

How Moses life still reflects on today's society. – Denise & Graham Smith

Moses was a Hebrew born to Jochebed and Amram both from the tribe of Levi when the children of Israel lived in Egypt as slaves. He was the youngest of three children, with a sister named Miriam and a brother called Aaron.

Now the Pharaoh was becoming restless and very afraid of the growing numbers of children born to the Israelites, so he ordered that all the baby boys should be killed, but Moses's mother managed to care and protect him for three months after his birth. Then the time came when she knew she could no longer hide him anymore, so she made took a small basket made of papyrus and covered it in pitch and tar, inside and out to make it water tight and put him in it, and placed it among the bull rushes on the banks of the river Nile.

She told Miriam to keep watch and not long after Pharaoh's daughter found the baby. Miriam approached her and asked her would if she like a nurse maid for him and went and fetched his mother.

Miriam must have felt under a lot of pressure to look after her younger brother Aaron, whilst her mother worked at the palace taking care of Moses. At first her mother was returning each night with Moses, but then when Moses got to about 2-4 years of age his mother had to give him over fully into the hands of the Pharaoh's daughter who was to bring him up as her own. Miriam watched as her mother became a different woman, now more quiet and reserved and Miriam would often spy her crying when she thought she was alone.

We today still see a lot of mothers giving up their children in hope of a for a better life for them, as we see boat loads of children arriving with other people, seeking asylum or as refugees on shores around the globe.

But now Moses had been adopted. He had all the typical royal training where he would have been schooled and learned to read and write. He would have met with people of Syria and Palestine as these people held very high administrative posts in Egypt.

Moses during his younger years developed an identity with his own Hebrew people, so much so, that as he grew older refused to be known as the son of the Pharaohs daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin and of the flesh.

Moses would have found out during his school days that he was a Hebrew by birth, so I suspect that knowing his people were being treated as slaves made him feel that he should suffer alongside them instead of living in the life of luxury at the palace. Moses didn't like to see his people enslaved.

We still see today where people are living in a new country and are learning to live in a new culture but still maintain their own culture as well, sometimes in secret for fear of

their lives. We have over the last few weeks seen a lot about slavery on the news and in newspapers and over the internet and all the debates and thoughts surrounding this.

So when Moses saw an Egyptian task master beating up a Hebrew, he set about and killed that Egyptian.

When what he had done became known, Moses had to flee and he settled among the Midianites living on the Sinai peninsula, where he married a priest's daughter called Zipporah. Moses lived there for forty years as a shepherd. It is thought he lived quite a nomadic life. He was a very humble man who enjoyed helping others.

One day Moses moved his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to the mountain of Horeb, known as the mountain of God, where Moses saw a bush on fire and went to take a look as it didn't seem to be getting consumed by the fire. As he approached a voice called out to him. "Moses, Moses". Moses replied "here I am".

The voice of God then tells him not to come any closer but to take off his sandals as he is standing on Holy ground. God then tells him that he is his father and that of his ancestors. Moses hides his face as he is scared to look at God. God then tells him he is to go back to the Pharaoh in Egypt and bring his people, the Israelites, back to the wilderness and to offer sacrifices to the Lord God.

Moses is astounded - how was he going to do this? He asks God, but God tells him in no uncertain terms, "I am Who I am, and you tell the Israelites I AM, has sent me to you."

Moses was a man who went on to argue a bit with God. He wanted proof and God told him to throw his staff on the floor, where it became a snake. God said "pick it up by the tail" and it instantly became a staff again. "Now go; I will be with you and teach you just what to say,"

But Moses argued some more saying send someone else instead of me. God was angry with Moses now and told him "all those who wanted you dead are now dead themselves. Take your staff in your hand and meet with your brother Aaron - he will speak to the peoples for you."

Here we see ourselves again. How many times, when we have got our lives just right as we want to live it, that something comes along and upsets the balance. We might have to move house or change our job; we are reluctant to do so and maybe we moan to everyone around about this, or even ask God "why now? Why at all? Can't you send others instead of us?"

So Moses trusted in God and took his family back into Egypt, where his brother Aaron was waiting for him. Can you Imagine Aaron's surprise when he sees Moses walking towards him. It must have been like watching an episode of long lost family, as the last time they were together was 40 years ago. But together they call the people and Moses tells them that God is going to deliver them out of Egypt.

Lots of estranged family members often find out about each other or have been searching for a lost brother, sister, sometimes a parent and are reunited sometimes just through an internet search in today's society.

Moses and Aaron then go to see the Pharaoh and tell him "God said to let the people go so that they may have a feast to him in the wilderness." Pharaoh argues about who this God is and why should he obey him. As he doesn't know him so why then he should he let the people go?

Isn't that a bit like us all when we are sharing our faith with others hoping that they will find God too?

Aaron is angry so throws down his rod and before the Pharaoh's eyes it becomes a snake. Pharaoh doesn't take this sight lightly so sends for his wise men and sorcerers and magicians. They threw down their rods and all became snakes, but Aarons was the most powerful of all and swallowed up the others. Aaron picked it up by its tail and it became a rod again.

We all look for something we can see and trust in, a solid confirmation of the truth.

Moses then warned that the river would turn to blood, if he still refused to let Israel go. Aaron struck out at the river with his rod and it turned to blood, everything in it died and it smelt foul - it was like this for seven days. This was to show that God was much more powerful than Egyptians' pagan gods. This was the first of the plagues and more were to follow all against the Egyptian Gods.

The second plague was frogs. During this plague the Pharaoh said he would let the people go so God destroyed all the frogs. Then the Pharaoh changed his mind, so God sent more plagues of lice, flies, deadly disease and painful boils. Each time the Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

Then giant hail rained down on Egypt and killed the people and animals in the fields. Pharaoh said "Enough is Enough. I will let the people go". But again as soon as the hail stopped he changed his mind and refused to let them go again. So more plagues followed – locusts and darkness.

The next plague was to be the death of all first borns. Moses told the Israelites to eat a feast of lamb, to consume all of it and spread its blood on the doors and posts their households and to have their staffs in their hands and be ready to leave. For that night the Angel of the Lord would see the blood and pass over their houses, and they would be safe from death.

Well we might not have lived through all these plagues but we are living with a pandemic virus and to keep ourselves and our households free of it, we have been washing down our door handles and letter boxes to hopefully keep the virus out. But unfortunately we have lost people to this virus, and we have all cried .

But all the first borns of the Egyptians died that night, including the Pharaoh's own first born. There was weeping and crying and moaning all day as someone in every Egyptian household had died.

But not one of God's people had died. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and told them "Go and serve the Lord take all the people of Israel and the flocks and herds with you". They were free to go. God had made a covenant with his people - this was the first Passover feast.

Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt and across the Red Sea with the help of God and his staff. He waved it at the sea and it parted for long enough for the people to go through to the other side, but the waters came back together killing the Egyptian army which had been directed by the Pharaoh as he had, again, changed his mind about setting them free.

The people did nothing but moan and groan at Moses, but he told them God will help you. They based themselves at Mount Sinai where God called Moses up the mountain. Moses went up this mountain and it was here that the Ten Commandments were given to him. These were the laws that the Israelite people were to follow and be governed by.

Moses came down from the mountain to find the Israelites worshipping other Idols. Moses was so angry he threw down the ten commandments that smashed into pieces.

Today people have been waiting for the shops and the pubs to reopen. We have seen people who can't wait and have been flouting the rules, gathering on beaches and such other public places, making those in the NHS service angry as they have worked so hard to keep everyone safe.

Later on Moses chisels the ten commandments back out of stone and they were then placed in the ark of the covenant.

Moses and the Israelites continued to wander in the wilderness for another 40 years. Moses died within the sight of the promised land on mount Nebo, in the land of Moab, and is buried in the valley there. But to this day his burial place has not been found.

So what a story, what a life, but it is not that far away from the lives we live today. After all we have moaned every time the Prime Minister told us that we would have to remain in lockdown for a while longer yet. Or maybe we accepted that, and moaned about others who were out and about and seeming to be carrying on as normal. But it seems now we are coming out of lockdown and we are all looking forward to "our Promised life" again but just like the Israelites waited 40 years, we have to wait a bit longer too.

So Give Thanks. Amen .