

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California
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by
Robert H. Roe, Pastor

Introduction to Moses, Lesson #1 - January 6, 1980

(Editor's Note: At the time Bob Roe taught this series, he felt that Thutmose III as the Pharaoh of the oppression and Amenhotep II as Pharaoh of the Exodus most closely fit the Biblical chronology, and he devoted much of this first lesson to why he believed that to be true. Since that early 1980 series, David M. Rohl has written "Pharaohs and Kings, a Biblical Quest" published by Crown Publishers, New York which throws new light on this era of Egyptian history. As a result, I am eliminating any speculation on which Pharaoh was what and am going directly to the teaching on Moses himself. --Helen Decoursey 4/00.)

Today we are beginning a series on Moses. He was the great law giver, a mighty man of God and one of the greatest men in the Old Testament. Yet as we study him we will find him to be a very ordinary individual. He had all the problems and hang ups that you and I have. He was not some super being springing from a phone booth with a giant "S" on his chest. He was simply a normal man empowered of God for a ministry which he was able to accomplish totally in the power of God. Whenever he was in the flesh it stood out like a sore thumb. This should be an important encouragement to us because whatever God has called us to, whether large or small, He will empower us to accomplish exactly as He did with Moses.

Now, let's take a look at Chapter 1 of Exodus and watch the hand of God at work. God is very interesting. When He chooses people, they become what my translation calls "peculiar" people. That doesn't mean odd balls. The word has the idea of "especially His." It is the same word used in the New Testament where Jesus talks about God being "His own Father." The word for "own" is a special word which means "Privately my Father, peculiarly my Father, one who is especially mine." And, of course, that shut out all the Jews. That isn't what he meant. They knew he was saying, "God, is My Father in the way he is nobody else's Father. There is a link between the two of us that does not obtain with anybody else. He is my own private, peculiarly mine, especially my Father in a way that none of you can ever have." They got the message. They tried to kill him.

When God chooses a nation, or an individual to become His Son's, He marks them out as separate, and they will never intermingle. They will always be separate. They may violate that relationship and maybe marry unbelievers, but they will have a dreadful existence because the indwelling Spirit of God is always there. They will have to do things that are displeasing to the Spirit of God, and they will realize they are marked people when they experience unhappiness, despair and despondency. It is called "grieving the Spirit of God" and is a sign that they are indeed marked people.

Class comment: Why do they "have" to do things that grieve the Spirit?

Bob's response: Say you have married an unbelieving husband and are deeply in love with him, and he wants to go to a topless bar. Now, do you let him go alone, or do you go with him? This is real fact. We run into this type of thing all the time in church counseling. Or, maybe you are in marketing in the oil industry, as I was for 25 years. We liked to look like big rough, tough, two-fisted drinkers and all that. Well, there's a really good customer the boss wants you to take to lunch, and he wants to go to a topless bar. What do you do? You have to say "Yes" or "No" to your boss. Well, I cannot go into a topless bar, and I know I can't. I have had people tell me I ought to

go in there and evangelize, but there is no way I can go in there and evangelize. I know my weaknesses. I cannot go there, and I have to choose to say "No" to my boss. This is where the rubber meets the road in Christianity. It could be your wife, your husband, your boss, your future, but you are God's person and, "Depart, depart...be ye clean" it says. Don't act like the world.

The Jews were marked. God had chosen them, and God always gives you something to remind you you are His. In our case it is the indwelling Spirit of God. I do not have to go astray. If there is something I don't know what to do about, I can give it up for grabs to the Lord, and the Spirit of God is responsible to tell me whether I can or cannot do it. It is then up to me to obey, but He is there for the very purpose of reminding me I am His.

And God gave the Jews a mark that said, "Hey, you are marked. You have a different hope, a different future. Remember whose you are."

Let's take a look at verse 24 of the prior chapter. There is no break in the five books of Moses. The words go right on. There are no titles. In fact the title of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible is "Now these are the names of the sons of" which is actually the first line of Exodus.

Genesis 50:24-25:

And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."

In other words, "I don't want to be tucked away in some big pyramid." He had saved the nation from destruction, and he had procured it all for Pharaoh, so he was "Mr. Big" and could have had a mammoth pyramid if he had wanted. Trouble was a big pyramid was permanently sealed to protect it from grave robbers, and there was no way to get the body out. After the body was in, the attendants that were going to be with him in the after life were killed and all the food was in, a series of giant blocks crashed down and the whole entrance was sealed up with tremendous granite blocks. You couldn't get into a body without hauling in modern equipment and partially destroying the pyramid. Joseph wouldn't let them do that.

Genesis 50:26:

So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

He probably had a pretty nice shrine, but for some 400 years this coffin containing the embalmed body of Joseph sat there, out and available and ready to be carried back to Canaan. All the Jews were aware of it. His body was finally carried back and buried in Shechem in a patch of land which at one time had been purchased by Jacob to build an altar to God.

So, this is the background of God's reminder. Then, flowing right on from Joseph, we have Exodus or literally, "And these are the names."

Exodus 1:1:

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun [the 6 sons of Leah, the oldest wife of Jacob] and Benjamin [the son of Rachel, the young wife and Joseph in verse 5, who was already in Egypt, is also her son]; Dan and Naphtali [sons of Rachel's maid Bilhah whom she gave to Jacob since she was barren at the time], Gad and Asher [sons of Leah's maid Zilpah whom she gave to Jacob to increase the number of her offspring to win Jacob's love]. And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number [only males, Genesis 46 points that out], but Joseph was *already in Egypt*. And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were

fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

God had made a promise to these Jews. We call it the Abrahamic covenant which is a deed that says to Abraham's descendants:

Genesis 15:18:

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates..."

In making a covenant, an animal was cut in two and the two people involved walked together between the pieces of the cut animal thus making their oath. It symbolized "This happened to your animals and will happen to you if you break the covenant." With Abraham, God walked between the pieces alone. He made no joint contract. He made this remarkable promise to a Caldean, a fellow from Ur, Abraham, and He used the strongest possible imagery for a person of that culture. So Abraham had no doubt that God meant business. God was saying, in a sense, "May this happen to Me if I fail to keep my word. May I be cut in half."

Genesis 15:13-16:

And God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. "And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

God was saying that the land was theirs, but not yet. He was going to give the Amorites more time to repent of their sins because He really didn't want to destroy them. After 400 years of oppression in Egypt, He was going to bring Abraham's descendants back to possess the land and not just Abraham and his little dinky entourage either. They were going to possess the whole land. God keeps his promises. The original ones die off, but it says "the sons of Israel."

Exodus 1:7:

But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied [They literally "swarmed" is the word. multiplying like you wouldn't believe], and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

It was particularly true up in the Delta Area, the choicest land of Egypt, and, of course, the exact place an invading force would enter. You can see why the Egyptians were a bit nervous. Here is an enormous group of people (maybe as large a group as the Egyptians themselves) sitting right at the border of Egypt, well placed to join an invading army and take over Egypt.

Exodus 1:8:

Now a new king [We don't know these kings. Unfortunately God never names the Pharaohs in the Bible] arose over [The word "arose over" is a phrase that never means friendly, means to arrive against] Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

The new king sees this huge force right at the entrance to Egypt and says:

Exodus 1:9:

And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier

than we.

God was committed to blessing them, and they had propagated unbelievably. They increased from 70 males and their families, 140 maybe, maybe 3-400, to 2.5 million in 400 years. That is a lot of doubling.

Class comment: Would that be just intermarrying between the families or would there be any intermarrying with the Egyptians?

Bob's response: No, it should be between just the families. God wanted them to stay separate. There was some intermarriage. Exodus mentions "mixed multitude" that left Egypt with them, but generally speaking this was Jews. They were an isolated group. They have never been assimilated. Not in all the time they were in Egypt were they absorbed by the Egyptian people. They have always stayed separate.

They have this monument, Joseph's coffin, to remind them their hope is not in Egypt but in Canaan, that some day they are to carry it back to Canaan and bury it in the land that God promised them in the Abrahamic covenant. That hope is picked up here.

Exodus 1:10:

"Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land."

The Egyptians know the hope of the Jews. The Jews expect to inherit the land of the Amorites, from the Euphrates to the Nile. That is the land they came from. That is the land they still own. They took deed to it. In Egypt they are a threat because of their hope. They will never be assimilated. They will always be a threat to the world because God promised them that land irrevocably. So the Egyptians have to "deal wisely with them."

Exodus 1:11:

So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.

You disobey God as a believer and God will discipline you. But in His very discipline He is blessing you. He is moving you toward the goal He has for you. He will not let you be deterred, and here His goal is to make a nation of Israel. In the land of Egypt, whether anyone likes it or not, the Jews are going to become a mighty nation. They are also going to possess the land from the Euphrates to the Nile because God cut a covenant. That is literally what the word "make a covenant" means in Hebrew. It means "cut a covenant." God keeps his word.

So the more they are afflicted with harsh labor the more what? The stronger they become. At first, of course, you think you are going to die. Ever been to boot camp or basic training? Well, the first day you are dead. Every muscle you never knew you had aches. But let a month go by and you are doing things you wouldn't have believed possible and, wonder of wonders, nothing aches. Then you are rather proud about it. You didn't realize you could take all the stress and strain they put on you. It is a great experience. When you come out of it, you are a different person. I went down to boot camp a smart-alec punt from Stanford University, but within one week I was saying, "Yes, Sir. No, Sir. In the right order, Sir." In one month I was doing things I couldn't believe such as scrubbing a latrine with a tooth brush at 4 in the morning. I was made Captain of the Head as a reward for disobedience. I'm Bob Roe from San Marino. I'm a Stanford graduate, son of Frederick Alexander Roe, and I'm scrubbing a latrine, a latrine that other guys use, at 4 in the morning and with a tooth brush yet? You'd be amazed at what they do in boot camp. I survived Midshipman's School too. You'd be amazed at what they do to you there. But when I got that gold braid, I understood it all. The guys that had hazed me and made my life miserable had to salute me. The reason they did those things to me was because they were committed to making me into a man they would be willing to salute. They said, "You are not fit to command until you learn to obey, and we are going to teach you obedience." When I got the braid and they saluted me, I understood the process and the need for the

process, and those men could salute me with respect because they had made a man of me.

God is going to make a nation out of Israel, and so he puts them through hard labor. I'll bet you they are crying to God, "Hey, we are the chosen ones." Remember the play "Fiddler On The Roof?" Remember that Jewish father crying out to God, "I know we're your chosen people but why don't you choose someone else for awhile." All during this time the Jews are probably crying out to God, "Hey, pick on someone else," and God is quietly squeezing them in the crucible to make them a nation. As they become hard, strong people, they become more prolific, and they aren't worn out at the end of the day. Neither are their spirits broken as the king had anticipated, and they keep right on breeding, increasing enough to make this poor king very nervous.

However, the Egyptians are not about to get rid of the Israelites. They are a natural resource. They didn't have hydroelectric power or coal and oil in those days. They built their pyramids with bodies. They dug their canals with bodies. They cultivated their fields with bodies. They built those beautiful tombs in the Thebes valley with bodies. 2.5 million Jews would be an enormous natural resource. Losing those Jews would be like running out of oil in the United States, particularly if they walked off with all the sheep, oxen, goats and other things under their care.

What do you think was the basic reason God was being so harsh with them? Would He have had to be this harsh if they had been obedient to Him? What is He doing?

Class comment: Training them to take over the land.

Bob's response: Yes, but why is He being so harsh about it? God cannot have a chosen person or a chosen people until He has crushed the ego, the self-life and made that person or those people totally available to Him, and God is unmerciful in His relentlessness. He is going to do a "boot camp" here. It is not fun. It is relentless and inexorable. You cannot escape. Sign up for four year in the Navy, and if you get in trouble, you go to prison. A Naval prison is the last place you want to be, but the Navy is determined to make an officer or an enlisted man out of you, and they are relentless. They do whatever is necessary to teach you obedience, absolute obedience. With absolute obedience comes the safety of your ship. If I start questioning my skipper, then my own men will question me, and you can't have a committee meeting in a war, not when someone is shooting at you. God wants no committee meeting. So when the Jews are worshipping other gods and are groaning and crying out, God must bring them to that point where their wills are broken, a broken and contrite heart, a broken spirit. It's not to leave them a crushed lump of clay but to mold and shape that crushed lump of clay into the likeness of Jesus Christ, the Lord God Almighty, the Holy One of God. He loves His people. He loves them in their idolatry, and He is committed to their future no matter the cost to them. He will never let them go.

Next week Exodus 1:13.

Father, we just thank you so much that your dealing with the Israelites is a beautiful illustration of your dealing with the children of God today and that you love us so much you will never let us go and when we run awhoring after other gods, when we get unequally yoked, you will hang in there with us. You may take us through the crucible of Egypt, but when we come out the other end, Father, we shall be a broken and contrite spirit, a broken and contrite heart and filled with the indwelling life of Jesus Christ, living in the power of the Spirit of God and manifesting all the glory and holiness and righteousness and love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank you so much, Father. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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