

A Case Study of Moses as Leader.

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According to the book of exodus, Moses was born at a time when his people, the Israelites, an enslaved minority, were increasing in population in Egypt. As a result, the Egyptian King Pharaoh thought they might endanger themselves with Egypt's enemies, so he ordered all firstborn males of the Israelites be killed.

He was born in Goshen in Egypt. Moses' real mother was Jochebed while his father's name was Amram, his wife was Zipporah, a Cushite woman. The names of his children were Gershom and Eliezer, his brother was Aaron, and Miriam was his sister's name. Moses' mother secretly hid him when Pharaoh ordered all newborn Hebrew boys to be killed to reduce the population of the Israelites. Through Pharaoh's daughter the child was adopted from the Nile river and grew up with the Egyptian royal family. (Exodus 2:1-10)

After killing an Egyptian slave master who was beating a Hebrew, Moses fled across the red sea to Midian, where he encountered the angel of the Lord speaking to him from within a burning bush on Mount Horeb, which he regarded as the mountain of God.

God sent Moses back to Egypt to demand the release of the Israelites from slavery. Moses said he could not speak eloquently, so God allowed Aaron, his elder brother, to become his spokesperson. After the ten plagues, Moses led the Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt and across the red sea, after which they based themselves at Mount Sinai, where Moses received the ten commandments. After forty years of wandering in the desert, Moses died within sight of the promised land on mount Nebo.

Moses was able to understand and internalize his kin's suffering, which he was not able to bear as he broke down in tears, saying "better that I should die than witness such degradation of my people." Moreover, seeing the heavy burdens that they had to bear, he does not hesitate to help them by shouldering the load with them. He assists the young and old, men and women, the weak and healthy, and focuses on each person's needs. This is an essential challenge for every leader to be able to know and respond to each of his followers.

In a bid to exercise justice Moses confronted a Hebrew who confronted another kinsman unjustly. The Hebrew whom Moses confronts retorts. "Who made you chief and ruler over us. Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" (Exodus 2:14).

The Israelite's response forecasts how the Israelites will deal with him in the future. The Bible says Moses was frightened and thought, "If the matter became known" (2:14). It is not just that Pharaoh will learn that he has killed the taskmaster, but that for the first time, he considers whether the Hebrews are worthy of his putting himself on the line for them, perhaps they are not worthy of being redeemed at all.

Moses was forced to flee Egypt for Midian (Exodus 2:15). Although he became a stranger, his leadership prowess never left him as he helped rescued seven sisters at a well where they were being harassed. He also helped water their flocks. The daughter of Jethro, a Midian priest by name Zipporah, eventually became his wife. He became a Shepherd of Jethro's flocks, where he built his leadership skill.

In Egypt, he was a bit violent in the cause of fighting for justice. While in Midian, he exercises more constraint. He was not seen as violent person but instead viewed as

compassionate and caring. In fleeing Egypt in the face of Egyptian power, he is cut from all that defines him, but he is not broken.

In Midian, Moses lost his sense of personality identity because he was referred to as an Egyptian by Jethro's family, and he did nothing to disabuse their mind. He never mentioned his Hebrew's birth or the circumstances that led to his flight. Jethro's daughters told their father that "an Egyptian man saved them from the shepherd." Moses' alienation was further sealed by his marriage to Jethro's daughter Zipporah (Exodus 2:21).

There is a connection between leadership and working as a shepherd; it is often alleged that a good shepherd will be a good leader. Moses had so much compassion for the animals in his case that God could recognize and say since you have such compassion for an animal, you shall surely pasture my flock. He shows a great deal of character, maturity, and capability-qualities needed to be the Israelite's leader.

God appeared to Moses in Horeb (Exodus 3:8) and manifested himself. God is referred to as the presence in the bush. In (Deuteronomy 33:16) where it also seems like a play on Sinai. No place in the world is devoid of God's presence, of God's power. The experience at Horeb enables Moses to survive God's overwhelming presence on Mount Sinai and to prepare the people for the challenges they encounter.

Moses turns aside to see the burning bush, he marvels at the sight and is frightened by it at the same time, and when God calls his name from the bush, he recoils. He cannot comprehend that God is addressing him directly. After all, who is Moses at that very moment but a simple shepherd caring for his father-in-law's flock in the wilderness? So, when he heard his name from the burning bush, he is speechless. Moses was not convinced it was God who called until God

had to call him twice. Moses was a very humble man more than any other person on the earth as at that time and season. (Numbers 12:3).

His self-doubt is even more evident in his response following God's charge to him. He said, "who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from slavery (Exodus 3:11). Moses' reticence to assume the leadership stem from several factors. He is justifiably afraid of confronting the mighty Pharaoh, who has issued a warrant for his death, but he also fears the people of Israel, God's covenanted partner. Stressing his unworthiness, he is utterly humbled. He is convinced that the Israelites will neither follow him nor listen to him (Exodus 4:1) even though God assures that they will (Exodus 3:18).

How ironic Moses, who is destined to become one of the most renowned lawgivers and poets in human history, feels at the onset that he cannot articulate God's vision. The vision the people must embrace if they are to trust in his leadership. When Moses is racked with such fears, his sense of inadequacy- his concern that he will be unmasked as a fraud resonates with our own feelings that we lack the skills and knowledge for the position we hold.

Moses felt he was inadequate for the task, but God told him he is not alone "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12) Even though Moses feels he is up to the task assigned to him, God is there to support him in every way.

The signal that God is with Moses and is the source of his leadership and authority just as the bush is not consumed, Israel will be delivered from Egypt by God through the hand of Moses, in order to forge a covenant with God at Sinai and embark on its divine mission or God is the real reason why Moses is chosen to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Israel is God's

people, and the divine reminds Moses that he is a marked vehicle to bring them to Sinai and then to the promised land.

You shall free my people the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 3:10), and when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain (Exodus 3:12). Moses doubt he will be able to convince the people that God sent him to deliver since he does not even know God's name. However, God gave him the Ehyeh. "I will be that which I will be to confirm to him that indeed he sent him all religious leaders derive their authority and power from the people's perception of their ultimate relationship with God.

Hammering the point, Moses is instructed to tell the Israelites that "the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has sent me to you" (Exodus 4:15) God's name, the divine essence, is linked to the leaders of the past. Moses now draws his power from walking in their footsteps for Moses's source of authority to be authentic before the people it must be linked to the previous generations.

Therefore, even though his authority comes from God, Moses is directed by God to appear to gather with the edges before Pharaoh (3:18) just as later he will bring Aaron with him as his spokesman (Exodus 5:1). He cannot lead alone.

Moses nevertheless harbors doubts. What if they do not believe me and do not listen to me but say the Lord did not appear to you. (Exodus 4:1).

In response to Moses' concern that he lacks the authority to make the people believe him, God asked him to stretch the rod in his hands, and it became a snake. Moses seems unaware that he already has in his hand the power to lead his people. It is part of him. The rod is an extension

of his arm; it represents his ability to act, also a sign that God is with him. Like all leaders, Moses possesses the rod. All he has to do is believe that he has the power, the ability to lead, once he does, he has to wield the power effectively, he has to be willing to act. When he put the rod down, and it turned to a snake, that strengthened him and gave him boldness that God is with him. Moses, then, on realizing the power of the rod as signifying God's presence with him, signifies the relationship between the people of God, the Covenant, his source of power, and the essence of leadership. Even with the rod, Moses still doubts his ability to lead the people since he lacks the skills to speak (he was a stammerer) (Exodus 4:10). God then responds, "who gives human beings the ability to speak" (4:11). "Now go, and I will be with you as you speak (Exodus 4:12).

Despite all of God's assurances, Moses finally pleads with God to send someone else (Exodus 4:13) with this short outburst. Moses indicates his essential lack of readiness to assume the role of leading his people. Moses feels that there must be another better suited to fulfill the divine mission. God, though angry, gave him his brother Aaron as his spokesman. Aaron, Moses' older brother, is willing to play second fiddle to Moses.

Instead of allowing the children of Israel to go, Pharaoh persecuted them more (Exodus 5:2;5:6-14). Moses' doubt was even more awakened after the episode of Pharaoh's refusal. He said, why did you send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh, he had dealt more ruthlessly with these people and still, you have not delivered your people' (Exodus 5:22-23)

There is no doubt that his interface with Pharaoh has made matters worse, but his lack of patience and self-doubt does not help matters either. But God keeps reassuring him of his ability to release his people (Exodus 6:1-2)

God referred to Himself as Adonai, meaning he has the power to deliver his people in his own time. God does not send Moses to Egypt needlessly; his role is to fulfill the promises God made to the patriarchs. He said he would bring them to the land he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

(Exodus 6:8). God gave Moses assurance that the Israelites will be delivered in due course. After four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. God moved compellingly and dramatically by performing the ten plagues on the Egyptians, including the death of the firstborns, which was the final blow that allowed Pharaoh to allow them to go. When they were eventually allowed, they took some of the possessions of the Egyptians with them because God told them they would not leave empty-handed. Pharaoh changed his mind after allowing them to go and worship their God; he ran after them with his chariots but was finally destroyed with his chariots at the red sea while the children of Israel were liberated.

When the children of Israel were finally free Moses Father in law Jethro paid him a visit after exchanging pleasantries and telling him about what they had gone through and how God had saved them, observed how Moses was judging the people. He therefore advised him on the right way to go about it without stressing himself and others out. He thought him about delegation of duties and responsibilities. Moses took the advice and indeed situation changed tremendously for the better. (Exodus 18:13-26).

Furthermore, God reconfirmed himself and his love for the Israelites, they were asked to sanctify themselves and on the third day Moses went down from the mountain to give them the ten commandments. Exodus 19

With this freedom, the Israelites still doubted God anytime they were faced with challenges saying they preferred to go back to Israel; they continued murmuring, grumbling, complaining, and nagging until they allowed Moses to get angry with them at Rephidim 17:1-7) Moses was meant to obey God's instructions to strike a certain rock in Horeb when the Israelites were thirsty by just speaking to the rock as instructed by God. However, the Israelites ungrateful attitude made him strike more than once. God got very angry with Moses and said that because Moses did not adhere to his instructions but instead listened to his followers, he will not make it to the promised land but will only catch a glimpse. God told Moses to appoint Joshua the son of Nun, a man full of the Spirit of God as his successor to lead the people to the land of Canaan (Numbers 27:18-20).

#### Questions

1. What was it about Moses that made him the right choice to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt?
2. What were the factors that led to the fall of Moses?
3. What were the lessons that could be learnt from Jethro Moses father in law on leadership?