

Key Events, Map, Charts, Time Line

# Life of MOSES



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

- ☞ A baby in danger became a liberator.
- ☞ A man who disliked the limelight became a leader.
- ☞ An 80-year-old shepherd faced a mighty Pharaoh.
- ☞ A man slow of speech became a prophet.
- ☞ A husband and father became a priest.
- ☞ A simple, humble man became God's servant.
- ☞ The life of this man changed the life of a nation-to-be.

Moses was perhaps the most important person in the Old Testament. His life was bound to the life of God's people, the children of Israel, and to God himself. In a special way, Moses represented Israel to God and God to Israel. Thus, learning about Moses means learning about God's people and about God himself.



### The Hebrew People

Moses was born in Egypt to a Hebrew slave family.

- The Hebrew people had originally come to Egypt about 400 years before, after a time of famine. Jacob (also known as Israel) and his sons moved to Egypt, where Jacob's son Joseph had become the second most important ruler after Pharaoh.
- After Joseph died, the Israelites were thriving. God was fulfilling his promise to Abraham to give him many descendants and bless them (Gen. 17:4–7): "The Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1:7).
- However, eventually Egypt's pharaohs forgot Joseph and worried about the great strength of the Hebrew people. Besides enslaving the children of Israel, the Pharaoh, moved by fear, began a murderous policy to control the Israelite population growth. By the Pharaoh's decree, all male newborns were to be thrown into the Nile River.
- It seemed as though Pharaoh had the upper hand. However, God planned to make Abraham's descendants fruitful and a great nation. Pharaoh opposed God's will and plan. God was behind the scenes, engineering a great deliverance for his people.

## THE BIRTH OF HOPE

In that time of grief, suffering, and danger, Moses was born. Although Pharaoh had intended to destroy Israel and frustrate God's plans to bless them, God worked through the most unexpected people to save the child. The baby's mother put the baby in a basket in the Nile to save him. The baby's sister Miriam wisely talked Pharaoh's daughter into giving the baby back to his mother to raise him. In contrast to the Pharaoh's evil intentions, his own daughter's tender and compassionate heart became a tool for the baby's salvation.

Thus the child Moses was born to a slave family, rescued by a noble person, nurtured by his own slave mother, and educated as a member of the Egyptian nobility. As we read the story of Moses' birth and rescue, we understand that God was working behind the scenes. What we might miss is that Moses' own story anticipated what was about to happen to Israel.



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Moses	Israel
Moses came out of the Nile River miraculously "reborn."	Israel miraculously came out of the Red Sea as a people with a new identity.
Moses became aware of the injustice and acted to save his people (Ex. 2:11–12).	God heard and was concerned with the fate of his people; he acted decisively to save his people.
Moses had to flee the anger of Pharaoh into the wilderness (Ex. 2:15).	Israel had to flee Egypt into the wilderness (Ex. 14:8–9).
Moses met God at the burning bush on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:1).	Israel met God while camping around the base of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:1–2).
Moses, an Egyptian (Ex. 2:19), became the deliverer of some troubled shepherds.	God chose Moses, the shepherd, to deliver his people from Egypt.

### Moses' Name

- The Hebrew name *Moses* sounds like the Hebrew verb for "to draw out."
- Pharaoh's daughter named the child *Moses* because "I drew him out of the water" (Ex. 2:10)
- But the name *Moses* has an Egyptian meaning as well and is found in many Egyptian names: Ra-messes, Thut-mose, Ah-mose.
- The first part of each name is related to an Egyptian deity (Ra, Thut, Ah). The second part of each name (*messes/mose*) means "boy" or "son." *Moses* can be an Egyptian name meaning *boy, son, or child*.

## DIVINE APPOINTMENT

In a fit of anger, Moses killed an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite. His life changed radically. After being a noble, Moses became a fugitive. Fleeing into the wilderness, he began a new life: a new home, a new clan, a wife and children, a new profession as shepherd. He remained with Reuel, the Medianite high priest, and married his daughter, Zippora. In time, Gershon, his son, was born (Ex. 2:22).

Meanwhile, back in Egypt, the cruel pharaoh died—but another equally ruthless pharaoh took his place, and the Hebrew people cried out to God under their burdens. Exodus notes that God entered the scene directly: he listened, remembered, and acted in favor of his people (Ex. 2:23–25).

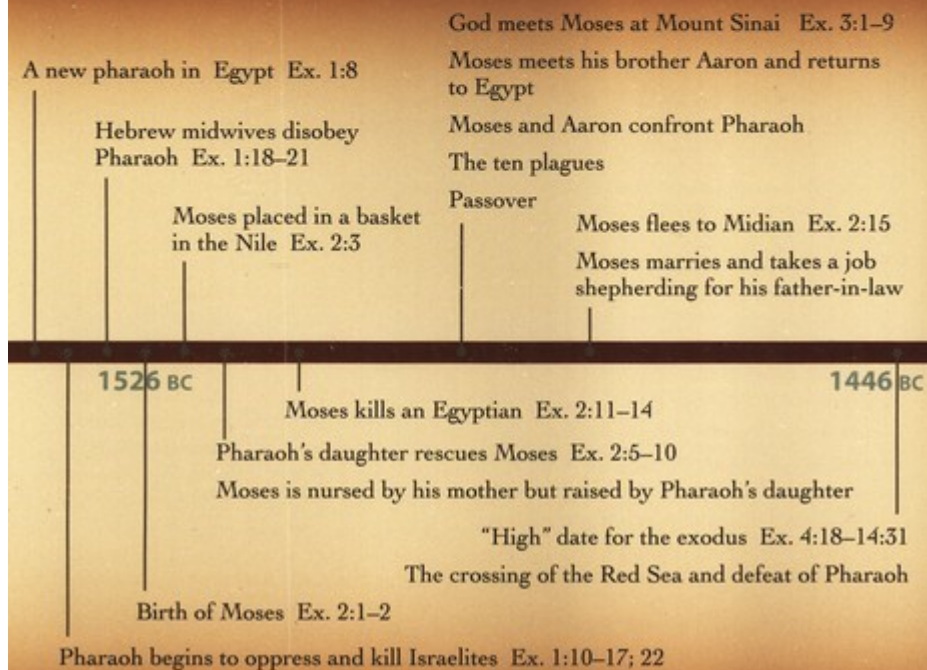
### Insight

Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush revealed much about God, Moses, and the children of Israel.

- God is faithful to his promises—he had not forgotten his covenant with Abraham.
- God chose and equipped Moses to be his special representative to Egypt to free his people.
- Moses' role became defined as that of an intermediary between God and Israel. From this moment on, Moses spoke to God on behalf of the children of Israel and to Israel on behalf of God.

### Time Line of Moses' Life

Dating the Exodus event is very difficult. Scholars have proposed two different possible dates for the Exodus event.

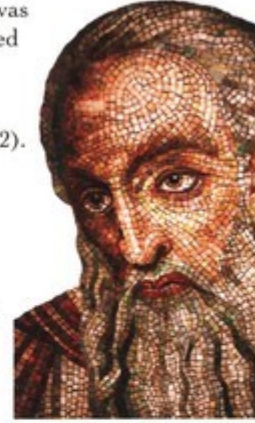


God called out to Moses from a burning bush on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:4).

➤ God identified himself as the God of Moses' forefathers. With reverence, Moses removed his sandals because God's presence made the ground holy (Ex. 3:5)

➤ God announced that he had seen his people's misery and was sending Moses to bring them out of Egypt. Moses protested that he was not the right person for the job. God offered signs that he would be with him:

- ✦ Israel would worship God on the same mountain (3:12).
- ✦ God revealed his own name to Moses (3:14).
- ✦ God would perform great wonders (3:20).
- ✦ Israel would not leave Egypt empty-handed (3:21).
- ✦ God showed his power by changing Moses' staff into a snake (4:2-4).
- ✦ God made Moses' hand leprous and restored it back to health (4:6-7).



Moses mosaic at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis

the Exodus: A "high" and a "low" date. In this pamphlet, we follow the traditional "high" date.

Moses and Israel meet God at Sinai Ex. 19:1-Num. 10:10

Moses receives the Tablets of the Law Ex. 20

Moses receives instructions and builds the tabernacle Ex. 36

Moses consecrates the priests Lev. 8-10

Census taken Num. 1

Passover observed Num. 9:1-8

Moses and the people leave Sinai Num. 10:11-36

Aaron and the golden calf Ex. 32

Miriam and Aaron rebel against Moses Num. 12

Moses leads the people to Mount Sinai Ex. 15-18

Water from a rock

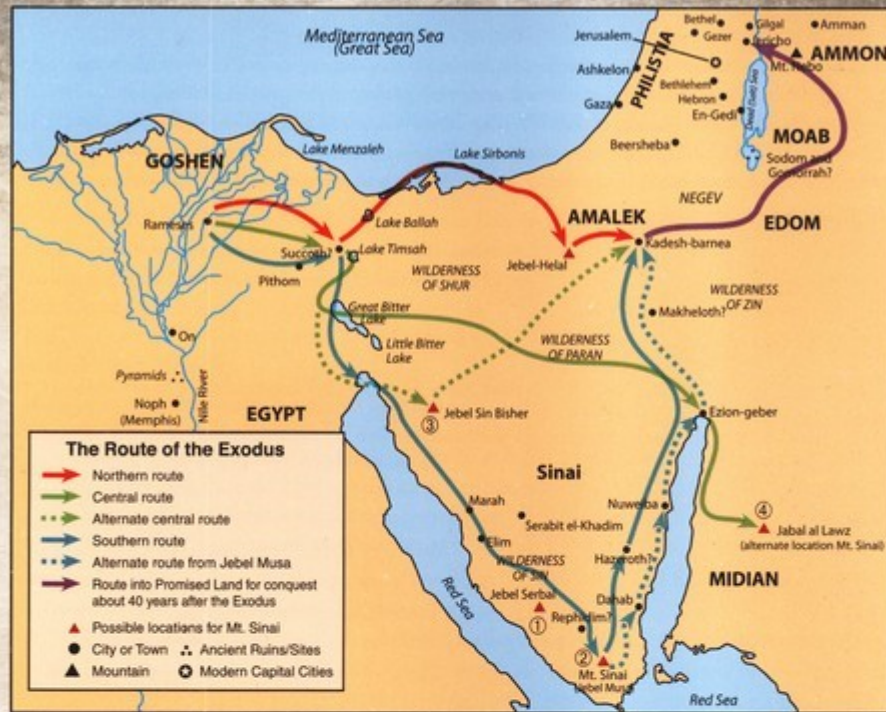
Quail and manna

War with the Amalekites

Judges are appointed to serve the people

Moses sends spies to the land of Canaan Num. 13

## LOCATION OF MT. SINAI



Traditionally, many people believe that Mount Sinai is found in the southern part of the peninsula. However, some scholars believe that the mountain might be found in the northern part of the peninsula or, even, outside of the peninsula in what was one location for ancient Midian. These are the four most common suggestions for the location of Mount Sinai.

- ① In the south, *Jebel (Mount) Serbal*
- ② In the south, *Jebel Musa*
- ③ In the north, *Jebel Sin Bisher*
- ④ Outside of the Sinai Peninsula, in Midian, *Jebel el-Lawz*

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