

Witness

Source Sheet by Sarra Alpert

Exodus 2:11

(11) Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen.

שמות ב':י"א

(יא) וַיְהִי אִ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל
מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיִּרְא
בְּסִבְלַתָם וַיִּרְא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה
אִישׁ-עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו:

Before reading the above text, start by sharing the context of where we are in the Israelites' story and Moses' story. After reading the text, discuss:

- What do you imagine Moses would have known about the Israelites' enslavement before this point? What might have been different about this particular moment?
- What are some examples from your own experience where you suddenly saw a particular injustice more clearly even though it had been around you all along?

Rashi on Exodus 2:11:2

(11) AND HE SAW THEIR BURDENS — he set his eyes and mind to share in their distress. (Exodus Rabbah 1:27)

רש"י על שמות ב':י"א:ב'

(יא) וירא בסבלתם. נָתַן עֵינָיו וְלִבּוֹ
לְהִיּוֹת מִצָּר עֲלֵיהֶם (שמות רבה
א':)

Ramban on Exodus 2:11:2

(11) And the explanation of **and he went out to his brothers** is [that it is] because they told him that he was a Jew, and [so] he wanted to see them, since they were his brothers. And behold, he observed their duress and toil and he could

רמב"ן על שמות ב':י"א:ב'

(יא) וטעם ויצא אל אחיו כי הגידו
לו אשר הוא יהודי, והיה חפץ
לראותם בעבור שהם אחיו. והנה
נסתכל בסבלותם ועמלם ולא
יכול לסבול ולכן הרג המצרי
המכה הנלחץ:

not stand it. And therefore, he killed the Egyptian who was striking the harried [Jew].

Discuss:

- What do you think it means to "share in their distress"?
- What do you think it means that "he wanted to see them"? Are there times in your life when you don't want to see an injustice? If so, then why?
- Do you think you have to see someone as connected to you before you act on their pain? Did Moses have to see himself as directly connected to the Israelites before he could act? Are there ways to see our connection to others even if we're not directly related to them?

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