

LIVING GODS WILL

Vessel of God

MOSES



Moses with the Ten Commandments by Philippe de Champaigne

Born: 1527 BC, Goshen, Egypt

Died: 1407 BC, Mount Nebo, (age 120)

Moses was raised as a child by the daughter of Pharaoh.

Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt and across the Red Sea.

Moses gave the Hebrews God's law and established the Old Covenant.

Moses brother Aaron was the first High Priest of the Israelites.

Moses is one of the most prominent figures in the Old Testament. While Abraham is called the "**Father of the Faithful**" and the recipient of God's unconditional covenant of grace to His people, **Moses** was the man chosen to bring redemption to His people.

God specifically chose **Moses** to lead the Israelites from captivity in Egypt to salvation in the Promised Land.

Moses is also recognized as the mediator of the Old Covenant and is commonly referred to as the giver of the Law.

Finally, **Moses** is the principal author of the Pentateuch, the foundational books of the entire Bible. **Moses'** role in the Old Testament is a type and shadow of the role Jesus plays in the New Testament.

We first encounter **Moses** in the opening chapters of the book of Exodus. In chapter 1, we learn that, after the patriarch Joseph rescued his family from the great famine and situated them in the land of Goshen (in Egypt), the descendants of Abraham lived in peace for several generations until there rose to power in Egypt a pharaoh who "**did not know Joseph**" (**Exodus 1:8**).

This pharaoh subjugated the Hebrew people and used them as slaves for his massive building projects. Because God blessed the Hebrew people with rapid numeric growth, the Egyptians began to fear the increasing number of Jews living in their land.

Moses was the son of Amram and Yochebed of the tribe of Levi. Miriam and Aaron (the first High Priest of the Israelites) were his brother and sister.

Moses married Zipporah (daughter of Jethro) and they had two sons Gershom and Eliezer.

He was born in Egypt during the period in which the Israelites (Hebrews) had become a threat to the Egyptians simply because of their large population. The Pharaoh had ordered that all newborn male Hebrew children be cast into the Nile to drown.

Amram and Yochebed took their newborn son and placed him in a waterproof basket and hid him in the tall grasses of the Nile. Meanwhile, his sister Miriam hid and watched over the baby from a distance.

A group of women and servants were bathing nearby. The Pharaoh's daughter, hearing the baby cry, found and rescued him. She named him "**Moses**," meaning "**drawn from the water.**" Her desire for a son fulfilled, she made certain that he had the best of everything, including education.

Moses was brought up in the splendor of the Egyptian court as the Pharaoh's daughter's adopted son. Grown to manhood, he was aware of his Hebraic roots and shared a deep compassion for his confined kinsmen.

He became furious while witnessing an Egyptian master brutally beating a Hebrew slave, and he impulsively killed the Egyptian. Fearing the Pharaoh's punishment, he fled into the desert of Midian, becoming a shepherd for Jethro, a Midianite priest whose daughter Zipporah he later married.

While tending the flocks on Horeb Mountain in the wilderness, he saw a bush burning yet not turning to ash. He heard a voice from within the bush telling him that he had been chosen to serve as one to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

He was also told to declare the unity of God to his people. At that time most Israelites were worshipping many gods. **Moses** was to tell them that there was only one God.

The tremendous responsibility of **Moses'** task, his shyness, and his own feeling of unworthiness brought forth a hesitancy and lack of confidence. The Divine answer was "**Who made your tongue?**"

He was then assured that Aaron, his more talkative brother, would serve as his spokesman both to the children of Israel and to the Pharaoh. The promised destination for the Israelites' journey was a "**land rich with milk and honey.**"

Moses returned to Egypt and persuaded the Hebrews to organize for a quick trip from their Egyptian slave drivers. With Aaron, **Moses** informed the Pharaoh that the God of the Hebrews demanded that Pharaoh free God's people.

The Pharaoh refused to obey, bringing upon himself and his people nine terrible plagues (diseases that spread rapidly and can cause death) that **Moses** produced upon Egypt by using the miraculous staff he had received from God as a sign of his authority.

The Egyptians suffered under the plagues of water turned into blood, frogs, gnats, flies, disease to their cattle, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness. Each plague was severe to the Egyptians but left the Israelites untouched.

The tenth plague is now the Hebrew story of Passover. God sent the Angel of Death to kill the firstborn sons of the Egyptians—a proof of His immense strength and power.

The Israelites protected their households by putting lamb's blood on their doorway, so that the Angel of Death would know to pass over their homes. This last plague broke the Pharaoh's resistance and moved him to grant the Hebrews permission to leave immediately.

Moses thus found himself the leader of an undisciplined collection of slaves, Hebrew as well as non-Hebrew, escaping from Egyptian territory toward freedom.

After the exodus, **Moses** led the people to the edge of the Red Sea where God provided another saving miracle by parting the waters and allowing the Hebrews to pass to the other side while drowning the Egyptian army (**Exodus 14**).

Moses brought the people to the foot of Mount Sinai where the Law was given and the Old Covenant established between God and the newly formed nation of Israel (**Exodus 19–24**).

The rest of the book of Exodus and the entire book of Leviticus take place while the Israelites are encamped at the foot of Sinai.

God gives **Moses** detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle—a traveling tent of worship that could be assembled and disassembled for easy portability—and for making the utensils for worship, the priestly garb, and the ark of the covenant, symbolic of God's presence among His people as well as the place where the high priest would perform the annual atonement.

God also gives **Moses** explicit instructions on how God is to be worshipped and guidelines for maintaining purity and holiness among the people.

The book of Numbers sees the Israelites move from Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land, but they refuse to go in when ten out of twelve spies bring back a bad report about Israel's ability to take over the land.

God condemns this generation of Jews to die in the wilderness for their disobedience and subjects them to forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

By the end of the book of Numbers, the next generation of Israelites is back on the borders of the Promised Land and poised to trust God and take it by faith.

The book of Deuteronomy shows **Moses** giving several sermon-type speeches to the people, reminding them of God's saving power and faithfulness.

He gives the second reading of the Law (**Deuteronomy 5**) and prepares this generation of Israelites to receive the promises of God. **Moses** himself is prohibited from entering the land because of his sin at Meribah (**Numbers 20:10-13**).

At the end of the book of Deuteronomy, **Moses'** death is recorded (**Deuteronomy 34**). He climbed Mount Nebo and is allowed to look upon the Promised Land.

Moses was **120 years old when he died**, and the Bible records that his **"eye was undimmed and his vigor unabated"** (**Deuteronomy 34:7**).

The Lord Himself buried **Moses** (**Deuteronomy 34:5–6**), and Joshua took over as leader of the people (**Deuteronomy 34:9**).

Deuteronomy 34:10–12 says, **"Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel."**

The above is only a brief sketch of **Moses'** life and does not talk about his interactions with God, the manner in which he led the people, some of the specific ways in which he foreshadowed Jesus Christ, his centrality to the Jewish faith, his appearance at Jesus' transfiguration, and other details.

But it does give us some framework of the man. So, now, what can we learn from **Moses'** life? **Moses'** life is generally broken down into three 40-year periods.

The first is his life in the court of Pharaoh. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, **Moses** would have had all the perks and privileges of a prince of Egypt. He was instructed **"in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds"** (**Acts 7:22**).

As the plight of the Hebrews began to disturb his soul, **Moses** took it upon himself to be the savior of his people. As Stephen says before the Jewish ruling council, **"[Moses] supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand"** (**Acts 7:25**).

From this incident, we learn that **Moses** was a man of action as well as a man possessed of a hot temper and prone to rash actions. Did God want to save His people? Yes. Did God want to use **Moses** as His chosen instrument of salvation? Yes.

But **Moses**, whether or not he was truly cognizant of his role in the salvation of the Hebrew people, acted rashly and impetuously. He tried to do in his timing what God wanted done in His timing.

The lesson for us is obvious: we must be acutely aware of not only doing God's will, but doing God's will in His timing, not ours. As is the case with so many other biblical examples, when we attempt to do God's will in our timing, we make a bigger mess than originally existed.

Moses needed time to grow and mature and learn to be meek and humble before God, and this brings us to the next chapter in **Moses'** life, his 40 years in the land of Midian.

During this time, **Moses** learned the simple life of a shepherd, a husband, and a father. God took an impulsive and hot-tempered young man and began the process of molding and shaping him into the perfect instrument for God to use.

What can we learn from this time in his life? If the first lesson is to wait on God's timing, the second lesson is to not be idle while we wait on God's timing.

While the Bible doesn't spend a lot of time on the details of this part of **Moses'** life, it's not as if **Moses** were sitting idly by waiting for God's call. He spent the better part of 40 years learning the ways of a shepherd and supporting and raising a family.

These are not trivial things! While we might long for the "**mountain top**" experiences with God, 99 percent of our lives are lived in the valley doing the mundane, day-to-day things that make up a life.

We need to be living for God "**in the valley**" before He will enlist us into the battle. It is often in the seemingly trivial things of life that God trains and prepares us for His call in the next season.

Another thing we see from **Moses** during his time spent in Midian is that, when God finally did call him into service, **Moses** was resistant. The man of action early in his life, **Moses**, now 80 years old, became overly timid.

When called to speak for God, **Moses** said he was "**slow of speech and tongue**" (**Exodus 4:10**). Some commentators believe that **Moses** may have had a speech impediment. Perhaps, but then it would be odd for Stephen to say **Moses** was "**mighty in words and deeds**" (**Acts 7:22**).

Perhaps **Moses** just didn't want to go back into Egypt and fail again. This isn't an uncommon feeling. How many of us have tried to do something (whether or not it was for God) and failed, and then been hesitant to try again?

There are two things **Moses** seemed to have overlooked. One was the obvious change that had occurred in his own life in the intervening 40 years. The other, and more important, change was that God would be with him.

Moses failed at first not so much because he acted impulsively, but because he acted without God. Therefore, the lesson to be learned here is that when you discern a clear call from God, step forward in faith, knowing that God goes with you! Do not be timid, but be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (**Ephesians 6:10**).

The third and final chapter in **Moses'** life is the chapter that Scripture spends the most time chronicling, namely, his role in the redemption of Israel. Several lessons can be gleaned from this chapter of **Moses'** life as well.

First is how to be an effective leader of people. **Moses** essentially had responsibility over two million Hebrew refugees. When things began to wear on him, his father-in-law, Jethro, suggested that he delegate responsibility to other faithful men, a lesson that many people in authority over others need to learn (**Exodus 18**).

We also see a man who was dependent on the grace of God to help with his task. **Moses** was continually pleading on behalf of the people before God. Would that all people in authority would petition God on behalf of those over whom they are in charge! **Moses** was keenly aware of the necessity of God's presence and even requested to see God's glory (**Exodus 33**).

Moses knew that, apart from God, the exodus would be meaningless. It was God who made the Israelites distinct, and they needed Him most.

Moses' life also teaches us the lesson that there are certain sins that will continue to haunt us throughout our lives. The same hot temper that got **Moses** into trouble in Egypt also got him into trouble during the wilderness wanderings.

In the aforementioned incident at Meribah, **Moses** struck the rock in anger in order to provide water for the people. However, he didn't give God the glory, nor did he follow God's precise commands.

Because of this, God forbade him from entering the Promised Land. In a similar manner, we all succumb to certain besetting sins which plague us all our days, sins that require us to be on constant alert.

These are just a handful of practical lessons that we can learn from **Moses'** life. However, if we look at **Moses'** life in light of the overall panoply of Scripture, we see larger theological truths that fit into the story of redemption.

In chapter 11 the author of Hebrews uses **Moses** as an example of faith. We learn that it was by faith that **Moses** refused the glories of Pharaoh's palace to identify with the plight of his people.

The writer of Hebrews says, "**[Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt**" (**Hebrews 11:26**).

Moses' life was one of faith, and we know that without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**). Likewise, it is by faith that we, looking forward to heavenly riches, can endure temporal hardships in this lifetime (**2 Corinthians 4:17-18**).

As mentioned earlier, we also know that **Moses'** life was typological of the life of Christ. Like Christ, **Moses** was the mediator of a covenant.

Again, the author of Hebrews goes to great lengths to demonstrate this point (**Hebrews 3; 8-10**). The Apostle Paul also makes the same points in **2 Corinthians 3**.

The difference is that the covenant that **Moses** mediated was temporal and conditional, whereas the covenant that Christ mediates is eternal and unconditional. Like Christ, **Moses** provided redemption for his people.

Moses delivered the people of Israel out of slavery and bondage in Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land of Canaan.

Christ delivers His people out of bondage and slavery to sin and condemnation and brings them to the Promised Land of eternal life on a renewed earth when Christ returns to consummate the kingdom He inaugurated at His first coming.

Like Christ, **Moses** was a prophet to his people. **Moses** spoke the very words of God to the Israelites just as Christ did (**John 17:8**). **Moses** predicted that the Lord would raise up another prophet like him from among the people (**Deuteronomy 18:15**).

Jesus and the early church taught and believed that **Moses** was speaking of Jesus when he wrote those words (**John 5:46, Acts 3:22, 7:37**). In so many ways, **Moses'** life is a precursor to the life of Christ.

As such, we can catch a glimpse of how God was working His plan of redemption in the lives of faithful people throughout human history. This gives us hope that, just as God saved His people and gave them rest through the actions of **Moses**, so, too, will God save us and give us an eternal Sabbath rest in Christ, both now and in the life to come.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, even though **Moses** never set foot in the Promised Land during his lifetime, he was given an opportunity to enter the Promised Land after his death.

On the mount of transfiguration, when Jesus gave His disciples a taste of His full glory, He was accompanied by two Old Testament figures, **Moses** and Elijah, who represented the Law and the Prophets.

Moses is, this day, experiencing the true Sabbath rest in Christ that one day all Christians will share (**Hebrews 4:9**).

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Exodus 24:4 And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Exodus 33:11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Exodus 33:17 So the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

Exodus 32:19 And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!"

Exodus 34:27 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."



Moses Calls Aaron to the Ministry, by Harry Anderson



The Finding of Moses by Francesco Solimena