

MOSES

I.

Introduction

The story of Moses is the story of a man who was transformed from someone who trusted in his own strength, into someone who learned to put all his trust in God. Only then this new transformed Moses was able to do, with God's help, such a gigantic task as to lead a slave nation from Egyptian captivity and, through God's laws and God's power, transform it into God's nation that was ready to take possession of the land God once promised to give Abraham's descendants. Let's examine the story of Moses to see how it fits into the grand picture of God's plan to save mankind through Jesus Christ, as well as to see the lessons we can take from Moses and the Israelites for our Christian lives. Let's also notice how many things pertaining to Moses apply to Jesus, and how many things pertaining to the Israelites apply to us.

II.

Religion of Egypt

We will begin in Egypt. Egypt was first settled by the descendants of Ham. Ham was one of Noah's sons. A famous Egyptian archaeologist, Sir Flinders Petrie, said that the original religion of Egypt was monotheistic. Despite the flaws in his moral character, Ham must have taught his children about one true God. That's not surprising. Anyone who could be in the ark and could see God's judgement over evil mankind would teach his children about the true God. However, as years passed, generations came who were not taught about the true God. These generations of Egyptians formed tribes, and each tribe developed its own tribal religion with its own tribal god, represented by an animal. Thus Egyptians had many gods represented by animals, especially a bull, cow, vulture, falcon, hawk, crocodile, ape, frog, serpent, and cat.

III.

Hebrews in Egypt, the rise and fall of Moses

East of the delta of the Nile River, in the land of Goshen, which was the most fertile part of Egypt, God, through His providence, placed Jacob's descendants, called Hebrews, to protect them from the world wide famine. This also provided them favorable living conditions where they could grow into a large nation, which was one of the promises God made to Abraham. - Genesis 47:5-6 While the Hebrews were in Egypt, God blessed them and through them, blessed Egypt, which grew to be a World Empire.

God had a purpose for the Hebrews. They did not know about that, but they knew that God promised to their forefather Abraham that his descendants would receive Canaan for their land, and some of them even believed that God would fulfilled His promise. Three hundred years had passed after the death of Joseph when Moses was born. The Egypt he was born into was quite a different place from the Egypt of Joseph's time, for his nation was enslaved by the dynasty of Egyptian kings who did not know Joseph. Moses' life was in peril from his birth. Yet through God's providence Moses became a very prominent person in Egypt. Moses was adopted by a daughter of the very same king who sought to destroy him. Yet he did not lose touch with his blood family and through them, with the religion of his nation. He was educated in all the wisdom of Egypt and became mighty in words and deeds. - Acts 7:18-22

Although Moses was brought up as Egyptian royalty, he did not forget about his nation and the God of his forefathers. He was 40 years old, at the peak of his strength, and he believed that God wanted to use him to save his nation. All his life so far indicated that God had some purpose for him: he lived although he ought to be dead, he belonged to the king's house although he was born in a humble home, and he was free although his kinsmen were slaves. Since Joseph's time, there was no one from his nation like Moses. Who else could save his nation from slavery, if not Moses?

I can imagine that Moses compared his elevated position with the misery of his kinsmen when pondering about God's purpose for him to save his nation. The truth was that God did have such a purpose for him. From a human perspective it was a gigantic task. Moses knew that the Egyptian king would not let the Hebrew cheap slave labor force simply go away without a fight. He knew very well how strong the enemy was and how weak his nation was. In order to save his nation he would have to do three impossible things: 1] unite the Hebrews under his leadership, 2] persuade them to rebel against the king of the most powerful world empire, and 3] face a professional, well trained, armed and equipped army of that king with an untrained, unarmed, unequipped nation of slaves. Moses, with all his own human strength and all the wisdom of Egypt, was not able even to unite his kinsmen under his leadership. - [Acts 7:23-29](#)

IV.

Transformation of Moses into obedient servant of God

Moses spent the next 40 years in a quite different environment than before. He who was used to royal treatment and the luxury of a royal house became a shepherd, lived in tent, and worked hard with his hands. For Moses, it was a lesson of humbleness, but also of preparation for the future tasks of which he did not have any idea at this time. I can imagine that many times he thought of his family and his kinsmen who were still under cruel bondage in Egypt because he failed to save them. Under his current circumstances there was nothing Moses could do for them but to pray to God to deliver his nation out of slavery to the land He once promised to their forefather Abraham.

40 years have passed. Moses was 80 years old when God spoke to him from a burning bush and told him to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses was an old man and his strength was gone. How could he now do what he was not able to do when he was young and full of strength? Moses did not feel adequate to such a task. - [Exodus 3:11](#) Let me paraphrase Moses: Who am I that I should do such a task? Moses knew he was nobody, and it was not in his power do this task. Let's read God's answer to Moses' doubts. - [Exodus 3:12](#) God assured Moses that He would certainly be with him. Next Moses' concern was that the Israelites would not believe him and would not listen to him, but God equipped Moses with miracles. Yet Moses thought of another excuse why he should not go and even made God angry. - [Exodus 4:13-14](#)

I do not think that Moses had doubts about God's power. I cannot imagine that God would choose someone for the task who would wonder if God can really do what He says. Rather I think that Moses had such little confidence in himself that he could do the task assigned to him by God, that even God's assurance of His help could not void him of fear of his insufficiency. He already failed once in this task and he was afraid that he would fail again. It took some effort on the part of God to persuade Moses to do the task, but once Moses was persuaded, he put forth all his efforts to do the will of God.

V.

Moses back in Egypt

Moses obeyed God and went back to Egypt. Miracles he performed caused the Israelites to believe that God had sent him, and they were united under his leadership. However, it took divine power, not Moses' strength for this to happen. - Exodus 4:29-31

The new Pharaoh that ruled in Egypt would not listen to Moses' message from God. At first he had an excuse for that. He said that he did not know Jehovah God who requested that he let the Israelites go. - Exodus 5:2 That could be the truth, for Pharaoh and the Egyptians worshipped animals, the river Nile, the sun-god, etc. However, once Pharaoh was shown miracles performed by Moses, he did not have any excuse for rejecting the word of God. He was the most powerful king of the world, and his pride hindered him from taking orders from the God of a slave nation. - Exodus 7:10-13

The following 10 plagues that befell Egypt and the Egyptians were God's punishment for Pharaoh's rejection of the word of God, as well as a demonstration both to the Israelites and the Egyptians that Jehovah God is the only true God, and the gods of Egypt were false. - Exodus 7:17

I will go briefly through some of the plagues. The river Nile was very important for the Egyptians. They were dependent on it for their drinking water and irrigation, and they ended up making a god out of it. It is possible that Pharaoh went to worship this Nile-god the morning when Jehovah God turned the Nile-god into a stinking dead sewer. It took 7 days for fresh water from the spring in the south to replace the dead water in the river. The frog was another god for the Egyptians. Jehovah God caused swarms of frogs to greatly pester the Egyptians until Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron to entreat their God to take away the frogs from him and his people. Moses and Aaron did so, and the result was heaps and heaps of stinking dead frog-gods. Out of all the animal-gods of the Egyptians, the bull was their chief god. When Jehovah God struck the herds of cattle belonging to the Egyptians with pestilence and they died, He struck their chief animal-god. When Jehovah God caused darkness over Egypt for 3 days, he gave a direct blow to Egypt's sun-god, Ra. Again and again Jehovah God demonstrated His power and the helplessness of the gods of the Egyptians, yet the Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Then the final blow came when Jehovah God caused all the firstborn in Egypt to die, except for the Israelites who sacrificed lambs and made signs with lambs' blood on their houses as Jehovah God had commanded them. Pharaoh yielded, and the Israelites, with the help of God, left the hostile country. After all these plagues, the exodus of the huge Israeli slave labor force with the gold and silver of Egypt, and later the destruction of the Egyptian army by God in the sea, Egypt was plundered, ruined, and its world power declined.

Jehovah God made a great impression on Moses and the Israelites with His mighty deeds, and they sang a song for Him. Let's see what they sang: - Exodus 15:2, 11

VI.

Moses leading Israelites to the promised land

Nevertheless, if Moses thought that he had the hardest task behind him and the journey to the promised land would be a piece of cake, he was in for a bad surprise. The Israelites, who were God's own chosen nation, had never fully submitted themselves to Jehovah God. As it turned out, the Israelites became their own worst enemies. They were freed from Egyptian slavery, but they still thought and acted like slaves, and they even worshipped animal-gods from their former slave lives.

With their minds set on the desires of the flesh, they totally missed that they had a new Master to obey - God, who delivered them with such mighty deeds from cruel bondage in a hostile country and who was even going to give them their own land.

Their relationship to God can be described in the following way: They were pleased when God did something they liked, e.g. destroyed the Egyptian army. In such case they even sang Him a song. However, they were displeased when God did something they did not like, e.g., when He led them through the wilderness into the promised land. In such case they did not sing any song to God, but they murmured and rebelled against God.

God was not pleased with their constant murmuring and rebellion, and it cost most of them their lives as well as the loss of hope for the promise land. - Exodus 16:2-3, 32:8, 10, 19, 22, 25

The grandeur of Moses' character is shown in his willingness to sacrifice himself on behalf of his kinsmen that sinned so awfully against God. - Exodus 32:30-33

The Israelites were God's chosen people. God gave them a law through Moses so that they could become God's holy nation. However, only two adults - Joshua and Caleb - out of one or so million adult people who left Egypt, later entered the promised land. The rest of them died in the wilderness because of their murmuring and rebellion against God. They were replaced by a new generation of Israelites who were born in the wilderness, who were toughened by the hard life in the wilderness, who had learned to worship God, who were taught God's law, and who had learned to rely on God.

After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses brought these new Israelites to the area near the Jordan river, beyond which was the promised land. There God showed him the promised land from Mt. Nebo before He took him to a better place beyond this world.

VII. ***Applications***

Moses was a prophet who announced God's will to the Israelites. He was the mediator of the Old Covenant between the Israelites and God. He interceded for the Israelites before God, but he also judged and punished the Israelites for their evil. He announced the coming of another prophet, who would teach God's will and would be the mediator of the New Covenant.

The role of Moses in the salvation of the Israelites from physical slavery and their transformation to God's nation thus foreshadowed the role of Jesus in His salvation of humans from the slavery of sin and their transformation to God's nation. None of this could be done by human strength, but only by God Himself. Moses learned not to rely on his own strength, but on God. He overcame his doubts, fully submitted himself to God, and was determined to do God's will till the end. In that he is an example for us as Christians today.

To rely on God and to do His will are our major tasks. In that we are no different from Moses or the Israelites. Like the Israelites, we too were slaves. God, through His Son Jesus Christ, delivered us with mighty deeds from cruel bondage in a hostile country – that is from the slavery of sin in the world ruled by Satan. Now, God is our new Master that we have the responsibility to obey in all that He commands us.

Since we were freed from the slavery of sin, we should quit thinking and acting like slaves. We should quit worshipping the gods of our former slave-life, whether it is materialism, all kinds of immoralities, hobbies, leisure time activities, celebrities, etc.

The desires of our flesh and ego should not be our masters, but we need to put them under control, so that we would not miss the point that the only Master we must obey is God. God, who not only saved us from the bondage of sin, but who is leading us through the wilderness of this world into the promised land in heaven. We should glorify God not only when He requires of us something that we like, but also when He requires of us something that we do not like.

I am afraid that many times we show God that we rely on our own strength instead of His power, and that we want God to send someone else to do His will, not us. We show it to God in our attitudes, in how we meet our Christian duties, how we deal with other people, how we solve problems, how we face difficulties, how we take care of our family, and how we live our lives in general.

There are some questions that require our answers. Are we humble or proud? Do we do God's will willingly with joy, or do we murmur and try to find a way to go around it? Do we try to help other people to have peace with God, or rather try to have our own peace with other people? Do we try to use God's Word to solve problems, or rather try to solve problems our own way? Do we try to learn how to overcome difficulties with God's help, or rather try to avoid all difficulties at all costs? Are we setting good examples to our children and teaching them God's will, or are we teaching them to be worldly? Are we trying to do our Christian duties, or do we say to God, "Send someone else," because we are too busy?

The destiny of the Israelites who died in the desert should send us a warning signal. They were God's people, but God was not pleased with them because they murmured and rebelled against Him. In other words, they did not put their trust in God and did not do God's will. They were not His true servants. They died in the wilderness and never made it into the promised land - 1. Corinthians 10:1-11 Therefore, let us be true servants of God and may the example of Moses help us to be such.

VIII. ***Invitation***

Would you like to be set free by God from the bondage of sin? Would you like for God to lead you into the promised land in Heaven? Become a true servant of God! Make the decision today to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord!

Prague, September 1, 2007
Last revision May 20, 2010 ec

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