

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF MOSES

- I. His Name

“Moses” means “drawn out” (Exodus 2:10). His name at court would be “Ramoses” as the King on the throne was Rameses II (see below).
- II. His Life
 1. The son of Levi - Exodus 2:1

The son of Levi, born of that union, became the greatest man among mere men in the whole history of the world (Numbers 12:3). How far he was removed in genealogy from Levi, it is hard to know: only four generations (Genesis 46:11; Exodus 6:16-20); at least ten or twelve generations (Exodus 12:37; 38:26). This is probably because in some lists only the important heads of families are given. The names of the immediate mother and father of Moses are not certainly known. The mother “*saw that he was a fine child*” (Exodus 2:2); so they defied the commandment of the king (Exodus 1:22) and for three months hid him instead of throwing him into the river.
 2. Adopted prince - Exodus 2:5-10

The princess of Egypt saved the child by adopting him. Thus he would receive her family name. The usual meaning of this royal name was that he was “born of” a royal princess through the intervention of the God Ra. But, since he was not “born of” the princess they fell back upon the primary meaning of the word “drawn out” (Exodus 2:10 - see above). The family name was “Mes” or “Moses.” Pharaoh’s daughter was probably the sister of the king on the throne. She would then be lineal heir to the throne, but debarred by her sex. Josephus relates (Ant. II, IX, 7) that she had no natural son, and thus Moses became heir to the throne, not with the right to supplant the reigning Pharaoh, but to supersede any of his sons.

Very little is known of Moses’ youth and early manhood at the court. He would certainly be educated as a prince. “Instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22).
 3. Friend of the people

The faith mentioned in Hebrews was at work (Hebrews 11:23-28). See Exodus 2:11-14; Acts 7:24. He became practically a traitor and endangered his throne rights and probably his civil rights also. He thought to do right and be a nobody than to be a tyrant and rule Egypt.
 4. Refuge in Midian - Exodus 2:15

We are told nothing of the escape and the journey, how he eluded the vigilance of the court guards and the frontier sentinels. The friend of slaves is strangely safe while within their territory. He reached the Sinaitic province of the empire and lived there. There God mellowed and matured the haughty prince instructed in the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was transformed into the wise, well-poised, leader, statesman, lawgiver, poet and prophet. God usually prepares His great ones in some quiet place away from the haunts of men and near to the “secret place of the most High” (Psalm 91:1).
 5. Leader of Israel - Exodus 3:10

He was given a most appalling commission - to go back home and deliver his kinsman from a terrible slavery at the hand of the most powerful nation on earth. Why was he not arrested as a traitor when he returned to the court?
 6. His own family - Exodus 2:16,21,22
 7. Death - Exodus 34:7

III. Moses' Place In The Scriptures

Joshua 8:30-35; 24:5

1 Samuel 12:6-8

1 Chronicles 23:14-17

Psalms 77:20; 99:6; 105; 106

Isaiah 63:11,12

Jeremiah 15:1

Daniel 9:11-13

Hosea 12:13

Micah 6:4

Malachi 4:4

Matthew 17:3; 19:8

Mark 7:9-13; 9:4; 12:26

Luke 9:30; 16:29-31; 24:27,44

John 1:17,45; 3:14,15; 5:46

Acts 28:23

Romans 5:14

Jude 9

Revelation 15:3

IV. Moses' Work And Character

1. The Author

The Jewish Church, from its most remote antiquity, has ascribed the work (writing of Genesis) to Moses; and the Christian Church from its foundation has attributed it to him too. Jesus and His apostles have completed the evidence and put the question beyond doubt.

There are a few things in the Pentateuch which were probably added by a later hand: Deuteronomy 1:1-5; 2:12; 34:5-12 (Also Genesis 12:6 "*And the Canaanite was then in the land*"; Numbers 21:14 "*In the book of the wars of the Lord.*"). These were probably the work of Ezra, who according to tradition, collected and arranged the Old Testament canon.

From Adam to Noah there was but one man necessary to the correct transmission of the history of this period of 1656 years. This history was probably known to Methuselah (Genesis 5:21,27), who lived to see them both. In like manner, Shem connected Noah and Abraham, having lived to converse with them both; as Isaac did with Abraham and Joseph, from whom these things might be easily conveyed to Moses by Amram who was contemporary with Joseph. Even on the authority of tradition alone these writings stand upon a foundation of credibility. But the unerring Spirit of God directed Moses also in the selection of facts and the ascertaining of dates. In his writings Moses also constructed everything according to the pattern which God showed him in the mount.

2. The Lawgiver

Moses first gave laws concerning the Passover (Exodus 13). At Sinai Moses gave a code of laws known as the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:7). This contains the Moral Law (Exodus 20:1-17). This is followed by a brief code suitable to their present needs and immediate prospects (Exodus 20:24,26; 21-23).

Some of the laws of Moses relating as they did to passing problems, have themselves passed away; some were abrogated by Christ and others explicitly fulfilled; but most of it is the warp and woof of the best in the great codes of the world to this day. The morality of the Decalogue is unapproached among collections of moral precepts. Its divinity, like the divinity of the teachings of Jesus, lies not only in what it includes but what it omits.

The laws of Moses were not a collection of court decisions, but codes given abstractly and arranged in systematic order.

3. The Prophet

Moses' work and character culminate in the prophetic office. It was as prophet that he held the place of highest eminence in the world until a greater Moses came (Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19; Acts 3:20-23). He gave to Israel a ritual of worship which most completely typified the redemptive mercy of God and which is so wonderfully unfolded in Hebrews, as it has been more wonderfully fulfilled in the atoning death of Christ. Moses' revelation of God is transcendent. The vision that Moses gives of God exalts and glorifies Him beyond expression.

The above material is adapted from the teaching materials of Annie Kartonjian (1908-1989) and are from here [Commentary and Notes on Genesis available at muncherian.com/CommentaryGenesis.pdf](http://muncherian.com/CommentaryGenesis.pdf).