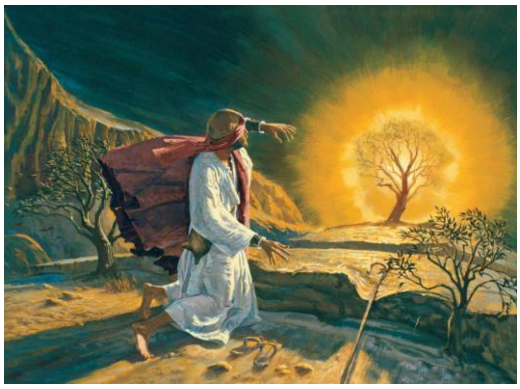
Moses – From Prince of Egypt to Leader of the Hebrews



Over many centuries, the followers of Abraham, known as the **Hebrews**, suffered terrible hardships. They had originally settled in Egypt during a time of famine, when food was difficult to find. At first, they were welcomed by the Egyptians. However, as their numbers grew, a new Pharaoh (the Egyptian king) became afraid that the Hebrews would become too powerful. He forced them into slavery and made them work long hours building cities and monuments. Their lives became extremely difficult.

The Pharaoh was so worried about the growing Hebrew population that he ordered all newborn Hebrew boys to be killed. One Hebrew mother was determined to save her baby son. She placed him in a basket made waterproof with tar and floated it among the reeds along the River Nile. The baby's older sister, Miriam, watched nearby to see what would happen.

The Pharaoh's daughter discovered the basket while bathing in the river. When she saw the baby crying, she felt sorry for him and decided to adopt him. She named him **Moses**, which means *drawn out of the water*. Moses was brought up in the Pharaoh's palace as an Egyptian prince. He received a good education and enjoyed a life of comfort and privilege. However, he was actually a Hebrew and belonged to the very people whom the Egyptians had enslaved.

As Moses grew older, he became aware of the terrible treatment of the Hebrews. One day, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. In anger, Moses killed the Egyptian and had to flee Egypt to escape punishment. He travelled to the land of Midian, where he became a shepherd, married Zipporah and started a new life.

One day, while looking after his sheep near Mount Horeb, Moses had an extraordinary experience of the power and mystery of God. He saw a bush that was on fire but was not burning up. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and told him that he had heard the cries of the Hebrew people and wanted to rescue them from slavery. God chose Moses to return to Egypt and lead his people into freedom.

At first, Moses was afraid and did not think he was good enough for such an important task. However, God promised to be with him and give him the strength and courage he needed.

Moses returned to Egypt and confronted the Pharaoh, demanding that he set the Hebrew people free. The Pharaoh refused, so God sent a series of ten plagues (disasters) upon Egypt. These included the River Nile turning to blood, swarms of frogs, darkness covering the land and a terrible plague affecting the firstborn sons of Egypt. Eventually, the Pharaoh gave in and allowed the Hebrews to leave.

Moses led the Hebrew people out of Egypt towards the Promised Land. This great journey to freedom is called the **Exodus**. According to the Hebrew sacred texts, when the Hebrews reached the Red Sea, God helped them cross safely while the Egyptian army was unable to follow.

During their journey through the desert, Moses climbed Mount Sinai, where God gave him the **Ten Commandments**. These were special laws to guide the Hebrews in how to live and how to treat God

and one another. God promised the Hebrews the Land of Canaan and, in return, they promised to love and serve God faithfully by keeping his laws.

The story of Moses is an important part of the history of the Jewish people. It reminds them that God listened to their suffering, cared for them and helped them find freedom. The Ten Commandments remain important today, particularly in Judaism and Christianity, and are also respected within Islam.

Check Your Understanding – 5 Questions

Read the passage carefully and answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. Why did the Pharaoh become afraid of the Hebrews, and how did he treat them?

2. How was Moses saved as a baby, and who discovered him in the River Nile?

3. What extraordinary experience did Moses have near Mount Horeb, and what important task did God give him?

4. What did Moses demand from the Pharaoh, and what eventually convinced the Pharaoh to let the Hebrews leave Egypt?

5. What did God give Moses on Mount Sinai, and why were these commandments important to the Hebrew people?