

A Lesson from the Life of Moses

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Just as Joseph endured years of suffering in preparation for the work that God had for him to accomplish, so also Moses endured years and even decades of suffering in preparation for the work that God had chosen for him. In the years after Joseph's death, the Israelite population multiplied greatly in Egypt. After a time, another Pharaoh came to power in Egypt, one who did not know Joseph.

The Israelites had become so numerous that the Egyptians feared they might one day side with Egypt's enemies in the event of a war. They therefore enslaved the Israelites, putting them to forced labor building with bricks and mortar and working in the fields. Despite their slavery, they multiplied even more. At this point, out of fear that the Israelites might one day become powerful enough to overcome the Egyptians, Pharaoh commanded that all newborn Hebrew male children must be killed. It was during this time that Moses was born.

Moses in Egypt - A Life of Privilege

In Exodus 2:1-10 we find the account of Moses' birth and God's providence in the circumstances that resulted in him being raised in the house of Pharaoh's daughter. Moses was born to a Levite man and woman. His mother hid him for three months so the Egyptians would not kill him. When she could no longer hide him, she took a basket made from papyrus and coated it with tar to prevent it from leaking. Then she put Moses in the basket and laid it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. Moses' sister watched from a distance to see what would happen to her infant brother.

At that time, Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to bathe, accompanied by her servants. As they were walking along the riverbank, she noticed the basket floating among the reeds, and she had one of her servant girls bring it to her. When she opened the basket, she saw the baby crying, and she felt sorry for him. She realized that it must be one of the Hebrew babies who had been hidden by his mother.

When Moses' sister saw this, she approached Pharaoh's daughter and asked if she could go and get a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for her. Pharaoh's daughter said yes and told her to go and do so. Moses' sister went home and got their mother for the task, and Pharaoh's daughter even offered to pay her for nursing the child.

Moses' mother then took him back home with her. When he was a little older, she brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son, living in the household of Pharaoh. It was Pharaoh's daughter who gave Moses his name, which means "I drew him out of the water" (Exodus 2:10).

In the Book of Acts, we find another account of Moses' life in Egypt. This account is given by Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrin. Opposition arose from the Jews to Stephen's preaching of Christ, and they produced witnesses who brought false charges against him. He was then seized and forced to appear before the high priest and the council to answer these charges and to explain the message that he had been spreading.

Stephen's address contained a brief summary of the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, and it ended with his condemnation of the Jews for being a stiff-necked and rebellious people, who though they had received the Law,

they had persecuted the prophets and killed the Righteous One Himself. For this, Stephen was stoned.

The biblical account of Stephen and his address before the Sanhedrin is recorded in Acts 6:8-8:1. Within this passage, we find his account of the early life of Moses and the events that led to his fleeing from Egypt.

In Acts 7:20-29, we learn that Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter as her own son, and that he was well educated in all of the wisdom and culture of the Egyptians. When Moses was forty years of age, he wanted to visit his fellow Hebrews. He went out to where they were working as Pharaoh's slaves, and he saw one of them being treated harshly by an Egyptian overseer. This angered Moses, and he defended his Hebrew brother by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his fellow Hebrews who witnessed the event would realize that he had been sent by God to deliver them, but they did not see it at the time.

The next day Moses saw two Israelites who were fighting with each other, and he tried to make peace between them. One of the men shoved Moses and asked him who had made him a ruler and judge over them. The man then asked Moses if he wanted to kill him also, just as he had killed the Egyptian the day before. Moses now knew that the story of him killing the Egyptian had spread and that his life would be in danger when Pharaoh heard of the matter, so he fled to the land of Midian.

Moses in Midian - Forty Years on the Far Side of the Desert

When Moses arrived in Midian, he sat down by a well. And this is where he met the daughters of the "priest of Midian", as recorded in Exodus 2:16-22. This priest of Midian, whose name was Reuel, had seven daughters and apparently no sons. He had sent his daughters to draw water for his flocks, but some shepherds who were there drove them away. Moses witnessed this, and he intervened for the young women, drawing water for their flocks himself.

When his daughters got back home, they told their father how Moses had defended them when the shepherds tried to drive them away, saying that Moses even drew water for them and helped to water the flock. Reuel told them to invite Moses to eat with them. Moses then agreed to stay with them, and Reuel gave his daughter Zipporah to be Moses' wife. Sometime later, Zipporah gave birth to a

son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.” (Exodus 2:22).

Moses had a zeal for his own people, the Israelites. At forty years of age “he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors” (Exodus 2:11), and he wanted to do something to help them. However, his rash and impulsive killing of an Egyptian who had beaten one of his fellow Hebrews was not at all what God had in mind for the deliverance of His people out of Egyptian bondage.

Because Moses tried to take matters into his own hands, he was forced to flee to Midian, where he met the daughters of a priest of Midian. He married one of them, and God provided for him as he took care of his father-in-law’s sheep for the next forty years on the far side of the desert. It was here that God was preparing him for the task of leading, or shepherding, His people out of Egyptian bondage to a land of abundance that He had promised them.

Since Moses was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter, he was no doubt used to living a life of luxury and privilege. He would also have been used to the deference and respect of other Egyptians, because most of them would obviously want to avoid offending anyone associated with the king’s family. Since he was used accustomed to this position of privilege and power, he may have felt that he had every right to take vengeance on the Egyptian overseer who was beating one of the Hebrew slaves, one of his own people, and he acted accordingly.

Our tendency as human beings is to bring our natural strengths to bear on any particular problem or obstacle that we may face. By natural strengths we mean whatever abilities, talents or resources that we may have at our disposal.

This is the way that the natural man, or unregenerate man, approaches life. It makes complete sense to him to approach life in this way, and in fact he can understand nothing else. Many times he is successful with this approach. He sees that his strengths and the resources and opportunities that are available to him are what enable him to excel above others and accomplish his goals, some of which others are not able to accomplish. The bigger picture however is that he is only fulfilling the destiny which God has chosen for him, and God has put all of these resources at his disposal to do just that.

Even as believers in Christ, our first tendency is often to approach our service for God with our natural strengths, or with the strength of our flesh. This is what Moses did when he killed the Egyptian. He may have thought that God would

be pleased with what he considered to be an act of loyalty and solidarity with his Hebrew brothers who were in bondage under the Egyptians. Though our natural tendency may be to use or own strengths in our service to God, we can see from the way that God has worked in the lives of many of His servants as recorded in the Scriptures, that He actually brings us to the point where our own strengths, talents, and abilities are proven to be completely inadequate for the task at hand and the challenges to be faced.

Being raised in the household of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses enjoyed a position in life with a high degree of prestige, power, wealth, and privilege, which had shaped him into a man who was accustomed to using his own strengths and resources to deal with the challenges that he faced. God however, for the next forty years (Acts 7:30, 31-36), would strip Moses of all of the benefits that he had known in Egypt, making him a shepherd, a class of people whom the Egyptians looked down upon and despised (Genesis 46:33-34).

Since he had been raised in Egyptian culture, being a shepherd may have been very distasteful to him. Not only would he be made a shepherd, but he would not even be given his own sheep to tend; he would tend the flocks belonging to someone else, his father in law.

All of the losses, hardships, and indignities that Moses endured were necessary in the sight of God in order to prepare him for the task of shepherding His people Israel and leading them out of Egyptian bondage. This deliverance would not be accomplished by the power of Moses or man, because no man was able to deliver from Pharaoh's hand.

The deliverance would come by the power of God working through a man who would endure forty years of an obscure existence on the far side of the desert, where he was stripped of the dignity and privilege he had once known, and shaped into a vessel prepared for the task and service which God had assigned for him. The result of the sufferings and losses that Moses endured was that he was transformed into a man whom the Scriptures would later characterize in this way: "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3).

This was the way that God chose to prepare Moses for the work that He had for him. God brought him from a place of wealth and privilege in Egypt, to a place of obscurity where for decades he rose no further than the position of a shepherd tending someone else's sheep.

After the forty years of preparation was finished, through long years of adversity on the far side of the desert of as God saw fit, the time had come for Moses to begin the work that God had determined he would do in His service. The Lord then appeared to Moses from the burning bush, calling him to the work and place of service that He had ordained for him, and for which He had prepared him.

It is interesting to note that Moses expressed reluctance and a sense of inadequacy to do what God was calling him to do, saying to the Lord that he had never been eloquent, and that he was “slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Exodus 4:10). It is also interesting to note that others characterized the Apostle Paul in much the same way, as we read in 2 Corinthians 10:10. Paul knew that others had criticized him, mentioning his weak and unimpressive physical appearance and his plain-spoken speech and lack of eloquence. God has no need of man’s eloquence, talents, or abilities to accomplish His work.

God is not impressed with the strength or abilities of man, as we see in Psalm 147:10-11, but He takes delight in those who fear Him, and who set their hopes upon His unfailing love and mercy. All that goes with worldly position and the praise of men is a hindrance in the lives of God’s people when it comes to being used in His service, bearing spiritual fruit that will last. These worldly things, along with man’s sense of self sufficiency and confidence in his own strengths, are among the things that must die in our lives in order that the fruit may be born, as Jesus taught in John 12:24-26.

And once again we recall another teaching of Jesus: “that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15). Jesus taught that those things which are highly esteemed and sought after among men: power, prestige, prominence, the pride of life, material wealth, worldly success and the praise of others – all of the things which are held in high regard among men are detestable in the sight of God. These “detestable” things, as Jesus described them, are the very things that will be removed from our lives as we are being prepared for the work that God has for us, just as we have seen in the life of Moses.

In Conclusion

God has a pre-determined plan and place of service for every one of His people. Preparation for the work that God has ordained for us to do in His service may take years, or even decades, as we can see from the lives of both Joseph and

Moses. And as we can also see from their lives, the process of this preparation will involve sufferings, losses and hardships of various kinds, which is consistent with John 12:24-26 and other passages of Scripture.

When he was a slave in Potiphar's house, and later when he was confined in Pharaoh's prison, Joseph in his wildest dreams could not have imagined what God was going to do as a result of all that he was suffering. Moses also could not possibly have imagined how God would use all of the losses that he had endured for any good purpose.

We can see from the Scriptures that it was given to both Joseph and Moses to be able to look back and see the good that God brought about through the years of suffering and hardship they endured. However, as we consider the experiences of our own lives, we may not be able to look back and see with clarity in this lifetime what good came out of the sufferings that we endured. Instead, our experience may be more like Job's, and we may not be shown what God was accomplishing through our sufferings and losses until we are together with Him in Heaven. Paul taught us in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that now, during our present lives, we see and know and understand only in part, but the time will come when we will see clearly and understand fully.

Paul also taught in Romans 15:4 that everything written in the Scriptures was written to instruct and encourage us. Everything recorded in the Scriptures of the ways in which God has worked in the lives of His servants to prepare them for the work and place of service that He has ordained for them is recorded to teach us about some of the ways in which He may work in our lives as well, as He prepares each of us for the work and place of service that He has ordained for us.

The timeless principle of spiritual fruit bearing revealed by Jesus in John 12:24-26 was at work in the lives of Job, Joseph, and Moses. The sufferings and losses they endured and the good that God brought about through their sufferings are recorded in the Scriptures for our benefit, so that we may have insight and understanding of how God works in the lives of His people to accomplish His will, plan and purpose.

As we have seen from the Scriptures before, the troubles, hardships, and sufferings of our present lives all have eternal value (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Romans 8:17-18, 28, others). Just as we have seen demonstrated in the lives of Job, Joseph and Moses, God will bring forth life and good through the deaths that our

sufferings have wrought in our lives. And as He does so, we will bear a harvest of fruit that will last, which will achieve for us a share in Christ's eternal glory.