

Moses, The Great Man of God

Dub McClish

Introduction

If one is somehow yet unconvinced of the greatness of Moses, perhaps the following three incidents will give him pause:

1. At Hazereth in the Wilderness (Num. 11:35), Aaron and Miriam rebelled against their brother, Moses. That which began as unhappiness with his choice of a wife soon became out-right rebellion against his authority. They suggested that he had no special authority beyond what they possessed because God also spoke through them. God did not hesitate to teach them better. He immediately and severely rebuked them in Moses' presence, reminding them that He spoke to prophets in visions and dreams, but that Moses was no "mere" prophet: "My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses?" (Num. 12:7-8). This passage provides a window into Moses' unique relationship with and estimation by God. This relationship is one of several ways in which the Old Testament lawgiver was typical of the Christ, the New Testament Lawgiver.
2. We also get a glimpse of God's evaluation of and appreciation for Moses in a statement He made to Jeremiah: "Then said Jehovah unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (Jer. 15:1). In effect, God told the prophet that even if the best men who had lived up to that time should intercede for Judah, they could not stay His judgment against rebellious Judah. God implied that Moses was one of the best of the best.
3. Further, on one of the several occasions in which Jesus sought a private place for prayer, He ascended a mountain and took with Him His inner circle of apostles, Peter, John, and James (Luke 9:28). As He was praying, He was temporarily transfigured, likely bearing His heavenly glory for this brief time (v. 29). If this were not sufficiently amazing, Moses and Elijah, resurrected from their Hadean resting places, were privileged to appear before the Lord and discuss with Him His coming death in Jerusalem (vv. 30-31). God apparently bestowed this signal honor upon these two men because they were representative of the law and the prophets (i.e., all of the Old Testament), respectively (Mat. 17:5-8). However, this occasion is surely a further indication of the superlative esteem in which Jehovah held Moses some fifteen centuries after He performed his funeral service in a valley near Pisgah.

We should not wonder, then, that even confirmed ignoramuses in all things Biblical are quite likely to know the name of Moses and perhaps a fact or two about his life. He is just that much of a historical giant, not only in Biblical history, but also in **all** history.

The book of Deuteronomy tells us that Moses lived one hundred twenty years (34:7), and we know that the last forty of those years were spent in the wilderness wanderings (29:5, et

al.). We also know from Moses' pen that he was eighty years old when he and Aaron returned from Midian to challenge Pharaoh (Exo. 7:7). We are indebted to Stephen, the New Testament evangelist, for more complete information. He delivered a homiletical masterpiece with powerful oratory before the corrupt Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-60), consisting of a sweeping summary of Jewish history from Abraham through Solomon. Without Stephen's sermon (in which he literally preached himself to death) we would have no way of knowing how to divide those first eighty years. He gave us the following outline of the one hundred twenty years of Moses' life:

1. The first forty years in Egypt—from his birth to his departure from Egypt (Acts 7:23)
2. The second forty years in Midian—from his departure from Egypt to his return (v. 30)
3. The third forty years in the Wilderness—from the exodus to his death (v. 36)

We will first notice a brief biography of Moses, followed by a study of some of the characteristics of his greatness.

The Biography of Moses

His Birth, Families, and Name

Moses was born in a sorrowful circumstance and time for Hebrew families: "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor" (Exo. 1:13, cf. 14).¹ Pharaoh so feared the potential of the burgeoning Hebrew populace, should it turn on him, that he decided he must reduce the risk. He first decreed that the midwives murder every baby boy they delivered (v. 16). When the midwives foiled this plan, he ordered that the Hebrew baby boys were at birth to be cast into the Nile.²

Into this grievous political, moral, and social maelstrom Moses was born of Amram and Jochabed (Exo. 6:20), both Levites (2:1). Moses was the youngest of the daughter and two sons born to this union. Miriam, Moses' sister, was the firstborn, and we infer that she was at least twelve years Moses' senior (cf. 2:4-8). Aaron, Moses' brother, was three years his senior (7:7), thus a mere toddler at the time of Moses' birth.

There was something "special" about baby Moses; he was a "goodly child" (2:2; Heb. 11:23) and "exceeding fair" (Acts 7:20). "By faith" his parents hid him for three months, disobeying the immoral edict (Heb. 11:23; cf. Acts 5:29). Each day brought them nearer a dreaded decision. If Moses were discovered, he would certainly be seized and slain. M.G. Kyle appropriately observed concerning this poignant circumstance:

The time soon came when it was impossible longer to hide the child.... The mother resolved upon a plan which was at once a pathetic imitation of obedience to the commandment of the king, an adroit appeal to womanly sympathy, and, if it succeeded, a subtle scheme to bring the cruelty of the king home to his own attention.³

With broken heart Jochabed placed her infant son in a box and left it on the river for an uncertain fate. She waited anxiously for some word from young Miriam who was keeping an eye on the little boat with its living cargo. That the Egyptian princess discovered the tiny boat and its passenger and decided to spare and adopt him seems an unmistakable demonstration of the providence of Jehovah. The name *Moses* came from the fact that he was drawn from the water (Exo. 2:10).⁴

Moses would have two mothers. His adoptive mother had no reason to suspect that Miriam was his sister or that she would fetch his actual mother as nurse. Pharaoh's cruel edict likely left many Hebrew mothers with ample supplies of nursing milk. The princess secured the services of Jochabed to take the child and nurse it, with the promise of payment for her services; so Moses was returned to Jochabed's empty arms. Thus Moses would have two families — one Hebrew and one Egyptian.

In one moment, the dagger that had pierced a mother's heart was now removed and the deep wound healed. She truly had a "win-win" situation: Her beloved son was assured of life, she would be able to nurse him, and she would be paid to do so. Surely, this circumstance was also providential as God thus began working out His plans to deliver His people from Egypt.⁵ It is both ironic and interesting that God used the unwitting daughter of Pharaoh to begin executing these freedom plans.

At the age of forty years (as discussed below), Moses fled Egypt for his life and sojourned the next forty years in Midian. Soon after fleeing he came upon a well where he assisted some girls with watering their father's sheep. This chivalrous act led to his meeting Reuel, "the priest of Midian," the father of the girls he had helped (2:16–20). In his gratitude, Reuel (called "Jethro" in 3:1, et al.) gave Moses a place to live, a daughter (Zipporah) in marriage, and a job tending his flock (2:21–22; 3:1). Two sons were born to him and Zipporah (2:22; 4:20; 18:3; Acts 7:29). We know little more about Moses' family.

Moses' Training and Abilities

Moses was not a thorough autobiographer of his early years. He covers the span of his first forty years in only five verses (2:11–15), most of it in part of only one verse: "And it came to

pass in those days, when Moses was grown up..." (v. 11a). We could wish for more, but God's motive in revealing His will has never been the mere satisfaction of human curiosity.

We do not know Moses' age when Jochabed delivered him to the princess. The record simply states: "And the child grew, and she [Jochabed] brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son..." (v. 10a). Some have inferred that Jochabed gave Moses to his adoptive mother at the Hebrew weaning age of three.⁶ However, this inference (as we shall later see) may not take all relevant matters into account.

The Bible is silent on Moses' childhood, adolescent, and teenage years. Those years are covered with a simple summary: "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up..." (2:11). The Hebrews letter uses the same age description concerning Moses: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up..." (11:24). *When he was grown up* apparently coincides with Stephen's description, *But when he was well-nigh forty years old...* (Acts 7:23a). The KJV has here, "And when he was full forty years old," which is apparently the better reading.⁷

We know no more details on the first period of Moses' life except Stephen's sweeping summary statement: "And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works" (Acts 7:22). As an adopted prince, Moses enjoyed all of the princely privileges of the most powerful, wealthy, and advanced nation on earth. Rawlinson says that education included "orthography, grammar, history, theology, medicine, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and engineering."⁸ He, whose law should have slain Moses aborning, instead, in God's providence, helps prepare him to emancipate the Hebrew slaves.

Stephen specifies that Moses "was mighty in his words and works." As part of Pharaoh's court, his privileges and opportunities were many. Even if he lacked eloquence and was "slow of speech" (Exo. 4:10), the words Pharaoh's grandson surely carried great authority. When Moses spoke, people listened. Likely, he was given certain responsibilities of state that carried with them commensurate authority.

Moses' Consciousness of Who He Was

Although outwardly an Egyptian, Moses knew that he was a Hebrew. We earlier noted the speculation that Jochabed relinquished Moses to his adoptive mother at the age of three. Even if this inference is correct, there is no reason to suppose that Jochabed never saw Moses afterward. She may have been allowed "visitation" privileges (either in her home or in Moses' new home). It is possible that Jochabed was retained as a nursemaid in the palace for this

toddler (either on a “live-in” or a “commuter” basis). Certainly, by some means (most likely through his Hebrew mother) **Moses knew and valued his ethnic origin**. It is unlikely that her influence over him only for his first three years is sufficient to explain his strong ethnic identity and loyalty.

Moses’ Pivotal Decision

When Moses was forty “it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel” (v. 23b). He “went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens” (Exo. 2:11). By *visit*, Stephen meant more than a mere social call. This decision and visit seem to coincide with the time when Moses “By faith...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” and chose to share the ill treatment of God’s (and his) people (Heb. 11:24–25). He not only knew who he was – he determined to identify himself completely with his kindred, despised though they were.

Jochabed must have instilled Moses with a deep faith in God as well as a consciousness of his true identity. It took great faith for Moses to turn his back on all of the advantages and pleasures of court that were his. However, he knew that all such pleasures were but for “a season.” Through faith, his eye was on the true riches and pleasures to be found in doing God’s bidding; he could “see” Him Who is invisible. He counted being a poor and despised servant of God of greater value than being an heir to the treasures of Egypt (vv. 26–27). His faith-based decision to cast his lot with God’s people would prove crucial and pivotal for him, for Israel, and for the entire world thereafter.

Moses’ conscience would not allow him to enjoy comfort and privilege, knowing his brethren suffered greatly. It was time to do something about it: “He supposed that his brethren understood that God by his hand was giving them deliverance...” (Acts 7:25a; cf. Exo. 2:14a).⁹ Moses must have believed that his act of defending a fellow-Hebrew by killing his oppressor (Acts 7:24) would signal to all of Israel that he (an Egyptian prince, no less!) was ready to champion their cause and lead them to freedom, “but they understood not” (v. 25b). Ironically, Moses was ready to lead his people to freedom at this point, whereas forty years later he sought to avoid doing so (Exo. 3:11–4:17).

The next day, as he sought to settle a dispute between two Hebrews, one of them reproached him for killing the Egyptian, as if to say, “You may be an Egyptian prince and judge, but who made you a prince and judge over us?” (Exo. 2:14a; cf. Acts 7:27). Only with difficulty can one imagine a sorer demonstration of ingratitude and neglect of opportunity than this. Realizing that his deed was known, Moses rightly supposed that Pharaoh would count him

a traitor and an insurrectionist: "Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh..." (Exo. 2:15). With these few words he concluded the record of the first forty years of his life in Egypt.

The Occupations of Moses

From the foregoing information, it is obvious that Moses' first forty years were spent as a **prince** in Egypt. His next forty years were spent as a shepherd in the employ of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the land of Midian. His real life's work did not begin until he was eighty years old. At that age, he became the great **emancipator** of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Upon leading them to freedom, he then became their **guide** through the wilderness as they traveled toward Canaan.

He was a unique **prophet** of a special class. God said of him that he was not like "ordinary" prophets: "My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches..." (Num. 12:7-8). God gave his covenant law to Moses to give to the people, and thus was both **law-receiver** and **law-giver**. He was the Lord's spokesman and mouthpiece. Jehovah thereby invested him as the **spiritual** and **civil head** of Israel the last forty years of his life. To confirm Moses in these terrible responsibilities, God empowered him to perform manifold wonders and signs, both of blessing and punishment. He was Israel's steady and faithful **guide** through the trackless wilderness wanderings. When or where has there ever been another man who fulfilled such awful responsibilities so well?

His "Great Commission"

In the last forty years of Moses' life, God commissioned him to do many things on various occasions (e.g., part the Red Sea, smite the rock for water, come up into the mountain to receive the law, et al.). One commission God gave him looms high above and serves as the foundation of all of the others.

While tending Jethro's flock in Horeb (i.e., Sinai), Moses saw a bush that burned but was not consumed with the fire. God spoke to him from this bush and identified himself as the God of Moses' father, as well as of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:2-6). From that announcement, He went on to tell Moses that it was time to free Israel from its bondage, and that he was to be their emancipator (vv. 7-10). That which Moses had voluntarily attempted to do forty years earlier was now thrust upon his shoulders as a God-given charge. God directly and unmistakably commissioned him to this task. Moses' various attempts to excuse himself eventually angered

God, and He would have none of them (3:11–4:17). Had Moses refused to execute this commission none of the others would have ever been given, at least not through him.

At God's order, Aaron traveled to Sinai to meet Moses where he "told Aaron all the words of Jehovah wherewith he had sent him, and all the signs wherewith he had charged him" (v. 28). These "words of Jehovah" included the fact that Aaron was to be his younger brother's mouthpiece and assistant in the awesome task before him. The two brothers then left Horeb and returned to Egypt to do God's bidding, thus ending the second forty-year period of Moses' life.

His Work as an Author

Moses is the "traditional" author of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. More importantly, the Bible declares him to be such. Critics have for two centuries enjoyed raising all sorts of doubts with fanciful and sometimes ridiculous theories about the authorship of these books, all of which are designed to convince their followers that Moses did not write them. They have no credible evidence that any other one or ones wrote them. They occupy a position characterized by objection, speculation, cynicism, and skepticism that has spread like a cancer through theological circles, destroying the faith of many.

It is not within the purview of this chapter to treat the Mosaic authorship in any detail (an entire chapter in this volume is devoted to that discussion, to which readers are referred). Let us consider the following simple facts:

1. Moses claims to be the author of Exodus (17:14; 24:4–8; 34:27–28), which is clearly a continuation of the book of Genesis (cf. Gen. 46:1–50:26 with Exo. 1:1–8; 13:19). Leviticus is even more clearly a continuation of the book of Exodus (cf. Exo. 40:38 with Lev. 1:1). Moses received the words of Leviticus as part of the revelation of God in Sinai. Thus, Exodus and Leviticus have the same author—Moses. The book of Numbers, the record of Israel's journeys in the wilderness, is expressly attributed to Moses (Num. 33:1–2). Near the close of the book of Deuteronomy the entire book is attributed to Moses (Deu. 31:9, 22, 24). With good reasons these books have been called "the books of Moses" for many centuries.
2. Jesus attributed the Pentateuch to Moses in numerous passages (Mat. 8:4; 19:8; Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:47; 7:19). Was the Son of God mistaken about who wrote the first five books of the Bible?
3. No evidence has been set forth to demonstrate that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch.

As penman of these foundational books of the Bible, Moses is undoubtedly the best-selling writer of all time, as well as the most influential writer the world will ever see. Readers should bear in mind that the Holy Spirit is the author, and Moses was merely the scribe.

The Death of Moses

After forty years of trials, tears, and travail with the people of God in the wilderness, Moses finally brought them to the eastern shore of Canaan, their land of promise. It was time for them to cross the natural boundary of the Jordan River and begin enjoying the fruits of the promise God had made to their fathers. However, Moses would not be allowed to enter the land because, said Jehovah, “ye rebelled against my word,” referring to his striking the rock instead of speaking to it to produce water, as God had commanded (Num. 20:10–13; 27:13; Deu. 1:37; 33:51; et al.). In preparation for their entering the land, Moses delivered the long discourse of the book of Deuteronomy (“second law”), wherein he repeated the law as given at Sinai and strictly charged them to keep it and teach in all succeeding generations.

Though in God’s justice He could not allow Moses to enter Canaan, in His mercy He allowed him to view it. He commanded Moses by himself to ascend Mount Nebo in Moab, “to the top of Pisgah,” adjacent to Jericho, from which he got a panoramic view of the land (32:49, 52; 34:1–4). Remarkably, God commanded him to die while he was in the mount, and so he did (32:50; 34:5). Perhaps as a final tribute to Moses’ greatness, God Himself laid this faithful servant to rest somewhere in a valley of old Moab, undiscovered in 1500 B.C., and still undiscovered to this hour (v. 6). Although he lived to the age of 120 years, his eyesight nor his physical vigor were still intact (v. 7). Israel mourned his death for thirty days (v. 8).

Some Characteristics of Moses’ Greatness

A Man of Faith

“By faith” Moses refused Egyptian privilege and chose to suffer with God’s people (Heb. 11:24). “By faith” He fled Egypt to live as a stranger in the wilderness for forty years (v. 27a). “By faith” he endured that period of wilderness life because he could “see” “him who is invisible” (v. 27b). “By faith” forty years later he instituted the Passover (v. 28). Biblical faith—the faith of Moses—is defined in the first words of Hebrews 11. It involves matters which we cannot see with the physical eye (2 Cor. 5:7), but about which we can nonetheless entertain assurances of their reality. Evidence produces conviction, and God has never required men to have faith in anything He has said without sufficient evidence to support it. This faith is not optional, but absolutely obligatory; one possessing it both believes in the existence of God and in His Word (Heb. 11:6). Moses’ faith shines all the brighter because he grew up in a time of sparse revelation and no written communication of God’s will.

It was this sort of faith, therefore, that Moses had and out of which he acted to fulfill God’s commands. As with all of the persons named in Hebrews 11, His faith was not a mere

dogma or opinion, but an activating principle of life. He understood that “faith apart from works is dead” (Jam. 2:26). There is no greatness of achievement without greatness of faith.

Moses’ faith included trust in God and His promises. Without this facet of faith, it is impossible to please God, for one must not only believe in God, but trust in His promise to reward those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Many profess belief in the Father or the Son of God but have little or no use for His Word. They are a “package deal” and cannot be separated. Jesus said: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Let us cultivate the fulness of faith as Moses demonstrated.

A Man of Meekness

We need no exercise of the powers of inference to know of Moses’ meekness, though many circumstances demonstrate as much. Moses described himself as follows: “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). In some circumstances and from some tongues this would be a boastful statement. However, from Moses, his entire life is testimony to its truthfulness. The setting in which it appears is where Aaron and Miriam challenged his authority in a sordid display of arrogance and jealousy. Rather than respond directly to their challenge, in his meekness, he left the judgment of their behavior in the hands of God, Who responded suddenly and decisively (vv. 4–12).

Moses’ demonstrated his meekness on this occasion. Rather than being vengeful, Moses meekly accepted Aaron’s repentance and earnestly cried for the Lord to heal his leprous sister (v. 13). His hesitancy to go back to Egypt as God’s emancipator may have been from meekness as much as any motive (Exo. 3:11; 4:10; cf. 6:12, 30). We see this trait in his intercession with God for the people in the matter of the golden calf (32:10–14; 31–32). When confronted with Korah and his rebellion, Moses “fell upon his face” rather than seeking personal vengeance (Num. 16:4; cf. v. 15). A man not excelling in meekness could never have borne all of the ungodly attacks and murmuring he endured from a stiff-necked and selfish people.

Meekness has to do with strength under control and refusal to press one’s felt “rights” to the limits. Meekness will cause one to suffer wrongs rather than create worse wrongs. Meekness is an inner spirit that produces gentleness in action and speech. The meek person is self-effacing rather than self-glorifying. Rather than connoting weakness or cowardice, meekness requires great inner strength and self-control. Negatively, a meek person is not self-assertive, proud,

haughty, boastful, or vain. Humility and lowliness are marks of the meek. Jesus said such will “inherit the earth” (Mat. 5:5).

A Man of Prayer

We often see Moses in prayer. His access to God in prayer was much like the Savior’s in that God and he had a “face to face” and a “mouth to mouth” communication relationship (Exo. 33:11; Num. 12:8; Deu. 34:10). He often interceded for the people, as noted above, even when the people were not deserving of it and were opposing both God and him. Moses also besought God’s blessing upon the people (Num. 10:35–36; Deu. 1:11; 33:1–29).

Jesus, the great Antitype of Moses, teaches us to prayer both by numerous precepts and examples. God delights in the prayers of His people, even though He knows our needs before we ask (Mat. 6:8). We have not because we ask not (Jam. 4:2). The Lord urges us to ask, seek, and knock at Heaven’s gate (Mat. 7:7–11). We need to take Paul’s injunction on prayer to heart: “Pray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17–18).

A Man of Perseverance

We must marvel at the perseverance of Moses. Without it, he would have early thrown up his hands in frustration and defeat in the face of apparent insurmountable obstacles and difficulties in his mission. He not only had to contend with a hard-hearted Pharaoh, but with a stiff-necked mass of perhaps 2 million of his own people. Pharaoh did not want to let them go, and the people were not exactly enthusiastic about their prospect of leaving Egypt. Even when, by God’s power, Moses led them out, he then had to contend with their murmuring at almost every encampment and sometimes between them. Many of them rebelled at his authority and even his own brother and sister were jealous of it. They were so faithless at Kadesh-Barnea that they ruined the opportunity to enter the land of promise quickly. They were on the verge of stoning Moses and selecting a captain to take them back to Egyptian bondage. Talk about mental toughness – the perseverance of Moses demanded a large degree of it.

So many good works are never brought to fruition because we do not persevere. Many are good “starters,” but not so many good “finishers” can be found. The test of faithfulness is not in the pleasant and agreeable times and circumstances. Rather, when the wind is in one’s face, the road is rocky and steep, and the enemy is attacking that faithfulness is tested. When one perseveres under such circumstances, he proves his mettle. The New Testament frequently urges us to exercise “patience.” However, the word thus translated actually means “endurance” or “steadfastness.” For lack of this trait many who obey the Gospel fall away quickly. For failure

at this point many no longer preach, teach a Bible class, or serve as elders or deacons. We should not wonder that “patience” is one of the attributes that when practiced will cause one to be fruitful and when it is lacking will cause spiritual blindness and relapse (2 Pet. 1:5-9).

A Man Who Listened to Wise Counsel

When Moses began leading the people from the Red Sea to Sinai, he was judging all their complaints (Exo. 18:13-16). His father-in-law, Jethro, warned that he would soon “wear away” if he continued this practice because it was too much for him to do (v. 18). He then counseled Moses to divide the labor by training and appointing judges to settle all but the most difficult cases (vv. 19-22). By doing this Moses would not be overburdened and the people would be happier at getting their cases heard (v. 23).

Moses’ reaction to Jethro’s counsel is an index to his character. Rather than being resentful of this advice, he saw the wisdom and logic of it and gladly implemented it (vv. 24-26). Many folk are so proud and egotistical that they seem to believe that only they have any good ideas or wise thoughts. To them, suggestions for improvement of their methods are equivalent to personal assaults. Wise men not only accept wise counsel when given (as did Moses), but they seek such counsel, for they realize that “Where there is no counsel, purposes are disappointed; But in the multitude of counsellors they are established” (Pro. 15:22; cf. 11:14; 24:6).

A Man Who Was Compassionate

Compassion was likely a major motivation that caused Moses to champion the cause of the Hebrew slaves while he was still a prince in Pharaoh’s court (Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24-26). We see the compassionate side of Moses in his defense of the Hebrew slave against his taskmaster and in his attempt to settle peacefully a dispute between two Hebrews (Exo. 2:11-13). We can observe his compassion in the numerous times he seeks God’s mercy for the people when they deserved His judgment. His compassion is easily recognized in his prayer for God to cure Miriam of Leprosy, although she had just attacked his authority in a show of petty jealousy (Num. 12:2-13). He took no pleasure in the pain and suffering of others but felt it with them and sought to relieve such.

Few traits are more noble and beautiful than this one. It is seen in almost every word and deed of the Lord. He taught its beauty through the object lesson we call “The Parable of the Good Samaritan,” saying that the Samaritan stopped and rendered aid because “was moved with compassion” for the dying man (Luke 10:33). Paul urges this characteristic upon us: “Put

on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. 3:12). Peter echoed the exhortation of Paul: "Finally, be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded" (1 Pet. 3:8).

A Man Who Was Not Materialistic

Had Moses been materialistic, he was in the perfect setting to do so – the court of the richest and mightiest nation on earth at the time. However, from someone (perhaps his mother) he learned that life did not consist in the abundance of one's possessions (Luke 12:15). His faith (as earlier discussed) enabled him to see beyond the present and material sphere with all of its trappings. He did not allow either the treasures of Egypt or the pleasures of sin available to him in the Egyptian court to corrupt him (Heb. 11:25-26). He forsook not only the wrath of the king, but all of the wealth and fleshly indulgence of Egypt when he left as well (v. 27). As the great leader of Israel for forty years, Moses had many opportunities to enrich himself with the gold, silver, and jewels brought out of Egypt and the spoils of war, but he never once did so. In the rebellion of Korah, he stated in his plea of innocence to God: "I have not taken one ass from them" (Num. 16:15).

One may accurately measure a person's character by his attitude toward things. One cannot be both spiritually minded and materialistic: "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24). John warned: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Paul's warning will never be out of date:

But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

A Man Who Was Not Power-Mad

As with wealth opportunities, Moses had great power opportunities. Many have long speculated that he may have ascended the imperial throne had he remained in Egypt and "behaved himself." Even if he were not heir to the throne, his openings for political power still would likely have been many. He obviously cared for no things. He shrank from the obvious place of power God chose for him when He commissioned Moses to free His people of their slavery. When Jethro suggested he delegate some of his authority to various judges, Moses did not count his authority something to be grasped (Exo. 18:17-26). When Aaron made the golden

calf, God was ready to destroy the entire nation and make of Moses the great nation he sought in rebellious Israel (Exo. 32:10). However, Moses begged God to reconsider, which He did (v. 14). Although vested by God with great authority and power, of which various ones (e.g., Aaron, Miriam, Korah, et al.) were greatly jealous, he never flaunted or abused it.

How unlike Moses so many are today. They seek not to serve, but to be masters. They seek not to submit, but to control. They seek not to be helpers, but to be masters. Congregations are often torn asunder by men or women of the disposition to rule or ruin, and sometimes they do both. John exposed and chastised a brother named Diotrephes, “who loveth to have the preeminence” (3 John 9). Elders are warned against “lording” over their respective congregations (1 Pet. 5:3). Moses likely would never have succeeded in the work God called him to do had he succumbed to the allurements of power. Those who seek power for the sake of controlling others and exalting themselves today are sure to fail.

Conclusion

Many great servants of God have graced the earth whose names and careers appear in the Sacred Text. Many great servants have lived since the inspired men laid their pens and parchments aside, some of whom have lived and still live in modern times. However, God’s assessment of Moses indicates that none greater than he, apart from the Christ Himself has lived or will live on earth. He was a spiritual giant that towered above all others.

Well did Israel pay tribute to this great man of God with thirty days of weeping and mourning (Deu. 34:8). The writer of the epilogue of Deuteronomy (obviously not Moses), gave due honor to him in summation: “And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face” (v. 10). Truly, there was not another like him in Israel or in all the world like him until that One came of Whom Moses prophesied: “Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deu. 18:15; Acts 3:22).

Endnotes

1. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
2. We have no way of knowing how long in advance of Moses’ birth Pharaoh enacted his murderous edict, but it began before Moses’ birth and it seems certain that it lasted until the exodus. Aaron was three years older than Moses (Exo. 7:7). The fact that he was not killed at birth could mean that the murderous decree was issued **after** he was born, thus implying that it was enacted perhaps only two years or so before Moses’ birth. However, since Moses survived the decree, it is at least possible that the decree was in effect when Aaron was born and he also survived it. As awful as Pharaoh’s cruel edict was, and as many thousands of infant deaths as it likely caused, he

was a piker compared to the ravenous, “kill-’em-at-all-cost” abortion kingpins in our time, especially in the USA. Even if the edict lasted a century, given the Hebrews’ head count shortly after the Exodus he could hardly have even come close to ending the lives of more than 40 million babies. Abortionists in our nation alone – in only 31 years (since the Roe v. Wade judgment in 1973) – have ended the lives of this stunning number.

Note some parallels between Pharaoh and his infanticide decree and the modern promoters of abortion:

- a. They both are motivated by political expediency and power-mania
 - b. Pharaoh was a pagan idolater, and those who champion abortion in our nation have to be worshipers of self or some other god (notwithstanding their denials) to favor this Godless practice
 - c. When people ruthlessly devalue and disrespect human life for one age group, sooner or later they will do so for other age groups (viz., Pharaoh began by devaluing life in adult slaves, then made his decrees concerning infants; abortionists began by devaluing life for infants in the womb, and this has predictably encouraged the concept of euthanasia)
 - d. Pharaoh subscribed to the philosophy that the end justifies the means, as the abortion protagonists most certainly do.
3. M.G. Kyle, “Moses,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1939), 3:2084.
 4. Scholars argue over whether the “she” who named Moses was the princess or Jochabed. Grammatically, it could be either. However, those who think the princess named him must struggle mightily to find an Egyptian word corresponding to anything akin to *Moses* that relates to drawing something out. It seems more likely that Jochabed named him, using a form of the Hebrew word, *masa*, “to draw forth.” For additional discussion of this subject see *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994 ed.), pp. 794–95.
 5. Who knows what potential resides in the life of any infant? What an awful crime to snuff out that spark before it has a chance to become a flame.
 6. George Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M Spence and Joseph S. Exell (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1950), 1:2:25; Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, reprint), 1:133.
 7. *The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Pub., 1975), p.363; R.J. Knowling, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980 reprint), 2:188; Robert Young, *Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956).
 8. Rawlinson, *ibid*.
 9. We can, from this rejection, better understand why Moses would later respond to God’s clear commission: “But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah hath not appeared unto thee” (Exo. 4:1).

[**Note:** I wrote this MS for and presented a digest of it orally at the 2nd Annual Schertz Lectures, hosted by the Schertz, TX, Church of Christ, Nov. 14–18, 2004. It was published in the book of the lectures, *Studies in Exodus*, ed. Dub McClish (The Gospel Journal, Inc., Cibolo, TX). The Annual Schertz Lectures were successors to the Annual Denton Lectures when they were discontinued in 2002 by the Pearl St. Church of Christ, Denton, TX.]

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