: he went out to them, and he

in our verse (3:11), and one in the previous verse: "and the boy grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he was like a son to her" (3:10). The first occurrence of "he grew" indicates that Moshe was weaned, which may indicate that he was closer to an older toddler than a younger infant in ancient times. Shmuel was delivered to serve in the Temple when he was weaned (1 Sam 1:24). While the midrash ventures a guess that Moshe and Shmuel were two or three years old when they were weaned, Nahmanides does not relate to a specific age, but rather views the weaning stage as one that is mature enough to have instilled lasting childhood memories and conceptions; to say nothing of Pharaoh's daughter, who knew the truth about Moshe's identity, and according to Abarbanel did not conceal Moshe's identity from him. See also [Bitya Bat Pharaoh](#).

⁸ Abarbanel explains that Moshe maintained a constant connection with his parents' household, and would go back and forth between the palace and their home. This indicates that there was a higher status of Hebrews, as indicated in the position that maintains that the Levites were not enslaved by the Egyptians (Shemot Rabbah 5:16: "Yehoshua ben Levy said: The tribe of Levi was free of hard labor" (the midrash also explains that the Levites alone circumcised themselves, and did not practice idolatry in Egypt). In v. 11, "and he went out to his brothers" is a description of Moshe's identification with the entire nation – the other enslaved tribes of Israel. Similarly, in his commentary *Tzeror ha-Mor*, fifteenth-century commentator Rabbi Avraham ben Yaakov Sava (who was a pupil of Isaac de Leon) notes: "*Moshe grew and he went out to his brothers* – to commiserate with their misfortune. And this is the meaning of *and he saw their forced labor*: he understood that this was a foreign thing: an Egyptian descendant of Ham's line, who were slaves, oppressing a Hebrew [...] and in his greatness of heart and valor he *turned this way and that and saw that no one was there* – no Egyptian. *And he struck the Egyptian and buried him in the sand* – for he was not afraid that his brothers the Hebrews would inform such a thing." The Malbim expounds: "*Moshe grew and he went out to his brothers* – this explains Moshe's righteousness, and how from youth he possessed all the qualities that merited him this honor; although he was raised in the king's palace and Israel were in the depths of despair, he did not conceal his face from them and went out to them recognizing that they are his brothers. This is the opposite of human nature, since most people who ascend to power distance themselves from their poor and desolate brothers." See a similar commentary on Proverbs 20:11. It seems this is not only a tale of different classes, but also the story of an internal Jewish struggle. Moshe's greatness is not only in leaving the palace and his Egyptian brothers to go to his Hebrew brothers, as Ibn Ezra notes, but also leaving his high-ranking Hebrew brothers who were not enslaved, and connecting with the lower class Hebrew slaves. The commentators may be referencing their own experiences with high-ranking Jews who were welcome in the palaces and courts of their time, and whether or not they identified with their suffering Jewish brothers.

went out to his people, and he saw their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brothers.⁹

Shemot Rabbah, 1:27¹⁰

At that time, Moshe grew – Moshe was 20 years old at the time, and some say 40 years old.¹¹

Moshe grew – and does not everyone grow up: man, animal, beast, and bird? Rather, this tells you that he grew up [in a manner] unlike the whole world.¹²

He went out to see his brothers – This righteous man went out twice, and the Holy One Blessed is He wrote them one after another. *And he went out the second day* – this is two. *And saw their burdens* – what is, "And [he] saw?" For he would look upon their burdens and cry and say, "I am shamed for you! If only I could die for you! For there is no more difficult labor than the labor of the mortar." And he would give of his shoulders to assist each one of them. Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabbi Yosse the Galilean said: If he saw a large burden on a small person and a small burden on a large person, or a man's burden on a woman and a woman's burden on a man, or an elderly man's burden on a young man and a young man's burden on an elderly man,¹³ he would leave aside his rank and go and right

⁹ Otzar Hamidrashim (Eisenstein) on Moshe, p. 358: "After God rescued the boy Moshe from the Egyptians, and he was in the king's house dressed in royal robes and wearing precious jewels on his head, and all the king's ministers looked up to him, and after fifteen years of being raised in Pharaoh's house, Moshe went to see his father and mother, and he saw their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man from his brothers. In note 3 we cited this midrash to symbolize Moshe's brief and unexplained journey to seek out his brothers. But the words "the lad went out to his father and mother" indicate that Moshe had childhood memories, as we have seen elsewhere. This later text also relates (although somewhat simplistically) to Abarbanel's question, perhaps influenced by other commentators.

¹⁰ We are going back in time, from later commentators and midrashic texts to earlier midrash (see introduction to Shemot Rabbah). This text focuses on Moshe seeing the suffering of the nation as a future leader, "and saw their burdens," and less so on "he went out to his brothers."

¹¹ Perhaps the dispute relates to physical vs. intellectual maturity: "twenty years for pursuit ... at forty wisdom" (mishna Avot 5:21). Cf. Sifri Deuteronomy, Parashat Vezot Haberacha, 357: "Moshe was in Egypt for forty years, in Midian for forty years, and led Israel for forty years." In this context the midrash mentions other leaders who lived to be 120 with three distinct chapters: Hillel, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zaccai, and Rabbi Akiva.

¹² Shemot Rabbah 1:26: "*And the child grew* – Twenty four months she nursed him, and you say "and the child grew"?! Rather, he grew, but not in the way of the land." Nahmanides' noting of the dual mention of Moshe 'growing' is preceded by Devarim Rabbah, Parashat Vaetchanan: "Why does it say twice, 'And the child grew,' 'And Moshe grew?' - The former in stature, and the latter in authority" (the midrash later notes an interesting parallel to the laws of the City of Refuge!). Midrash Tanhuma, Parashat Vaera, 17 comments: "*At that time, Moshe grew* (Ex. 2:11) – Rabbi Yehuda says: why was there a need to mention that he grew; do not all boys grow? Rather, when he was five he looked like he was 11. And why is it stated "and the boy grew" – did Moshe grow twice? The former in stature, the latter in greatness. What was his greatness? That he went out to his brothers." Kohelet Rabbah 9:2: "And Moshe grew and went out to his brothers. What is 'And Moshe grew?' his greatness was that he is the leader in and out." Moshe begins to grow into his leadership position, and his growth also relates to his maturity and sensitivity to the suffering of his people. Perhaps the midrash's emphasis on Moshe's maturation process offers a partial answer to the question posed above.

¹³ The description of Moshe's identification with the distress of Bnei Yisrael is a popular topic in midrashic texts. A parallel to this midrash can be found in Vayikra Rabbah 37:2, in the context of the laws of vows, and in Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, Masechta d'Shira 1: "And he saw their burdens... they were named for him, because he

their burdens, and act as though he were assisting Pharaoh.¹⁴ The Holy One Blessed is He said: You put aside your business and went to see the sorrow of Israel, and acted toward them as brothers would act. I will leave aside Heaven and Earth and talk to you. Such is it written, "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see" The Holy One Blessed is He saw Moshe, who put aside his business to see their burdens. Therefore, "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush."¹⁵

Shemot Rabbah 1:28

Another interpretation: "he saw their burdens" – that they did not have rest. He went and said to Pharaoh, "One who has a slave, if he does not rest one day a week, he will die! These are your slaves, if you do not allow them to rest one day each week, they will die!" He said to them, "Go do for them as you say." So Moshe went and established the Sabbath day for them to rest.¹⁶

sacrificed his life for them." In Psikta Zutra, Ex. 2:11: "At that time, Moshe grew and he went out. This is the meaning of the verse, 'A child may be dissembling in his behavior even when his actions are blameless and proper' (Proverbs 20:11): Although Moshe Rabbeinu was in Pharaoh's palace, he went to see the burdens of Israel. As stated in the mishna, Hillel says, do not separate yourself from the community: one should not see the community in distress and say I will go to my home, and eat and drink, and be at peace; rather, one should carry the burden along with his peers." This is a primary motif in the midrash: in addition to the commentary on "he grew," which attempts to answer our question (and the Abarbanel's), the midrash is concerned with the matter of seeing the burden of the other. Is this identification with human suffering, whether that of slaves or brothers (see Ibn Ezra above) what drove Moshe to discover his origins? Regardless, the comparison to Yosef emerges from almost every source: An Egyptian royal, originally a Hebrew, rediscovers his past and becomes a leader of the children of Israel. See [An Egyptian Man](#) on this parasha, and *Mayim Aharonim* on Parashat Vayigash, [Yehuda's Speech](#).

¹⁴ This description of Moshe bearing the burden of the Hebrew slaves should be contrasted with Pharaoh's cunning pretense, when he began the process of enslaving the Hebrews by pretending the workload would be shared by Hebrews and Egyptians alike, as described in Shemot Rabbah 1:9: "They brought a brick and hung it on Pharaoh's neck." This is described more at length in Bemidbar Rabbah, Behaalotacha 15:20: "When Pharaoh said, 'let us deal wisely (cunningly) with them,' and put slave masters over them to oppress them, he first gathered all of Israel and told them: 'please do me this favor today.' Therefore it is written: 'The Egyptians oppressed Bnei Yisrael with hard labor (פרך) – they did so with a soft mouth (פה רך – a sound play on the word פרך). Pharaoh picked up a basket and a rake, and who could see Pharaoh handling a basket and a rake and not follow? All of Israel immediately followed and worked as hard as they could, since they were strong and powerful. When darkness fell, he assigned taskmasters to them, and said: calculate the bricks. They stood and counted the bricks. He said: this is the amount you are committed to complete each day." Here in contrast, Moshe assists his enslaved people and pretends he is handling the work for Pharaoh. Is there any hint that this was not a one-time action? Could "he saw their burdens" be an ongoing process, similar to "he went out to his brothers," which as explained above was not a singular event? Could Moshe have started his journey as an enlightened Egyptian, and only later, after connecting with the Hebrew slaves, gradually discovered his origins?

¹⁵ The conclusion of this midrash reminds us that Moshe's identification with the nation's suffering began long before the encounter with the Burning Bush, when he was still in Pharaoh's palace, dressed as an Egyptian and surrounded by aristocracy. This description of Moshe is reminiscent of Yosef. It was not the Burning Bush that created his identification with the Hebrew cause, but rather the reverse: he went to Midian *because* of his identification, which caused him to kill the Egyptian, and escape from Egypt to Midian, become a shepherd, and end up at the Burning Bush.

¹⁶ Midrash Bereishit Rabbati on Parashat Bereishit offers an expanded version: "How do we know that Shabbat preceded the Exodus from Egypt by twenty years? For it is written: And Moshe grew and went out to his brothers and saw their burdens (Ex. 2:11). What did he see? He saw a way to relieve their labor and allow them to rest, and he informed them of the laws of Shabbat so that they may rest. How so? He went to Pharaoh and told him: I see

Bereshit Rabbah 79:617

And he camped before the city (Gen. 33:18) – he entered [the city] on Erev Shabbat at sunset, and set up boundaries before evening fell. In other words, Jacob kept the laws of Shabbat before they were given.¹⁸

Shemot Rabbah 1:28 (Continued)

"And he saw an Egyptian man" – What did he see? [...] Our rabbis say there were taskmasters among the Egyptians and officers from the Israelites, one taskmaster appointed over ten officers; one officer appointed over ten Israelites. And the taskmasters

that your work will become obsolete. The king said: how so? He said: for their work has no limits. And furthermore, when a boy is treated like a youth and the youth as an old man, their work is not beneficial. And one who has no limit to work, does he not die? He said: yes. Moshe said: these are your slaves! If you do not offer them some relief from work they will die. Pharaoh said: I have already put you in charge of my work, go do as you see fit. Moshe went to his people and figured out from the six days of creation which day was Shabbat, and established Shabbat. He told the oppressors: it is the king's command that there should be one day of rest from work each week. They may work for six days, and rest on Shabbat. And how do we know that Shabbat was given in Egypt? As it is written, "for God has given you the Shabbat" (Ex. 16:29) – not 'will give,' but rather has already given you Shabbat in Egypt." This idea is expressed in the liturgical *hoshanot* recited on Shabbat: "As you rescued a unique nation that yearns for freedom; they sought the knowledge to choose the seventh day for rest." Shabbat originates in the Egyptian enslavement, when Moshe convinced Pharaoh to provide his Hebrew slaves with a day of rest, and then calculated the days to figure out which was the original seventh day. This process preceded the commandments given in Marrah, as outlined in [The Marrah Commandments](#) in Parashat Beshalah. Even before the manna, Shabbat is mentioned explicitly in the Torah text. Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (eighteenth century, pupil of the *Seer of Lublin*) explains in his book *Bnei Yissachar* that this is the reason for the prayer *שמחה משה במתנת חלקו* ('Moshe will be happy with the gift he gave'): "the rabbis said about the verse 'Moshe grew and went out to his brothers and saw their burdens' that Moshe asked Pharaoh to give them one day of rest, and Moshe arranged that it would be Shabbat. When they left Egypt and God additionally commanded them to keep Shabbat, Moshe was happy, and this is the reason we say 'Moshe will be happy with the gift he gave'." Perhaps when we say Shabbat is a commemoration of the Exodus, we also remember that Shabbat was, in fact, a gift previously given in Egypt, by Moshe and Pharaoh.

¹⁷ We stopped in the middle of Shemot Rabbah to discuss the matter of Shabbat, and will return to the midrash soon; the idea of Shabbat in Egypt is also mentioned in the *hoshana* recited on Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot, as mentioned in note 16. There, of course, no credit is given to Pharaoh.

¹⁸ Was Moshe really the first one to present the idea of Shabbat to the nation, during the Egyptian enslavement? Bereshit Rabbah credits Jacob with keeping Shabbat when he returns from Haran. When Jacob returns from his exile, which is a preparatory exile for the Egyptian exile (see [Arami Oved Avi](#) on Parashat Ki Tavo), he established Shabbat as part of his return to the Promised Land (See [And he camped before the city](#) on Parashat Vayishlah). The descent to Egypt is a preparatory stage for keeping Shabbat since a slave has no control over his own time in the context of enslavement, and perhaps as a first step toward redemption. Moshe, with Pharaoh's assent, establishes Shabbat as a day of rest for his brothers, after seeing their suffering. Is this a lasting amendment? When we say that Shabbat is a commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt, are we referring to Pharaoh and Moshe's Shabbat? In Shemot Rabbah 5:18, when Moshe stands before Pharaoh and asks him to let his people go, Pharaoh cancels the day of rest: "this shows that they had scrolls to enjoy from one Shabbat to the next, and in them they would read that God will redeem them, since they had time to rest on Shabbat. Therefore Pharaoh said, the work shall be harder for these people, and they will perform it and not believe in lies – they should not enjoy the hope or relief of Shabbat." A true Shabbat is one experienced in a state of freedom. Pharaoh's Shabbat, given to prevent his slaves from dying, followed by a return to forced labor on Sunday, is not Shabbat. As an aside, these two midrashim explain the distinction between the beginning of Parashat Shemot, where Moshe goes to see the suffering of his nation and establishes Shabbat with Pharaoh's assent, and the end of the parasha, when the oppression is reinforced: the reinforcement of the oppression reflects Pharaoh's cancellation of the day of rest.

would go to the houses of the officers at daybreak to make them go call the workers. Once an Egyptian taskmaster went to an Israelite officer and he set his eye on his wife who was beautiful without blemish. He called the man and brought him out of his house, then the Egyptian returned and had relations with his wife and she thought that he was her husband and became pregnant from him. Her husband returned and found the Egyptian leaving his house. He asked her, did he touch you? She said yes, but I thought he was you. When the taskmaster saw that he suspected him he returned him to hard labor and struck him and sought to kill him. Moshe saw this and looked at him and saw with *ruah hakodesh* what he did in the house, and saw what would be done in the field, and said surely he deserves death, as it is written: "One who strikes a man shall die" (Lev. 24:21). And moreover, he had relations with the wife of Datan and therefore deserved killing, as it says: The adulterer and adulteress shall surely die (Lev 20:10), and that is why it is written: "And he turned this way and that" – he saw what he did to him at home and what he did to him in the field.¹⁹

Shabbat Shalom!

Mehalkei Hamayim

Mayim Ahronim Postscript: Prof. Avigdor Shinan noted that the Book of Jubilees (47:9) may be the earliest source that describes the angel telling Moshe about the history of the world: "And your mother hid you for three months [...] And afterwards, when you grew, they brought you to the house of Pharaoh, and you became his son, and Amram your father taught you the book, and after three weeks were completed they brought you into the royal court." Three weeks is likely a reference to age 21, concluding three cycles of seven years, indicating that Moshe entered Pharaoh's palace at a relatively mature age. Perhaps this source offers another answer to the questions raised above. See also Dr. Tamar Kadari's [Design of a Leader](#) on the Schechter Institute site. The 1998 animated film [Prince of Egypt](#) portrays Miriam as the one who reveals Moshe's identity to him, initially much to his dismay.

¹⁹ What else does Moshe see when he goes out to his brothers? He sees the two sides of the terrible forced labor to which they were subjected: the physical oppression and the emotional abuse. He sees the physical, spiritual, and emotional destruction brought about by the Egyptians; Pharaoh's gift of Shabbat (bestowed for his own personal gain) will not restore this damage – only the Shabbat of a free nation can. See [Forced Labor](#) for an expansion of this idea. Ultimately, Moshe leaving Pharaoh's house, and learning about his origins, is a turning point in his life. Whether or not he liked it, his leadership emerges from the suffering and injustice to which he is exposed. There is no way back to Pharaoh's house; he can only return to a direct conflict with Pharaoh and his strong, proud nation.