

## The Early Years

- Second generation of Israelites born into slavery in Egypt.
- Pharaoh commands that all male Israelite children be killed.
- Moses is born:
  - Mother, Yocheved, and sister, Miriam, make basket of rushes and hide baby Moses in the Nile River.
  - Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses and draws him out of the river and decides to raise him as her own. His name, "Moshe," means "drawn out of the water."
  - Miriam, who was hiding nearby when Moses was found, pleads with Pharaoh's daughter to take her and her mother on as the baby's nursemaids.
- Moses grows up in the Egyptian court but is aware that he is Hebrew. One day, he goes out among the Israelite slaves to see them at work. He witnesses an Egyptian slave master beating a Hebrew man to death. Enraged, Moses kills the Egyptian slave master.
- Fearing penalty for his rash killing of the Egyptian, Moses flees into the wilderness.
- For forty years, Moses lives as a shepherd among the people of the Sinai Peninsula.

[Timeline of Moses' Life]



## Moses as God's Liberator

- One day, on Mount Horeb, Moses encounters a bush that is burning without being consumed by the fire. He hears the voice of God from the bush, instructing him to return to Egypt and free his fellow Israelites from slavery.
- Moses encounters his brother, Aaron, on the road back to Egypt. God instructs the two brothers in miraculous signs that they can perform if the Israelites doubt that Moses and Aaron speak with God's authority.
- Moses and Aaron perform miraculous signs for the Hebrew slaves. The Israelites agree to follow Moses toward freedom.
- But first, Moses must convince the new Pharaoh of Egypt to let the Israelites go free. The new Pharaoh agrees, but then reconsiders. God sends a series of ten plagues upon the Egyptian people, pressuring Pharaoh to release the Israelites. Finally, after the final plague kills the Egyptian firstborn sons, Pharaoh lets the slaves go.

[Timeline of Moses' Life]



## Moses and the Exodus

[Timeline of Moses' Life]

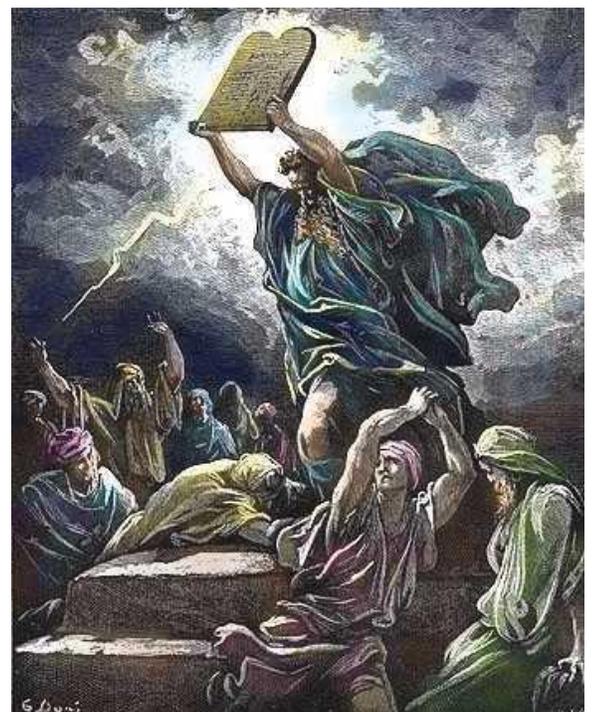
- The Israelites set out through the Egyptian wilderness toward the promised land of Canaan. Pharaoh has a change of heart again and sends his army after them. The army catches up to the Israelites near the Red Sea.
- Moses parts the Red Sea and the Israelites pass across the dry seabed to freedom on the other side. When the Egyptian army pursues, God causes the sea to return to normal and the waters crash down on the army, drowning them.
- God provides the Israelites a pillar of cloud to follow during the day and a pillar of fire to follow by night, leading them across the desert.
- When the people get thirsty, God instructs Moses to strike a rock with his staff, and water springs forth from the broken rock.
- When the people get hungry, God causes sweet flakes of bread called *manna* to fall from the sky each night. The people collect it in the morning and have food for the day. God instructs them not to store the *manna* up but to trust that it will come each night. The people disobey; the stored *manna* rots in the jars. The people then want meat, so God causes quails to surround the Israelites camp.
- The people complain pretty much all the time and God gets pretty fed up with them on several occasions.



## The Ten Commandments

[Timeline of Moses' Life]

- Moses climbs Mount Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai) and spends forty days communing with God, who appears in a cloud at the top of the mountain.
- Moses descends from the mountain with stone tablets, on which are written Ten Commandments for the people of Israel.
- When he gets to the bottom of the mountain, he finds that the Israelites have made an idol and are worshipping a golden calf. Enraged at their idolatrous betrayal, Moses throws down the stone tablets and breaks them.
- Later, God rewrites the Ten Commandments on new tablets and Moses takes them to the people. Moses is known as the Lawgiver in the Jewish tradition, with all manner of laws that uphold justice as well as the ritual purity of God's people.



## Desert Wandering

- God commands Moses to send ten scouts ahead to the promised land of Canaan and bring back reports. The scouts stay in Canaan for 40 days and return with grapes, proving the land's fertility. They describe it as a land of milk and honey. But the scouts voice fear and discourage the Israelites from entering, saying "A stronger nation of people already lives there. They outnumber us. We can never settle there."
- The people despair and complain that God has led them into the wilderness for nothing. They say, "It would have been better if we had remained slaves in Egypt. It would be better if we all just died here in the wilderness." God responds to the complaint, saying, "You are utterly faithless. So I'll give you what you ask for: You will all die here in the wilderness, wandering around for 40 years. Only your children will go into Canaan."
- Among the hardships of desert life, many Israelites die from snakebites. So Moses fashions a brass serpent and mounts it on a pole. Any Israelite bitten by a poisonous snake can look on the brass serpent and be healed. (This is the origin of the caduceus symbol of modern physicians.)

[Timeline of Moses' Life]



## Battles and Final Years

- The Israelites have several violent encounters with other peoples living in the region. In their battle against the Amalekites, Moses wields the power of God by lifting his arms up over the battlefield. As long as his arms are raised, the Israelites have the advantage. When his arms fall, the Amalekites start winning. Aaron and Hur help Moses hold up his arms, and the Israelites win the battle. In another encounter, the Israelites attack and slaughter the Midianites for having sent women into the Israelite camp to seduce their men.
- When the Israelites complain again in thirst, God instructs Moses to speak to a nearby rock to spring forth water. Moses and Aaron say to the people, "Do we have to strike yet another rock for you!?" They hit the rock and water springs forth. However, in their frustration, Moses and Aaron fail to credit God for the miracle or follow God's instructions carefully. God says to Moses, "You don't reveal my holiness to the people any more. You will not be the one to lead them into the promised land."
- On the near shore of the Jordan River, Moses delivers his parting words to the Hebrews, which become the book of Deuteronomy, restating God's law and exhorting the people to follow it.
- Moses dies at the age of 120 on Mount Nebo. God buries him in a valley.

[Timeline of Moses' Life]

