



BETHEL CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

A STUDY ON THE LIFE OF
MOSES



INTRODUCTION

According to the Bible, Moses was the prophet who led Israel out of slavery in Egypt and brought them to the outskirts of the Promised Land. The first section of the Bible mentions him 767 times, making him one of the most prominent people in the Old Testament (only David is mentioned more). While Abraham is Israel's ancestor, Moses is often considered its founder for his role in establishing Israel as a nation. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Moses is considered one of the most important prophets to have ever lived.

Moses is also the traditional author of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) even though some portions are co-authored by Joshua and other scribes. He is also credited with writing some Psalms. In four books – Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy you will find a record of Moses' life from birth to death, giving us the opportunity to see him in a wide range of roles. The Pentateuch closes by remarking on how no other prophet in the Old Testament came close to Moses' legacy:



Deuteronomy 34:10-12: *“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, all his officials and 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.”*

Moses is also recognized as the mediator of the Old Covenant and is commonly referred to as the giver of the Law. Moses' role in the Old Testament is a type and shadow of the role Jesus plays in the New Testament.

The name Moses is written in the Hebrew Bible as “Mosheh”, meaning “to draw out.” Mosheh was named such because Pharaoh's daughter “drew him out of the water” (Exodus 2:10).



THE BIG LESSON FROM THE LIFE OF MOSES

Faithful Obedience is the greatest virtue that one can learn from the life of Moses. Moses believed in God. He believed God can deliver the Israelites. He trusted God to use his stammering tongue and a rod to lead millions of people. He believed God could send the plagues and use the death angel to pass over all. He believed God could protect the 2 million people along the way in the wilderness. Many of those beliefs were peculiar, if not completely astonishing. Neither did they appeal to the flesh, nor did they necessarily make sense to the mind. Nevertheless, he believed all that God said.

Moses not only believed God but obeyed God. The Bible knows nothing of a faith that does not result in obedience. It wouldn't have been sufficient for Moses to acknowledge that God's instructions were true. Neither would it have been sufficient for Moses to intend to do what God had commanded. He had to follow all instructions given by God.

Our motivation to be faithful and obedient to Him comes from our love for Him. Love is at the centre of God's authority over us. The author of Hebrews offers this summary of Moses' life: *"He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible"* (Hebrews 11:26–27).

THE TORAH

(5 BOOKS OF MOSES)

The Hebrew Bible is generally divided into three sections known as the Law (or Torah), the Prophets, and the Writings.

The Torah consists of the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. That is why it is also referred to as the Pentateuch, which in Greek means “*five books*.” These books are associated with Moses, which is why they are sometimes referred to as “*the Law of Moses*.” They narrate the stories of creation, the patriarchs, and the formation of the nation of Israel, and sets up the laws by which the nation should live because of its covenant relationship with God.

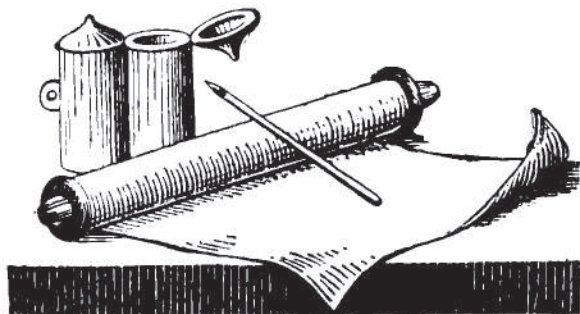
GENESIS tells the story of creation, the fall of human beings, and its consequences. It also contains the start of the redemptive plan of God as He calls Abraham and makes promises to him and his descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

EXODUS describes the Israelites’ slavery in Egypt and their deliverance by God through Moses. It tells of the covenant between the Israelites and Yahweh in the wilderness of Sinai, the presentation of the Ten Commandments, and God’s leading of the people through the wilderness towards the land of Canaan.

LEVITICUS focuses on details of the Israelites' worship, particularly the different sacrifices and offerings; laws and regulations regarding purity, and presents the rewards for obedience and the penalties of disobedience. How can God's people, who have proven to be selfish and rebellious, be reconciled to the holy God? That is what the book of Leviticus is all about—how God graciously provides a way for sinful, corrupt people to live in His holy presence.

NUMBERS carries forward the story of Israel after their exodus from slavery in Egypt as the people of Israel end their year-long stay at Mount Sinai and head into the wilderness towards the land God promised Abraham. The book's storyline is designed according to the stages of their journey – Mount Sinai --> the wilderness of Paran --> the plains of Moab --> and the Promised Land.

DEUTERONOMY contains Moses' farewell speech to the people. He reminds them of their history of slavery, their deliverance, and the covenant that was made at Sinai. He encourages them to obey the Lord and observe all His laws if they wish to enjoy the Promised Land.



OVERVIEW OF MOSES' TIMELINE

(0-40 years)

MOSES AND HIS FORMATIVE YEARS

- *The Miracle baby and God's providence*

Exodus 2:1-2,10: *“And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. ²So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months... ¹⁰And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So, she called his name Moses, saying, “Because I drew him out of the water.”*

The unseen forces of God's providence had a great influence on Moses' life. Right from the beginning, a struggle between good and evil swirled around the cradle of a little boy. Note the remarkable fact that all the persons in this narrative are anonymous. Neither do we know the names of Moses' mother, father, and sister at this particular point, nor are we introduced to the daughter of Pharaoh, who played such a significant role in the story. The reason is not ignorance (*as the names of the parents and the sister of Moses are revealed in Exodus 6:20*). It is deliberate. The writer keeps them in the shadow, as it were, to shine the spotlight on the primary actor in the drama — God, Himself.

Moses' mother hid her child for three months, bravely opposing the edict of the king. When the writer gives his catalogue of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the parents of Moses are there with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Gideon, David, and Samuel. The anonymous ones are now brought under the spotlight, for "*by faith*" they hid Moses for three months, because "*they were not afraid of the king's command*" (Heb. 11:23).

When she could hide him no longer, she took a boat—an ark or a chest made out of bulrushes—waterproofed it with pitch, and then in an ultimate act of commitment, put it at the river's edge, in the reeds, and settled back in faith to wait for God to act. Here is an interesting lesson from the lives of Moses' parents. When we have done our best in any task, situation, or circumstance, we can wait on God trusting that He is in control.

Around that little basket - that frail ark made out of straw, half lost among the reeds - was the mighty shield of God's purpose. Every human act and every circumstance that followed was designed to serve God's purpose. The reeds prevented the basket from being carried away by the mighty stream. The princess came for her bath at just the right hour. Her idle glance went in precisely the right direction, and the cry of the child came at just the right moment. There was the innocent but brilliant diplomacy of Moses' sister, and there was the shelter of a happy mother's breast as the child was returned to her.

Then there was the safety of the palace. You see, all these and a hundred more minute, but important things combined to paint a picture of God's providential design, through which His secret purpose was being carried out. Probably the most amazing scene in the story was the arrival of the Princess at the precise hour. What a role she played in God's unfolding drama, providing the setting for Moses to be raised in the palace, educated, and prepared to be the liberator of his people.

Shouldn't this convince us that no matter what the circumstances, despite the many Pharaohs that may rise against us, and even in the face of the many forces Satan may direct against us, God's will is going to be accomplished eventually?

- **Growing up in the palace but having a heart for his people**

There is a giant leap in Moses' biography—from the time he was about three months old when he went into the palace (v. 10) until "*Moses was grown*" (v. 11). What does "*grown*" mean as a description of Moses here? It's more than chronological and physical, I believe. "*When Moses was grown... he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.*" (Exodus 2:11)

It's easy to be a part of the oppressive system, and not let it get to us. But Moses was “grown” now, and when he looked upon the burdens of the people, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. He intervened and killed the Egyptian. It was an act of undisciplined anger. We applaud Moses' awareness of his people's suffering, but there is no justification for murder; to debate whether or not the murder was within the will of God is to miss the point of the narrative. What is important here is Moses' identification with his people, the Hebrews, although he had lived in the palace and had been trained as an Egyptian. This reveals Moses' sense of justice, his courage, and his willingness to live and act decisively.

There's an interesting twist of irony in the record of this incident. On the day following the murder, which Moses thought was a secret, he intervened in a fight between two Hebrews. Yet, he was impotent in the situation. He had no influence. Worse than that, he was scornfully challenged: “*Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?*” This rejection is the first statement of a continuing theme of Moses' life: although he constantly sought to do good and to follow God's leading, he faced the brunt of scorn, ridicule, and murmuring. He was often rejected by those he was seeking to liberate.

After the conversation with the Israelites, Moses fled Egypt. He was afraid that Pharaoh would find out about his sin, and that his own life would be taken.

Exodus 2:15- *“But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.”*

That was Moses’ entry into Midian. Though few would have believed it, the providence of God still followed Moses; for God, during this exile from Egypt, was preparing Moses for a heroic task. Moses, himself, was probably unaware of this. Yet, during this period, God revealed Himself to Moses in a fuller way. For forty years in Midian, Moses was a part of the household of a priest named Jethro who later became his father-in-law.

The Midianites were already worshipers of Yahweh God when Moses arrived to live among them, and this added additional religious undergirding to that which Moses had received from his mother when he was a child. Is that not another witness to the overshadowing providence of God?

(40-80 years)

MOSES AND HIS SILENT YEARS

In a matter of few verses, forty years had elapsed. A gap in the story does not mean that nothing was happening. Moses moved from being a celebrity to living in obscurity - from being a prince in Egypt, he became a shepherd to his father-in-law’s sheep. Midian became his training ground in humility. This was an essential quality he would need to be an effective leader of Israel in the wilderness.

Interestingly, in the biblical world, the role of kings was often compared to shepherding. Kings were shepherds of their people. Israelite kings were certainly seen in that light. When Nathan the prophet confronted King David over his abuse of power, he expressed his criticism through a parable about a rich man stealing a poor man's sheep (2 Samuel 12). In Psalm 23 God, Himself, is portrayed as the Good Shepherd. So, Moses' years of shepherding were possibly nurturing skills of leadership in him. Numbers 12:3 rightly describes Moses' transformation into a person who was the humblest among all the people on the face of the earth.



The silence of God does not mean that God is **unconcerned or inactive**. Even in silence, God is at work on behalf of His people, and Moses was to learn this when he was confronted by God in the burning bush. (Remember the two most agonizing experiences of Jesus' life: Gethsemane and the Cross. In both of those experiences, our Lord was greeted by the silence of God. It is doubtful whether God could ever have been any closer to His Son than on those two occasions).

In **Exodus 2:2-25**, we see the heart of God during the silent period. In the four action words listed below, we have a clear picture of a God who loves, cares, and intervenes in the lives of His people.

- God hears: *“God heard their groaning.”*
- God remembers: *“God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”*
- God sees: *“God looked upon the children of Israel.”*
- God knows: *“God acknowledged them.”*

God had not forgotten His people; neither had He forgotten Moses, who would be their deliverer. The Pharaoh who had oppressed the Israelites so cruelly had died after a long reign. This paved the way for Moses’ return to Egypt.

(80 – 120 years)

MOSES AND HIS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

• Moses and the Burning Bush

Moses was old. He was now eighty years of age. He had settled into a shepherd’s life in Midian, content with the family of Jethro the priest. Nothing exciting was going on for Moses. He was occupied with mundane work. Exodus 3:1, *“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.”* He was just doing his work—nothing out of the ordinary—when God appeared.

We should not be preoccupied with the burning bush itself, but fix our minds on what it teaches. And remember, when God wants to reveal Himself, even an old bush will do!

Lessons from the burning bush:

1. The greatest lesson from the burning bush is that our God appears in the ordinary, probably when you least expect Him. God always gets our attention before He presents Himself to us. And the way He gets our attention is varied, miraculously varied. For Moses it was the burning bush, for Elijah it was the still small voice, for Isaiah it was a heavenly vision. God is always looking for an opportunity to present Himself to us, which is contingent on giving Him our attention.

Horeb or Sinai

Horeb and Sinai are synonymous. While leading the flock of his father-in-law, Moses came to the back of the desert, and to Horeb, the mountain of God. At this place Moses received his call to deliver the people out of bondage, here he would return after their deliverance, and on this mountain, he would receive the tablets of the Law.

Note two power-packed truths here. (1) God called Moses by name. This is a personal God with whom we are dealing. He looks, He sees, He knows. (2) God identified Himself so that Moses would know that he was not meeting an unknown God. The One who spoke was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of our fathers who is gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and faithful to uphold His covenant with us.

2. The burning bush as described in Exodus 3:2 is a theophany, the appearance of God in a form that is visible to man. The bush itself was most likely some kind of thorn bush, and the fire burning the bush was in the form of the angel of the Lord who “*appeared to him [Moses] in flames of fire*” (Exodus 3:2).



3. This is the first time the Bible uses the word “*holy*” in reference to God (verse 5). At the burning bush, God revealed His holiness in a way it had never been revealed before. There are several reasons why God revealed Himself to Moses out of the burning bush. First, God reveals Himself as a fire because it is an image of His holiness. All through the Bible, fire is used as a picture of the purifying and refining quality of God’s holiness. Though God has revealed Himself as one who lives in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16), the burning bush symbolized His intent not to consume or destroy His people, but to be their saviour, to lead them out of bondage in Egypt and into the Promised Land.

4. Additionally, God disclosed His name to Moses: “God said to Moses, **‘I AM WHO I AM.** This is what you are to say to the Israelites: **“I AM has sent me to you”**” (Exodus 3:14). There are several reasons why God did this. The Egyptians had innumerable gods with many different names. Moses wanted to know God’s name so the Hebrew people would know exactly who had sent him to them. God called Himself **I AM**, a name that describes His eternal power and unchangeable character. **“I AM THAT I AM,”** declares God to be self-existent, without beginning, without end. This is also expressed in the term **“Yahweh,”** meaning **“I Am the One Who Is.”** It is the most significant name for God in the Old Testament. By identifying Himself as **“I AM,”** God was declaring that He always exists in the immediate now. He isn’t bound by time like we are. There was never a time when God wasn’t. He has no fixed point when He was born or brought into being. He has no beginning or end. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last (Revelation 22:13).

• **Moses and his Excuses**

Exodus 3:11- *“But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”*

In response to God’s call, Moses makes a series of excuses.

Excuse 1: Not Capable to Do the Task

Excuse 2: Do not know God’s Name

Excuse 3: People Will Not Believe

Excuse 4: Inability to Speak Eloquently

Having reviewed these excuses of Moses, there are two truths we can learn. The first truth is this: *In Christian life, in our response to and relationship with God, most of us do not aspire for too much, we settle for too little.* So we prefer to be onlookers of God's activity in history, spectators and recipients, but not actors and participants. Let's remind ourselves of the words of Jesus in **John 14:12**- "*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*"

The second truth is that: *Only when we know we can't do it, can we do it by the grace and power of God.* The bottom line of all this was that Moses was saying to God, "*Who am I? I can't do what You're asking me to do.*" That's the point to which God wants to bring us. That is His way of bringing us to the place where we know we're completely dependent upon Him. "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2 Cor. 12:10).

Dwight L. Moody has been quoted as saying, "*Moses spent forty years in Pharaoh's court thinking he was somebody, forty years in the desert learning that he was nobody, and forty years showing what God can do with a somebody who found out he was a nobody.*"

• Moses and his Testing of Faith

Testing is part of how God relates to His chosen ones. When God selects someone to represent Him (and therefore, to receive His blessing), He gives them opportunities in life that He doesn't give to other people. Those opportunities automatically become tests to know if they trust God's word and wisdom or do what is good in their own eyes. The history of testing goes way back to the Garden of Eden. The essential question remains unchanged: *Is it your free will or God's will?*

The Faith of Moses was tested by Pharaoh.

Moses' faith was tested in his confrontation with the most powerful of all living men in his day. Pharaoh's response to Moses' message was, *"Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go"* (Ex.5:2). The work of Yahweh would be presented to Pharaoh time and time again, but the pride of Pharaoh would keep his heart hardened. Pharaoh responded by making the burdens of the people even heavier. He assumed that by increasing their labour he would make them forget any "foolish" notions about freedom.

The Faith of Moses tested by his own people.

To be rejected by Pharaoh was one thing, but to be abandoned by his own people was another. Moses took the message of redemption to his people *"but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage"* (Ex 6:9)

People turned against Moses and Aaron and they spewed hatred towards them: “*You have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us*” (Ex.6:21). Moses does what we find him doing over and over again in the face of personal bitterness and oppression—he turns to the Lord.



In the midst of testing, we must have a yielding heart and a listening ear to follow God’s voice. God was on the side of Moses and Aaron, and Pharaoh was going to learn that the population of the Israelites or their stature did not matter. As long as they had the Lord on their side, they were the majority. With God alongside, Moses would be “*as God*” to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1). Moses was not acting in his own strength, and the power of God was visible in him—so much so that Pharaoh, who boasted, “*I do not know the Lord,*” would tremble before Moses - the Lord’s agent.

- **Moses and the Power of God**

1. Plagues – Revelation of God's power over Egypt

Plagues over Egypt testify to the power of the Lord's redemptive action and provides evidence that nothing is too hard for the Lord, not even the deliverance of an enslaved nation from Egypt. The plagues were more than crucial events in the Exodus experience. They provided a continual affirmation of God's power, which imparted abiding confidence to succeeding generations.

First, they provided a public manifestation of the mighty power of the Lord God. **Exodus 9:16** says, (*"But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth"*). After the third plague, the magicians themselves acknowledged that *'This is the finger of God'* " (Exodus 8:19)

Second, the plagues were a divine visitation of wrath and punishment upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their cruel treatment of the Hebrews. Pharaoh himself admitted this: *"Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, 'I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you' "* (Ex.10:16).

Third, the plagues were a judgment from God upon the Gods of Egypt and demonstrated that the Lord was above all Gods.

10 PLAGUES

Jehovah God vs gods of Egypt



PLAGUE 1: WATER TO BLOOD Exodus 7:14–25

The Egyptians were also able to turn water to blood, including the death of the fish and a smell that prohibited even trying to drink the water. Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

The Nile was the source of Egypt's power. There are several gods in their pantheon that draw life from the river.

Khnum was the guardian of the river's source.

Hapi was the god of annual flooding of the Nile and the lord of the fish.

Osiris had the Nile as his bloodstream.



PLAGUE 7: HAIL Exodus 9:13–35

This plague affected the agriculture and livestock that was left in the field. Such a storm of hail was unique to Egypt.

Nut was the goddess of the sky. Her father Shu, god of the wind and air, was a calming god.



PLAGUE 8: LOCUSTS Exodus 10:1–20

This plague would be told to Pharaoh's sons and grandsons, serving the purpose of showing God's power for generations.

Neper and Nepri were the god and goddess of grain. Set was the god of disorder.



PLAGUE 2: FROGS Exodus 8:1–8:15

The Egyptians also produced frogs. Piles of dead frogs filled the land with a foul odor.

Heqt was an Egyptian goddess with the head of a frog.



PLAGUE 3: GNATS OR LICE Exodus 8:16–19

The gnats or lice came up from the dust of the earth. The Egyptian priests could not duplicate this miracle. They declared, "This is the finger of God."

Geb was the god over the dust of the earth.



PLAGUE 4: FLIES Exodus 8:20–32

This was the first plague that affected only the Egyptians.

Khepri had the head of a beetle and also moved the sun.



PLAGUE 5: SICK CATTLE Exodus 9:1–7

God continued to distinguish between the Israelites and the Egyptians. This plague affected only the Egyptian herds.

Hathor was a fertility goddess who was often depicted with the head or horns of a bull and sometimes as a bull wearing the symbols of Hathor.



PLAGUE 6: BOILS Exodus 9:8–12

This was the first plague to affect the body directly. God made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Egyptian priests were unable to appear in court.

Isis was the goddess of health and Imhotep was the god of healing.



PLAGUE 9: DARKNESS Exodus 10:21–29

It was so dark for three days that the darkness could be felt.

Ra, the god of the sun, was the most worshipped and revered god in Egypt after the Pharaoh. Jehovah God showed He had power even over the mightiest of the Egyptian gods.



PLAGUE 10: DEATH OF FIRSTBORN Exodus 12:29–36

Establishes the Jewish Passover festival.

This plague was a judgment on all Egyptian gods, including Pharaoh himself. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh had ordered the killing of Israelite babies, and now the firstborn of all Egypt was killed.

the plagues of Egypt are well known, but a deep study reveals that each was a direct challenge to the various Egyptian's gods & goddesses. The plagues affected the Egyptians' physical senses as well as their hearts with reminders that Jehovah God was far superior to any of their gods. He exercised power at will while the Egyptians gods remained helpless against Him.

2. *Passover initiates the exodus from Egypt*

God had dealt with Pharaoh through the plagues—sending nine plagues of judgment against Pharaoh’s rebellion. It was time for the tenth and final one. The death angel was to claim the firstborn of all the land. The way of deliverance from the death angel was to do what the Lord called them to do; that was, to slay a lamb without blemish and mark their households with the blood of that lamb.

What Calvary is to the Christian, the Passover was to the Jew. The intimate connection between the two must never be forgotten because the Passover informs Christians about the heart of our faith. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples and announced to them that He was the Passover Lamb to be slain for the sins of the whole world.

The lamb is the clearest representative type of Christ in the Old and New Testaments. The beloved disciple John called Jesus “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8). John the Baptist designated Him “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

The practice continues today as faithful Jews remember. “*And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households’*” (Exodus 12:26–27).

3. Red Sea Crossing – God’s deliverance for His people

All of us know this story well. Moses extends his rod, the waters of the sea separate, and the Israelites walk through on dry land. Then when the Egyptians, in hot pursuit, attempt to cross over through the highway in the sea, the waters close in, and Pharaoh’s horses and charioteers are drowned.



The story of the Red Sea is not recorded simply to tell us what happened to the Hebrews long ago. It is also a lesson for us. At the Red Sea was where fears were confronted and defeated when the Israelites heeded God’s command and moved forward in faith towards the Promised Land. Now, the focus of the story is not the drowned Egyptian soldiers. Rather, the story symbolizes the death of evil—God’s victory in “*the struggle between good and evil*”.

Exodus is a symbol of Easter. Here is God’s ultimate act of both love and power, shattering the tomb, pulling out the fangs of death, and announcing the triumph of eternal life and a new beginning.

• Moses and the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-3 - *“And God spoke all these words: ²“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

The Ten Commandments (Hebrew expression is called a decalogue, i.e., 10 words – Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4) are ten principles for living in harmony with God and other human beings. The first four describe our relationship with God. The final six are concerned with our relationships with other people.

The law is an expression of the Lawgiver’s heart and character. Before we say, *“I don’t care about the laws”* or *“It’s daunting to go through the list of do’s and don’ts”*, we must understand that the commandments not only show us what God wants; they show us what God is like. They highlight His honour, His worth, and His majesty, and tell us what matters to God.



THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

I

You shall
have
no gods
before me.

II

You shall
not make
idols.

III

You shall
not take the
name of the
Lord your
God in
vain

IV

Remember
the sabbath
day, to
keep it
holy

V

Honor your
father and
your
mother

VI

You shall
not
murder.

VII

You shall
not
commit
adultery

VIII

You shall
not steal

IX

You shall
not bear
false
witness

X

You shall
not covet

The Ten Commandments were not given so that we could earn our salvation. Some people view Christianity as a rule-based religion, wherein the love of God and His saving grace are dependent on our adherence to these rules. That's not what happened in the story of the exodus. The Israelites were an oppressed people, and God said, "I hear your cry. I will save you because I love you. And when you are saved, free, and forgiven, I'm going to give you a new way to live." Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). All our doing is only because of what He has first done for us.

The way to find moral instruction is not by listening to your gut or your feelings but by listening to God. If we want to know right from wrong, if we want to know how to live the good life, if we want to know how to live in a way that blesses our friends and neighbours, we would be wise to do things God's way, which means paying careful attention to the Ten Commandments.

There are many more laws in the Old Testament. But these first ten are foundational for the rest. The Ten Commandments are like the preamble to the Constitution, and what follows are the regulatory statutes.

The reception of the two tablets of the commandments was just one part of the story. When Moses got down from the mountain and saw people dancing wildly around the golden calf, he was enraged.

He threw the tablets on the ground and smashed them. He then took the golden calf which they had made, and he burned it in the fire and ground it into powder and put it in the



water, and made the people of Israel drink it. Then he confronted Aaron, his brother, and offered the whole crowd an opportunity to be faithful or not. What a dramatic picture it was when Moses went to the gate of the camp and stood there before the people and shouted: *“Whoever is on the LORD’S side—come to me!”* (Ex.32:26).

Moses again prayed to God, confessing the sins of the people, and pleading for God’s forgiveness. He laid his life on the line in Ex.32:32: *“Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”* Moses had to spend another 40 days on the mountain as the Lord commanded to rewrite the commandments. The first set of tablets, inscribed by the finger of God, (Exodus 31:18) were smashed by Moses when he was enraged by the sight of the golden calf (Exodus 32:19). The second set of tablets was later chiselled out by Moses and rewritten by God (Exodus 34:1). The second set of tablets was later chiselled out by Moses and rewritten by God (Exodus 34:1).

Moses and Wilderness Provisions

Deuteronomy 8:2-4- *“Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.”*

While Israel was journeying through the wilderness, God never left their side. He protected and provided for 2 million people over forty years while they journeyed through the wilderness.

Here are **seven** major provisions during the wilderness journey:

1. Pillar of fire at night and a cloud by day

Exodus 13:21 - *“The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.”*

2. Rock that produced water

1 Corinthians 10:3-4 - *“They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.”*

3. Manna and Quail

Psalms 105:40- *“They asked, and He brought quail,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.”*

4. Clothes and shoes did not wear out.

Deuteronomy 8:4- *“Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years”*

5. Health did not deteriorate.

Psalms 105:37- *“He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”*

6. God protected them from all their enemies.

Deuteronomy 20:4- *“For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”*

7. Above all God’s presence was in their midst

Exodus 33:14-16- *“The Lord replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”¹⁵Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”*

Any mention of the wilderness generation almost immediately calls to mind **Israel's grumbling and lack of trust in the Lord**. In the midst of all these provisions, Israelites rebelled against Moses and God at various occasions in their journey to the Promised Land.

Numbers 11-21 contains seven narratives about Israel's rebellion as they journey through the wilderness. These narratives tell you a great deal about the dark side of humanity, but also the covenant faithfulness of God (even when the Israelites don't know it). Every story to follow begins with a moment of Israelite insurrection:

1. *"And the people complained about their hardships."* (Num. 11:1) *"And the rabble among them had greedy desires... and said 'Who will give us meat?'"* (Num. 11:4)
2. *"And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses."* (Num. 12:1)
3. *"And all the community raised their voice... and grumbled against Moses and Aaron."* (Num. 14:1-2)
4. *"And Korah... with Nathan and Abiram... with two hundred and fifty leaders of the community... rose up against Moses."* (Num. 16:1-3)
5. *"And the entire community grumbled against Moses and Aaron."* (Num. 16:41)
6. *"And the people quarrelled with Moses."* (Num. 20:3)
7. *"And the people spoke against God and Moses."* (Num. 21:5)

“The Wilderness remains a time of testing but at the same time, it is an opportunity to allow God to lead us through it. It is not hard to trust God when all goes well. It is in the Wilderness that we come to depend upon God for our daily bread and to learn that “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4.4; Deut. 8.3).”

These stories are an honest portrayal of how you and I relate to God in the midst of difficult circumstances. They witnessed the ten plagues and the defeat of Pharaoh in the sea. Yet, these memories quickly faded in the face of hunger, thirst, and an uncertain future. Even as the Israelites continue to grumble and wonder if God is really

with them, Yahweh blesses them and promises future deliverance and blessing in the form of the coming Messiah.

Because of Israelites continual conflict for water, in Numbers 20, in anger and frustration Moses disobeys God by striking the rock to produce water instead of speaking to it as commanded by God (Numbers 20:8). The Rock still produced water but God was unhappy with Moses and was forbidden to enter the Promised Land.

The point of this story is not for us to walk on eggshells with Yahweh because He might punish our smallest mistake. Rather, it is about Moses' intentional choice to ignore God's word. Remember, Moses is not an average person. He's God's chosen representative. The closer you are to Yahweh (both metaphorically and, in Moses' and Aaron's case, literally), the higher the stakes of responsibility.

Moses as an intercessor

Deuteronomy 9:25-26- *"Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD ; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. 26 Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: 'O LORD GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'"*

- *Moses was passionate about God and His people*

Moses is one of the most notable examples of an intercessor in all of scripture. He stood before God on behalf of the people of Israel regularly. **Exodus 33:11** tells us that Yahweh *"used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."* Of all the Hebrews, no one had this type of relationship with the Lord Most High.

When God disclosed to Moses what was happening at the foot of the mountain and that He intended to destroy the nation, the response of Moses was immediate. *"But Moses sought the favour of the Lord His God."* God had offered to make Moses a nation. He had said to Moses, *"Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."* Many men would have grabbed this opportunity. Who could ask for more? It was an opportunity to have his own nation, one bearing his name and not the name of Israel. However, Moses had an undeniable love for the Lord, which would not allow him to grab that opportunity.

- *Moses' interest was in God's reputation rather than his own.*

It is of interest that the first concern of Moses was with the reputation of God. He did not want the reputation of God to be spoiled before the Egyptians. His strong-knit relationship with God caused him to be more concerned about God's reputation and His promises. This is basic in the life of an intercessor. More than anything else, an intercessor has a passion for God. Interestingly, Jesus placed the passion for God right at the start of the disciple's prayer, which we are taught to pray. The first point that is addressed in the Lord's Prayer is with regard to the Lord's name, His kingdom, and will. There is to be a love and passion for the Lord God Himself in the heart of an intercessor.

- *Moses knew that God's plan for the people was greater than the people's sinful actions.*

These people about whom he cared so much had given him a hard time ever since he returned to Egypt. They had accused him, ridiculed him, and been generally uncooperative with him from Day One. Nevertheless, Moses did not try to get rid of these people. Instead, he saw them not as just the wayward people that they were, but also as the people of God. They were his brothers and sisters in a covenant with God. Because of this, he cared so much that he immediately went into the presence of God to seek grace for them.

Moses and the Tabernacle

Exodus 25:8-9- *“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.”*

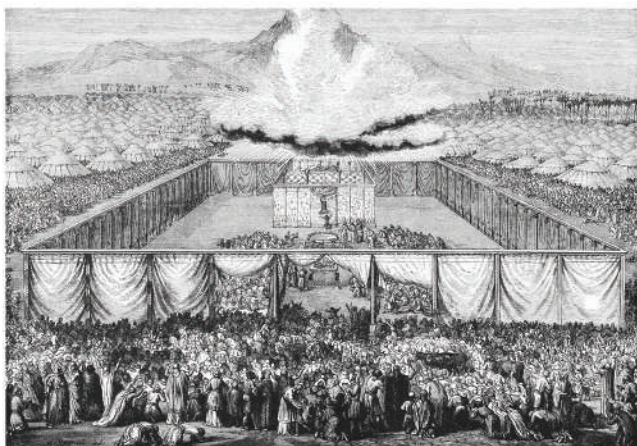
God gave Moses very specific instructions for building a tabernacle - a really big tent that the Israelites could take with them. Around 14 chapters of Exodus are dedicated to explaining the pattern and materials that were to be used in the construction of the tabernacle. It would serve as a place where God could meet with His people and assure them of His presence in their midst.



The author of the book of Hebrews describes the dwelling as a copy and a shadow of what is in heaven (Hebrews 8:1–5). It’s believed that Moses saw the dwelling of God, which is in the realm of God. Similarly, when the Lord Jesus taught us how to pray, He ensured that it captured the spirit of a similar challenge: *“on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matt. 6:10).

So, Moses gathered all the Israelites together. He asked them to bring materials. God gave two men, Bezalel and Oholiab, special skills for building and creating things. Bezalel, Oholiab, and all the other skilled craftsmen came together to build the tabernacle for God. They built the tabernacle just as God had instructed.

Every part had its special purpose and was made just as God had said. When the time came, God told Moses how to set up the tabernacle. He told him how to anoint the tabernacle so that it would be holy. God had led the Israelites from a cloud, and now the cloud covered the tabernacle. God used it as a sign for the people: When the cloud covered the tabernacle, the people were to stay where they were. When the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, the Israelites were to move and take the tabernacle with them. The cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle during the day, and a fire was inside the cloud at night. All of the Israelites could see it as they travelled.



The Lord Jesus is the New Testament fulfilment of the Old Testament tabernacle. John 1:14 says that “*the Word became flesh and took up residence among us (or He ‘tabernacled’ among us)*.” The Lord Jesus made His dwelling with people and gave us His Spirit to dwell in our lives.

Moses established the Priesthood of Aaron as a mediator between God and man in the tabernacle and later in the temple. The tribe of Levi bore the responsibility of the services of the priests and the Levites, focusing on the offering of sacrifices and their access to the altar providing mediation for the people with God.

• **Moses and the Glory of God**

Exodus 33:18- “*Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”*”

To say Moses had some great experiences with God would be an understatement. The experiences themselves were breath taking - the burning bush, the 10 plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea, God’s presence on Mount Sinai, and provisions along the wilderness journey. And yet, what is most amazing in Exodus 33:18, is that Moses, after all these experiences with God, still wants more of Him! It seems the more Moses experienced God, the more he wanted Him. This is not a typical statement. For most of us, we are content with the little relationship that we have with God. Yet, Moses after encountering God in such marvellous ways, longed deeply to see more of God's glory.

God compassionately responded to Moses' request in **Exodus 33:19-20**- *"And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

God graciously responded to Moses. He told Moses that He would show him His glory, but He would not show him His face: *"And you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."* This is a warning that there are limitations to revelation. God is not limited, but we are. This idea is expressed throughout the Old Testament (Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Deut. 4:33; Judg. 6:22-23; 13:22; Is. 6:5). No one, not even Moses, could know all about God. Even though He has revealed Himself fully in Jesus Christ, there is a sense of hiddenness that would be revealed only when we journey with Him.



While Moses was standing in the crevice of the rock, the Lord passed by and Moses sensed His presence. But what Moses saw was not nearly as important as what he heard. Because, as the Lord passed by, He said to Moses:

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6–7).

Moses’ glimpse of God becomes an answer to the question of the ages: Who is God, and what is God like? In mysterious ways, Moses had

Psalm 103:7, “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.”

gotten more than a glimpse. He had heard God’s voice, and in the depths of his soul, he knew what John understood centuries later after being tutored by Christ: God is love.

The glory of God is only to be seen in the face of Christ Jesus; and on the top of Tabor, Moses saw the Son of God transfigured (Matthew 17:1-9). In the transfiguration, God showed Moses His full glory; for he was then made able to behold it. Paul mentions the same glory of God that is revealed in the hearts of His disciples. **2 Corinthians 4:6**, *“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”*

Moses and his Final Days

Deuteronomy 34:1-7- *“Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, ²all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. ⁴Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” ⁵So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. ⁶And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. ⁷Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.”*

Moses was living out his last few days on earth and he knew it. His blessings and exhortations to the people he led for forty years were bestowed on them. His last words held a special significance for Israel. The whole of Deuteronomy is a reminder for a potential future generation to avoid the mistakes of their fathers. Moses, the great communicator, endeavoured in his last speech to get Israel to live right after he was gone.

He climbed Mount Nebo alone. His ministry ended as it began—in the very presence of God. He gazed at the land which he could not enter. As he viewed it, there must have been a deep-seated joy, for he had set eyes on his lifelong goal. Moses then “*died... according to the word of the LORD*” (Deut. 34:5). God arranged for the private burial of Moses; “*no one knows his grave to this day*” (Deut. 34:6). The beauty of Moses’ death lies not in the physical details of his death but in the fact that he was with God in that hour of transition. The God who called him to lead the people of Israel was with him even in his dying hour.

● CONCLUSION ●

Moses was a great man of God, and many lessons can be learned from his ministry as a prophet. The words “*there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses*” encourage the reader to reflect on this leader’s greatness.

Moses holds a unique position among prophets; he was a spiritual pioneer. Moses was the first to proclaim the attributes of God. Moses was the first to give us God’s law. And he was the first to give a plan of education in the family – to teach the children and their children the laws of God. Moses was unequalled in performing signs and wonders. He displayed awesome power among the people of Israel.

Moses accomplished God's work not through his intellect or his education or influence but rather by supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit. The greatest lesson for all is God's work cannot be accomplished through the power of the flesh, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Another noteworthy character of Moses is that he never used his spiritual gifts for any of his personal gains or for his selfish motives. He could have used his power when people rebelled against him or to have his own interests but he always left his defense to God. He became the humblest man on the whole planet who had an intimate relationship with God. Thus, the character of Moses as a mediator and intercessor for God's people points to his greatness.

The greatness of Moses stood the test of time. The prophets who followed Moses pointed forward to a new covenant. It was in the formation of the new covenant that at last "*a prophet like Moses*" appeared again, but He was more than a prophet, He was the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ (**Hebrews 3:1–6**).



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