

**CHAPTER XI**  
**Moses**  
Exodus - Numbers

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Hints to Bible Study  
The Colorado College of Divine Science  
Denver, 1920.

Genesis, the book of beginnings, is the history of the origin of the Hebrew people. It deals with the family and the dignified patriarchal form of government. Exodus is the organization of those various families into one united nation; their departure from Egypt; and the codification of the necessary laws for their government. The oldest code of laws in the Bible is the Book of the Covenant, which is from the nineteenth to the twenty-fourth chapters of Exodus. These are by many conceded to be of Mosaic origin. Since Genesis was rewritten at least a thousand years later, its historical value is by no means as verifiable as Exodus.

The Hyksos kings were overthrown and the native dynasty again came into power. The Pharaoh of the oppression is generally supposed to be Rameses II and the Pharaoh of the exodus his son and successor Menephtah, who began his reign about 1300 B.C. This coincides with the statement: "There arose up a new king which knew not Joseph." Naturally those Egyptian monarchs feared this great nation which under the patronage of preceding kings had grown to very formidable proportions within their borders, and would look with disfavor on anything Asiatic. So all possible means to check their growth and render them powerless by reducing them to slavery became the policy of the Egyptian Pharaohs.

Great men are the result of the needs of their age. They embody the composite consciousness of their race and are the supply to the national demand. A national need was never greater than this one; for one of the outstanding characters of all time is Moses.

Again the Call. It came to Abraham to move from Chaldea with his family. It comes to Moses to move from Egypt with his nation. The task confronting him is not only the unwillingness of Pharaoh to let go of those whom he had made into profitable slaves, but also to stimulate to open rebellion this nation which had lost its initiative under the hardships of its taskmasters. It required extraordinary genius to meet this condition; which Moses possessed with self-abnegation and the courage of his own convictions.

Moses was singularly equipped for his great work through his birth and education. It is too strange not to be true, for no flight of the human imagination ever equals the great truths that actually happen in a world that rests under the eternal shadow of the Almighty. The thread of the narrative of Moses' history is lost within much statement

of law in Exodus and Numbers. Professor Moulton in the "Modern Reader's Bible" enables us to follow the story of his life easily, by using smaller type for the legal enactments.

Biography is always valuable, lives of great men are inseparable from history, and as Longfellow tells us, remind us that we can make our lives sublime. Hebrew biography and history are never mere chronicles of events. They are interpretations of God in His dealings with His people. Historic accuracy of time or events is not essentially the purpose of these writers, but to tell how God guided, watched over, and supplied the every need of this nation, the primal reason for all of their literature.

The life of Moses is divided into three forties. Since the Hebrew always wrote under numerical symbols, the question is--are those figures symbolic of perfect time, four being the number of perfection, or is there in the mathematical accuracy of the universe a method which works out perfectly to those who live closely under its laws? Moses stands as a synonym for law, the type of perfect manhood on the human plane. Scientists tell us that normal length for all animal life is five times its maturity. Counting man's maturity from the early twenties, one hundred and twenty years is the natural span of man's life, and we are told that Moses reached this age with his natural forces not abated. The soul never matures, for it is not under what we call natural law; it knows no time, no space, no material walls. In the life of Jesus we see natural law transcended, so we have come to see that natural law is but human belief, and the only law is the spiritual.

Great lives are the natural lives; the little, contracted life has not allowed itself to expand. In great men God has been permitted to have the right of way and expansion is the result. The book of Exodus fairly sings of the Presence. Moses was born under the conviction of the saving Power. The oppression had reached its harshest point, the boy babies were all to be slain, the race to be exterminated. His mother determined to save her child. He can be safe only under royal favor, and with the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove she laid her plans. What woman could resist her beautiful babe? The daughter of Pharaoh must see him. The princess proved herself to be a true woman, the child was saved, and she bestowed on him the Egyptian name Moses.

Nursed by his own mother, educated in the palace of the Pharaoh, the man reached his fortieth year. Two roads lay before him--the royal road to wealth, position, power. Over against this the championship of a race oppressed and powerless--an enslaved people. This man nurtured at the breast of his Hebrew mother, never hesitated, but chose that road which forever closed the royal palace to him.

His sympathy for the Hebrews led to his killing one of their taskmasters, and he must flee the country. He found refuge with the Midian priest, Jethro, married his daughter Zipporah, and tended the flocks of his father-in-law. He was taught of this Midianite

priest, and the religion which we call Judaism emanated from Jethro, who was always a valued friend and advisor of Moses.

Here in the land of Midian, near Mt. Horeb, the Cosmic Vision came to Moses, and this benign Presence remained throughout the life of the man. We find Moses arguing with it of his own unworthiness to accomplish the tremendous task of gaining the consent of Pharaoh to lead his people out of the dominion of Egypt. Then we see the gradual breaking down of his own mental limitations, for whoever accomplished a big work in this way had ever failed to break through his limiting belief of himself and rise into the Infinite Belief in him?

"Who has more obedience than I, masters me," Emerson tells us. Moses found the One to whom he was to render obedience. Jacob, the self seeker, could not get the *name*, which was so graciously given to Moses, the self eliminator. I AM WHAT I AM is the comprehensive rendering of this by modern scholarship. I am what I am, perfect, eternal, spiritual. To Me the temporal and material are non-existent. Duality, time, space, weight are not in my Mind. Sin, sickness, sorrow and death are but inventions of human thought: I AM WHAT I AM.

Moses was now eighty years of age and his work was just commencing. A great work requires great preparation. He presented himself before Pharaoh, but this king is more subtle than his predecessor; the other would exterminate the race, this one had made of them a source of income and he hardened his heart and would not let them go. It is the will of Jehovah, however, that the people go, and who yet has defied that Will and lived?

How ignorant we are still about natural elements and conditions? How far reaching is man's control of these elements? Jesus, we are sure would say, Absolute. Did he not control the winds and the waves? All the plagues of Egypt were but intensified conditions to which that country which has been called "The gift of the Nile" was subject. The reddish color of the Nile, owing to the debris of vegetable and animal defilement; the locusts, the frogs, the cattle diseases, the storm of hail, all had been known before and have been since. "All nature is on the side of the one who would rise" and right royally she rallied to the aid of the Israelite at this time.

From this time dates the Passover, for did not Jehovah pass over the houses of the Hebrews and slay only the first born of the Egyptians? They are free now, and the third division of the life of Moses commences. The final culmination of the deliverance comes to us in the Song of Moses and Miriam, his sister: "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

It is not in these great heroic movements that the accurate measure of man's stature can be taken; but in the sustained strength which does not yield when the stimulated interest which comes with a movement into new conditions is gone, and the long, slow process of reconstruction commences. A chain is only as strong as its weakest

link, but the character of Moses yields not under any pressure. He fills "the measure of the stature of man." The people whom he led from Egypt had lost their virility and initiative in serfdom. Not until these have passed away, and a new generation is born and reared in freedom and under his tutelage, can they move forward and take the land promised to their fathers. Moses never fails either in heroic action or in the long tedious years in which he must settle their petty disputes, meet their murmurings and ingratitude, and supply their needs both physical and spiritual.

Exodus and Numbers are books of miracles because they are books of the Presence. The water never fails, and the herb which sweetens the bitter water is at hand; where there is no water the barren rock is made to flow. The manna with its lessons stimulating industry and rebuking covetousness fell as needed. For his daily bread man must work, nor is he entitled to more recompense than that his daily needs be supplied. When we gather more, is it not an abomination in the house? Storehouses may be full of the wisdom of man, but Paul tells us, "The wisdom of man is foolishness unto God." The guidance is unmistakable; the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night; when to go forward, when to stand still, always clear.

The life of Egypt under foreign oppression, is the symbol of man under the hard taskmasters of sensuality, pride and avarice. The deliverance under Moses is the freedom man gains from these taskmasters as he learns the law of life; for we can never come under Grace except we first know the law. Law must be known in order to be fulfilled, as we must know the law of music before we make music. In the desert is the discipline and education which enable us to come into the promised land of our own creative power. Step by step, from bondage to freedom, can we trace the way for every living soul. We too, unconscious of the presence, see the cloud and the pillar of fire. We, too, in invoking this Power, have had the manna fall, and the rock gush forth its living water. We too, in using our creative power selfishly, have had the loathsome stench come into our nostrils because of it.

Moses is composite man. He is father, mother, sister, brother, friend, judge, sustainer, and supplier to his people. His great mind can harbor no jealousies. Jealousy is always the sin of the little mind, in fact it is what constitutes littleness; for it is the belief that another has a better endowment than one's self. It chokes out the passage of the inheritance that belongs to all equally. Moses wants no monopoly of God's favors. "Enviest thou for my sake?" he says to Joshua. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." The great soul does not want leadership; but the companionship of equal souls that will be a stimulus to better endeavor.

On tablets of stone stand the great commandments of Moses. To break them is to break ourselves. They are laws which are written in the very constitution of the universe. It is the first half of the ladder that we must climb as we ascend Godward. Beyond it lies spiritual law, but there is no means under heaven whereby we may come to that second law save as we fulfill the first.

Moses lived under the gracious Presence, and it focused its rays in his heart and they radiated from thence to the nation. The Christian revelation could never have been made had not this great revelation preceded it. But he who lived under the shadow of the Law, hid in the cleft of the rocks, can only see the "back parts" of God. That which is "existent behind all law, which made them and, lo, they are," can be revealed only to one greater than Moses.

Gleaming behind the Saviour of men will forever loom the great figure of him who thundered the law from Sinai. He whose reward was Pisgah's heights from whence he saw the promised land afar, and in Spirit perceived the people whom he loved better than he loved himself pass over into safety, laid the foundation of true religion broad in the roots of reality.

What matters what happens to the individual if his life has aided the race to go forward? Great souls only ask the privilege of serving, and of being conscious that their lives have increased the leverage which raises the race to a broader vista and its consequent greater expression. Across the centuries the gracious benediction falls upon us and, loving and appreciating the inspirer of it, we too, may reflect in our faces that shining which was in his when, "He wist not that the skin of his face shone."

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;  
The Lord make his face to shine upon  
thee, and be gracious unto thee;  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon  
thee, and give thee peace.