

Moses, a Humble Leader

(Exodus & Numbers)

By

Joelee Chamberlain

Moses was a very important man, and there are many exciting stories about him in the first part of the Bible, aren't there? In fact, the first 5 books of the Bible are sometimes called "The Books of Moses", because Moses wrote them down. We've talked about Moses before when we talked about other things, haven't we? But let's just talk only about Moses himself today, not about all of the other things. Okay? So what do we know about Moses himself?

Well, to start with, Moses was the great-grandson of Levi, one of Jacob's sons. (You remember, of course, that Jacob's other name was Israel, don't you?) Moses' parents were Amram and Jochebed. Do you remember the names of Moses' older sister and older brother? That's right. Miriam and Aaron.

Now, Moses was born during the time that Jacob's descendants, the children of Israel, were slaves in Egypt. (The children of Israel were also called Hebrews, and later they were called Jews.) And Moses was born during the time that an evil king of Egypt, Pharaoh, had given a terrible order. Pharaoh had said, "All the boy babies of the Hebrews are to be thrown into the river and drowned!"

Can you imagine that? How wicked! Pharaoh had ordered this because he was afraid of how many Hebrews there were getting to be. He was afraid that they would grow up to be men who might fight against him.

But when Moses was born, his mother Jochebed loved her new baby boy. So she hid her baby as long as she could. When Jochebed couldn't hide him any longer, she made a water-proof basket/box, put her baby boy in it, and then she put the basket in the water at the edge of the river. And his big sister Miriam stayed there a ways away watching to see what would happen to her dear baby brother.

And as she watched, Miriam saw the princess, Pharaoh's daughter! The princess was walking down by the river. and the princess saw the basket at the edge of the river, so she had one of her maids go get it and bring it to her.

The princess opened the basket -- and that beautiful baby began to cry.

"Oh," the princess said, "this is one of the Hebrew babies." And she felt sorry for him.

Little Miriam then went up to the princess and said to her, "Would you like me to get one of the Hebrew women to come and nurse the baby for you?"

Pharaoh's daughter said, "Oh, yes."

So Miriam went home and got her mother. And Jochebed went to the princess, and the princess said to her, "Take this baby with you and nurse it for me. I will pay you to do this."

So Jochebed took her dear baby boy home with her again, And the princess paid Jochebed to take care of her own baby! So not only was her baby boy okay now, but Jochebed was being paid to take care of him!

Well, when her baby was old enough, probably about 5 years old, Jochebed took the little boy to Pharaoh's daughter, and the princess adopted him, and then he lived with the princess. (Oh! And that means that he was then the adopted grandson of that wicked Pharaoh who would have drowned him, doesn't it?! How funny! But God had a plan!)

And Pharaoh's daughter said, "I will name this baby Moses, because I pulled him out of the water." (Moses means "to pull out".) And there, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses got a very good education. The Bible doesn't say, but Moses probably also learned how to be a soldier and to fight.

Now, Moses knew he was one of the Hebrew people, so I imagine that while his mother Jochebed had him with her in her home, she must have taught little Moses about God and told him that he was one of the Hebrew people. Anyway, when Moses was 40 years old, one day he went out to see how things were going with his relatives, the children of Israel. And Moses saw that things were very hard for them.

And then Moses saw an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew men. Well, Moses didn't like that at all! So he looked this way, and he looked that way, to make sure that no one was watching him, and then Moses killed that Egyptian and buried him in the sand!

Well, the second day Moses went out again, and this time he saw two of the Hebrew men fighting each other. He went up to them and said to the man who had started it, "Why are you fighting your relative?"

The man said to Moses, "Who made you to be a prince and ruler over us. Do you plan on killing me as you killed the Egyptian?"

This scared Moses! He thought, "Uh oh! What I did must be known!"

Well, when Pharaoh heard what had happened, he was going to kill Moses! But Moses ran away before Pharaoh could find him. Yes, Moses went far away, to the land of Midian. And there in the land of Midian he came to a well, and he sat down to rest.

Now, there was a priest of Midian named Jethro. (He was also called Reuel.) Jethro had 7 daughters, and evidently these girls took care of their father's flock of animals. Anyway, while Moses was resting by the well, Jethro's daughters came along to the well with the flock in order to give them some water. The girls filled the water troughs with water from the well for their animals. This was quite a bit of work for them to do, wasn't it?

But what do you think happened then? Why, some shepherds came and chased the girls away! The men were going to take the water the girls had drawn from the well for their father's animals, and then the men would have their own animals drink the water instead! So the poor girls would just have to wait until the men were finished watering their flocks, and then the girls would have to draw more water for their father's flock! That was mean of the shepherds, wasn't it?! But evidently those men did this lots of times!

Well, Moses saw this -- and he didn't like what the shepherds were doing! So Moses stood up, and he made the men stop taking the girls' water! Good for Moses, right?! Then Moses drew more water for the girls' flock and watered their animals himself. And then the girls went home with their flock.

When the girls got home, their father Jethro was surprised to see them back so quickly. Jethro said to his daughters, "How is it that you are here so soon today?"

They said to their father, "An Egyptian saved us from the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered our flock." (Evidently Moses was still dressed in his Egyptian clothes, so they thought he was an Egyptian.)

Their father said, "And where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him so that he can have something to eat."

So Moses went to the priest of Midian's house, and Jethro asked him to live with them. Moses was happy to live there with them, and he took care of Jethro's flocks. And Jethro let Moses marry Zipporah, one of his daughters. After they were married, Moses and Zipporah had 2 sons.

Well, after a while the king of Egypt, Pharoah, died, and there was another king of Egypt. But this new king was still mean to the children of Israel, and they cried out to God.

Now in the land of Canaan many years before this time, God had told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the ancestors of Moses and the other children of Israel) that there would be trouble. But then the Lord had promised them that after a certain number of years the Lord would take their descendants away from their trouble and that they'd go back to the land of Canaan with great riches. Well, of course, God always keeps His promises, doesn't He?

Okay, then. For 40 years Moses worked as a shepherd for Jethro. By now Moses was 80 years old. During that 40 years as Moses was taking care of Jethro's flock, he would take the animals from place to place for them to find food to eat. But now the time was coming when God would keep this promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to take their descendants out of their troubles.

Well, one day Moses was out with Jethro's flock, and he led them to another place where they could find food to eat. He was in the desert and had come to a mountain called Horeb. (This mountain is also called Mount Sinai.) And what do you think Moses saw there on the mountain? Why, he saw a bush that was on fire -- but it didn't burn up! How strange! So Moses thought, "I'm going to go over

there and see this strange thing, why the bush doesn't burn up."

But as Moses was starting to go over toward the bush, suddenly the Lord God called to Moses from out of the middle of that burning bush!! The Lord called out, "Moses! Moses!"

Moses said, "Here I am."

Then the Lord said, "Don't come close! Take off your shoes, because the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am the God of your fathers -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!"

Well, Moses was afraid to try to look at God, so he hid his face!

Then the Lord said, "I have seen the great troubles of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cries, and I know their sorrows. And I have come down to deliver them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them out of there into a very good, large land."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "And I'm going to send you to Pharaoh so that you may take my people out of Egypt.

Well, Moses didn't know what to think! And it sounds as if Moses didn't want to try to do this. In fact, Moses actually argued with the Lord! Moses tried all sorts of arguments! Moses said that Pharaoh wouldn't listen to him. And Moses said that the children of Israel wouldn't believe him. Yes, Moses and God talked back and forth. And the Lord answered all of Moses' arguments.

The Lord told Moses, "At first the king of Egypt won't let the people go, but I will do wonders there, and then he will let you go."

And God told Moses that He would be with him, and God gave Moses the power to do miraculous signs to show to both Pharaoh and the children of Israel so that they would know that the Lord God had really come and talked to Moses. But I'm just going to tell you about one of those signs.

Moses had said to the Lord, "But the people won't believe me when I tell them that You have appeared to me."

The Lord then said, "What do you have in your hand?"

Moses said, "A rod." (That would be like a walking stick.)

The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground."

So Moses threw it on the ground, and what do you think happened? Why, Moses' rod became a snake -- and Moses ran away from it!

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and pick it up by the tail."

Well, I think Moses was very brave and obedient, because he reached out his hand and picked the snake up by its tail! And what do you think happened then? Why, it turned back into his rod, a stick, again!

Then the Lord told Moses what he was to say to the people.

But Moses said, "But I don't know how to talk well."

The Lord said, "I made your mouth, and I will tell you what to say."

Then Moses said, "Oh, Lord, please send whom you want to send."

It sounds to me as if Moses were asking the Lord to send anyone but himself!

Finally the Lord got sort of mad at Moses and told him, "Your brother Aaron can talk well. And look here, Aaron is going to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. Then I'll tell you what to say, and you'll tell Aaron, and Aaron will talk for you."

So Moses stopped trying to get out of going to Pharaoh and telling him to let the people go. And the Lord said. "I will be with you, and as a sign to you that I have sent you, why, when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all come back to this same mountain and worship Me, the Lord God, here."

So Moses went back to Jethro, his wife's father, and he said to Jethro, "Please let me go back to Egypt to my relatives and see how they are doing."

And Jethro said to Moses, "Yes, go in peace."

Well, the Lord spoke to Moses' brother Aaron and said, "Go out into the wilderness and meet Moses."

So Aaron went, and he met his brother Moses there at Mt. Horeb. And they were glad to see each other. Then Moses told Aaron everything that the Lord had told him. So they both went down to Egypt, and they told the leaders of the children of Israel what the Lord had said and showed them the miracles, and the people believed them and bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord.

Then Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that the Lord had said that he was to let God's people, the children of Israel, go out of Egypt. There is a song about this that I'm sure you've heard:

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let My people go.
They worked so hard they could not stand,

Let My people go.
 Go down, Moses,
 Way down in Egypt's land.
 Tell ol'
 Phar'oh
 To let My people go.

Well, at first Pharaoh wouldn't let the children of Israel go. He even made them work harder. But the Lord told Moses to go back to Pharaoh. The Lord said, "When Pharaoh asks you to show him a miracle, you tell Aaron to throw down his rod, and it will turn into a snake."

Now listen carefully, as this is really funny! Moses and Aaron went back to Pharaoh as the Lord had told them, and there in front of Pharaoh Aaron threw his rod down on the ground, and it turned into a snake. Well, Pharaoh had some magicians who worked for him, so he called them, and they each threw down their own rods, and their rods became snakes -- but then Aaron's snake swallowed their rod/snakes!! So when Aaron picked up his snake by the tail and it turned back into his rod, why, the magicians didn't have anything of their own to pickup, did they?! Wow! I wonder what the magicians thought about that?!

Well, Pharaoh still wouldn't let the people of Israel go, Then the Lord sent terrible plagues onto Egypt, ten of them. (I've talked about the tenth plague in the Exodus audio and the one on Passover, haven't I? It's so exciting! And that's when the first Passover happened, wasn't it? But let's go on!)

After the tenth plague Pharaoh quickly sent for Moses and told him, "Go! Take all of the children of Israel and everything they have, and leave Egypt! Hurry!"

So Moses took the children of Israel out into the wilderness with their flocks and herds. There were probably 2-3 million people! And the Lord led them Himself in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Well, they all got to the Red Sea -- but here comes the Egyptian army chasing after them! The people were scared! But Moses said to them, "Don't be afraid! Stand still and see how the Lord will save us. The Lord will fight for us!"

Now Moses had his rod in his hand. And the Lord told Moses, "Lift up your rod and stretch your hand out over the water."

Moses did this, and then the Lord sent a strong wind -- and the Red Sea opened up and made a dry path so all of the children of Israel could cross it without even getting their feet wet! And they all got safely across.

Then the Egyptian army started going down into that path to chase them. And the Lord told Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the water again."

So Moses lifted his rod out over the Red Sea again, and the Lord had the Red Sea close up again -- drowning the whole Egyptian army that was chasing them! Then Moses and all of the children of Israel sang a song, praising the Lord for saving them.

Well, the children of Israel traveled on. And as they went, the Lord let Moses do many more miracles for them. Once when they were running out of water, the Lord told Moses to hit a certain rock with his rod. Moses did, and a river gushed out of the rock! But I'm not going to tell you all of the stories about what happened during that time, as it would just take too long. However, you can read about them in the Bible, especially in the books of Exodus and Numbers. But all of this time the Lord was taking care of them, and the Lord even gave all of those thousands and thousands of people a special, miraculous food, manna, so they would have enough to eat.

After about 3 months they all got to Mt. Sinai, just as the Lord had said they would. And the Lord came down on top of Mt. Sinai. Then there were thick clouds there and smoke and thunderings and lightnings and a loud trumpet, and the mountain was shaking! Wow!

And God had the people gather together at the foot of the mountain, and there God Himself spoke to all of the children of Israel. The very first thing the Lord told them was that they weren't to worship anything except Himself, the only real God. And they weren't to make idols nor to bow down to any idols nor to worship them. And the Lord give them the Ten Commandments.

You know about the Ten Commandments, don't you? They say that we should only worship the Lord, and that we should obey our parents, and that we shouldn't murder or steal or lie or be jealous. And the Lord was saying all of this to the people from on top of the mountain that was smoking and had lighting!

Now, all of this scared the children of Israel! So they said to Moses, "Just you talk to us, and we will listen. But don't have God talk to us; we're afraid we'll die!"

So the Lord told Moses many rules and laws for the children of Israel. After all, with that many people, there would have to be rules and laws. Otherwise it would be confusing, wouldn't it? And then Moses told the people what the Lord had told him. And the people said, "We will do what the Lord has said." And Moses wrote it all down.

Then God told Moses to come up to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up onto the top of the mountain and went into the cloud. And Moses stayed there on Mt. Sinai with God for 40 days. and there the Lord gave Moses 2 tables of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them. And then the Lord told Moses just how they were to build a sort of tent/temple that they could carry with them. This was called the Tabernacle. (I've told you a lot about the Tabernacle another time, haven't I? It's very interesting!)

Now, after the 40 days of being with God, when Moses went down off the mountain, what do you think he saw? Why, he found that the children of Israel had gotten worried when he was away for so long. They didn't know what had happened to him. So they had had Aaron make an idol for them and hoped this statue would lead them to the promised land of Canaan! And they were worshipping

this statue, this idol! They were doing exactly what the Lord had warned them not to do just a few weeks before, weren't they??!

Yes, they had an idol. And just think. While Moses had been talking with the Lord God on the top of the mountain, the people had made an idol and were worshipping it at the foot of that same mountain! Can you imagine that?! Yes, they were worshippig a statue of a calf all made out of gold! How wicked of them! And foolish, too! Why an idol can't do anything, can it?!

Well, of course, this made Moses very angry. In fact, he was so angry that he just threw down the 2 tables of stone with the 10 Commandments on them that the Lord had given him, and they broke!

Then Moses went to the entrance of the camp and called out, "Who is on the Lord's side??!! You come to me!"

And the other descendants of Levi went to Moses. And Moses told them to go and kill some of the people who had been worshipping that awful idol. And they did.

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great, big sin! Now I will ask the Lord if He will forgive you."

Well, the Lord was angry at the children of Israel, too. At first the Lord told Moses, "You lead the children of Israel yourself into Canaan, but I won't go with you."

When the people heard this, they were very unhappy and took off all their jewelry. This was a way to show that they were sorry.

Then Moses put a tent up outside of the camp and went into this tent. When Moses went into this tent, the people all stood up in the door of their own tents and watched him go in. And as Moses went into this tent, what do you think happened? Why, the pillar of cloud came down and stood at the door of the tent!

And when the children of Israel saw the pillar of cloud come down to the door of the tent that Moses was in, they all got up and stood in the door of their own tents and worshipped the Lord. They were afraid and also sorry, because they had sinned by having an idol.

And then the Lord talked to Moses at the door of that tent. The Bible says that the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, just like a person speaks to his friend! And Moses talked to the Lord and begged Him to forgive the people.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "All right, I will go with all of you, because you have asked me. You have found favor with me, and I know you by name."

Yes, the Lord was going to go ahead and lead them to Canaan, the land that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then Moses asked a big favor of the Lord.

Moses said, "Please show me your glory." (The glory of the Lord seems to be a great, shiny, brightness.)

The Lord said from the pillar of cloud, "You can't see my face. But there is a rock here beside me on the mountain. I will put you in a big crack in this rock, and then I'll put my hand over you while my glory goes by you. Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back."

Then the Lord told Moses, "You are to cut out 2 more tables of stone to replace the ones that were broken. I will write the same words on them that the others had."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Be ready tomorrow morning to come back up onto Mount Sinai with me."

So Moses cut out 2 tables of stone like the others, and the next morning Moses took them and went back up onto Mount Sinai. Moses was there with the Lord for 40 more days and nights.

And then the Lord did what he'd told Moses He would do when Moses had asked to see His glory. There was a big rock there on the mountain where the Lord was, and there was a crack in this rock. The Lord had Moses be in this crack, and then the Lord put His hand over the crack and walked past it. Then the Lord took His hand away, and He let Moses see His glory and His back.

Wasn't that kind of the Lord to do this for Moses? Yes, Moses was a very special man!

And there on Mt. Sinai God wrote on the 2 tables of stone again. Also the Lord told Moses about special days of celebration and worship that the children of Israel were to have. (I've talked more about these special days another time in "God's Holidays", haven't I?)

Well, after this second 40 days on the mountain with the Lord, when Moses came down off of the mountain he had the 2 new tables of stone. And Moses he didn't know it, but his face was all shiny! Yes, Moses had seen the bright glory of the Lord, and now he was reflecting it.

And when his brother Aaron and the people saw Moses' face shining like that, it scared them! Moses told them everything that the Lord had told him on the mountain, then Moses put a veil over his face. But, of course, when Moses went into the tent to speak to the Lord, he took the veil off. Then when Moses came back out where the people were, he put the veil back on. The Bible doesn't tell us how long his face was shiny.

All of these things I've just told you here about Moses can be read in the second book of the Bible, the book of Exodus.

Yes, the Lord gave Moses many rules. And in the third book of the Bible, Leviticus, Moses wrote down more rules that the Lord gave.

Moses and the children of Israel had many more adventures in the wilderness. We can read

about them in the book of Numbers, the fourth book of the Bible. Sometimes Moses would get discouraged when the people would disobey the Lord. But the Lord was with Moses. In fact, after the big Tabernacle was built, the Lord would actually talk to Moses inside of the Tabernacle. Moses was one of the greatest men who ever lived. But even though Moses was so great and such an important leader, the Bible also says that Moses was very humble. He wasn't proud of how important he was; he was a humble leader.

There is so much in the Bible about Moses that I'm just not able to tell all about him here; it would take way too much time! But I do talk about Moses and tell other things about him several other times, such as when I talk about the book of Exodus and when I tell about the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy when the children of Israel are in the wilderness. Also, I have audios about Miriam and Aaron, and, of course, those would also talk about their brother Moses. But let's finish up talking about the life of Moses now, okay?

Well, Moses led the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years. And now he was 120 years old. He was still strong, but it was getting to the time when Moses was to die. But Moses wanted the people to remember how good the Lord had been to them, and he wanted them to remember the good rules the Lord had given them. So Moses called them all together, and he went over many of these rules with them again. (The book of Deuteronomy tells about when Moses did this.)

And Moses said to them, "Soon I am going to die. After that Joshua will be your leader. God will let Joshua take you into the promised land of Canaan. And remember that you must never worship idols. Only worship the Lord God."

And Moses said to the children of Israel, "And be sure to follow God's rules. If you do this, if you obey, the Lord God will be with you and will protect you and take good care of you. But," Moses warned them, "if you disobey the Lord, He will not protect you. Then your enemies will come in and conquer you, and many bad things will happen to you."

Then Moses told them, "And the Lord God will raise up a prophet after me who will be like me. He will be from among you. You must carefully listen to him."

After talking with the children of Israel, Moses went up on top of a mountain. (Remember, he was then 120 years old. But he could still climb a mountain!) And there the Lord let Moses see all over the land of Canaan. This was the land that the Lord had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would have. And the children of Israel were those descendants. Now the Lord would keep His promise to them. After that Moses died. And guess who buried Moses? The Lord did!

Yes, the Bible says there was no one else like Moses, Moses with whom the Lord talked face to face. Moses was a great man of faith and a great but humble leader. And he was a great prophet. But what did Moses mean when he said that the Lord would raise up a prophet after him who would be like him and who would be one of them and that they had to listen carefully to him? We read in the Bible that later the Jews were expecting this prophet. But who would this prophet be? Well, the New Testament tells us who this prophet was -- He was the Lord Jesus Christ! Yes, Jesus is a Prophet, a Priest, and a King. And Jesus is also God, God the Son.

But Jesus loves us so very much that He came to earth as a human (though he was still God, too). And God the Father loves us so much that He sent Jesus to earth. Why? So that if we believe in Him, trust in Him, we will be saved from our sins and someday be able to be with God forever. And how did Jesus do this? Yes, here on earth the sinless Jesus, the Son of God, was so very humble that He died on the cross for our sins. (Of course, 3 days later Jesus was alive again and is still alive in heaven.) And whoever trusts Jesus to take their sins will have their sins forgiven and will someday be with Him forever.

Yes, when Jesus was here on earth, He was a great Prophet, giving many prophecies of things to come and performing many miracles. But now Jesus is in heaven where He is our great HHigh Priest before God the Father. And someday Jesus will return to earth and reign as a great and righteous King! The Lord Jesus Christ -- our Prophet, Priest, and King. He is the prophet like Moses that we all need to listen to and we all need to obey. But how can we listen to Jesus? Why, we can read the Bible where it tells about Jesus and what Jesus said and did.

Yes, Moses was great, but Jesus, the Son of God, is much, much greater.