Moses – Impact on Religious and Secular History

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the biblical perspectives of the man Moses, his birth and adoption as Pharaoh's daughter's son and his role in the court of Egypt. The paper will also provide some theological insight into Moses's call as a prophet and deliverer of Israel in Egypt. The article's intention is to provide a view that academically upholds faith in God as the Being present both in secular and religious history. Some archaeological evidences that establish the authenticity of the Bible records on Moses as a historical figure will be provided. The article will look at some of the events surrounding the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. Taking a look at the field of Biblical Archaeological discoveries. Moses existed during the reigns of three Pharaohs. This paper will briefly present some of the roles played by each of them. The man Moses was trained in the arts and sciences of the Egyptians;; and according to the Scripture, he spent his first forty years in Egypt. The paper will conclude by substantiating the fact that some major religions of the world (religions that enjoy more than 50% of earth's population), believe in Moses as a great religious leader and adminstrator

Key words: Moses, Exodus, Pharaoh of Egypt, Biblical Archaeology and Queen Hatshepsut.

Introduction

The name Moses or Mose was an Egyptian name ascribed or affixed to Egyptian Kings' and princes' names. According to Neufeld (1969:761), "The Egyptians incorporated the word… "mose," into royal names such as Ahmose, "the one born of (the moon god) Ah"; Thutmose, "The one born of (the scribal god) Thot"; and

common name Ramose (later Rameses), "the one born (the sun-god) Ra." Neufeld posits that" these names were often abbreviated to "Mose"(ibid). Similarly, Moses' name may have initially incorporated such names as Hapimose or Irumose which is an allusion to the one born of or drawn out of water. Neufeld suggests that Moses might have dropped the Egyptian deity name affixed to his name. Instead of Irumose or Hapimose he retained only "Mose." According to Apostle Paul, Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's "daughter"(Heb. 11:24).

Birth of Moses

The name Moses is not Semitic; it is Egyptian. In the beginning chapter of the book of Exodus it is stated that after Joseph and all his brothers who left Canaan to Egypt had died, a new king who did not know Joseph emerged. "Look", he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."(Exd. 1:8-10).

The Bible records that this situation led Pharaoh and his people to take an extreme measure of throwing into the Nile river Israelites infants – baby girls were spared. This fearful event led Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents, to device a basked of bulrushes in order to the child's life. Coincidently, Pharaoh's daughter who had gone on a routine visit to the bank of the Nile spotted the basked, rescued it with the baby boy, and gave him an Egyptian name, Moses – one drawn out of water.

Bible – A reliable History Book

The Bible remains the oldest book followed by Homer's Iliad some 700 years (about 800 BC) later (Speener: lliad). Some recent archaeological finds have lent credence to the Bible as a reliable book of ancient history.

In the book of 2kings 12:1-4 the Bible states thus: "After Rehoboam's position as King was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD. Because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak King of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam…he captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem". Bubastite portal excavated by archaeologists has proved that the Bible historical record of

the invasion of the cities of Judah during the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, King of Judah, is true. According to Bud (Pharaoh Shishak), "Today the vast majority of scholars believe that the Bubasite Portal records a real Egyptian campaign by Shosheng (Shishak) in the mid-to-late tenth century B.C. Kenneth Kitchen has called the reality of Shosheng's campaign during the reign of Rehoboam beyond reasonable doubt" Levin also averred that if this campaign took place in 925 B.C which was the 5th year of Rehoboam's reign as King in Judah, Solomon's reign could have ended in 930 B.C (48-49). The Bubastite Portal is located at the Egyptian Karnak temple at Luxor Governorate, south of Egypt (*Discovering the Karnak Temple*).

David and Solomon

Rehoboam's father, Solomon and grandfather, David, were both historic figure. They existed in history according to the Bible. Lidman (2023) avers that "A network of cities around Jerusalem has been dated to the time of King David, more than 200 years earlier than previously thought, offering support to the theory that king David ruled over a complex and large kingdom." Gordon argues in support of Lidman that David was a real historical figure about 3000 B.C.

> But after decades of debate, new discoveries are affirming David's historical stature. The expanded monumental inscriptions to the remnants of ancient construction – supports the biblical account.
>
> "we now have a completely different picture than we did 50 years ago," said Michael Hasel, Professor of Near Eastern studies and archaeology of southern Adventist University, pointing to the mounting pile of archaeological evidence. The first breakthrough came in 1993 with the discovery of the TEL Dan stele near the Syrian border. An inscription on a stone slab, written by an Aramean King celebrating a military victory, names the defeated kingdom the "House of David." The stele dates to about 140 years after David's death, making David the earliest biblical person named in the archaeological record and,

> by the standards of the field, an established historical person.(Gordon 2023)

Biblical records affirm that Solomon was one of the sons of David and that he took over the reign of Israel as king after the death of David. He was crowned king while David was alive (1kings 1:28-40). Archaeology has made some successes in confirming the existence of Solomon about the 10th century B.C. A good number of scholars had doubted the existence of David and Solomon as kings during the period. They had concluded that such a vibrant kingdom as the Bible has recorded was not possible at the period designated. According to science news of December 26, 2014 (News Staff) "six clay seals found at the archaeological site of Khirbet Summeily in Israel offer evidence that supports the existence of Biblical Kings David and Solomon. The paper states that this conclusion was reached by a team of archaeologists led by Dr. Jeff Blakely of the University of Wisconsin Madison.

Halley also lends credence to the view that there was a "fragment stele" found buried in a wall at Tel Dan in Israel. Archaelogists have discovered that it was written by Hazael. The name "Hazael" in Bible times belonged to Aramean Kings. This stele was written 840 BC. It described how Hazael eliminated king Joram of Israel and king Ahaziah of Judah. According Harley (2014), "Remarkably, the inscription states that Ahaziah belonged to the house of David". This is a direct confirmation by Hazael, about 130 years after David, that David founded a vibrant dynasty. Actually, the Bible states that it was Jehu who killed the two kings – Joram and Ahaziah (2 kings 9:14-29). The Arameans under the command of Hazael wounded Joram, who, as a result, returned to Samaria because of the injury. Ahaziah, king of Judah was vising him at the time. This archaeological discovery at Tel Dan confirms the Biblical narrative that this Israel-Aramean war occurred mid-9th century B.C. Although the Kingdom had been divided at the time under review, it was one kingdom under David in the 10th Century BC. Hazael's inscription is justified both Israel and Judah were the "House of David" or better still "Kingdom of David"

First Jerusalem Temple

The Bible states unambiguously that the first temple was erected by Solomon, Son of David "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out

of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, be began to build the temple of the LORD. (1kings 6:1). The Bible is a book of history and can be relied upon. The first five books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy are about 1000 years older than the first secular documented history authored by the "father of history" Herodotus, a Greek. (Mark 2022). According to Mark, "Herodotus (i.c. 484 – 425/413 BCE) was a Greek historian famous for his work *Histories.* He was called "The Father of History by the Roman writer Cicero." (ibid)

The Bible account states that the movement of Israel out of Egypt, widely known as Exodus occurred in the 480th year from the time of the laying of the first temple by Solomon. Taking the calculation backward points to 1446/45 BC as the exodus year. The commander who led Israel out of Egypt was Moses. Depending on the reliability of the Bible, Moses was a historical figure. Josephus, a Hebrew historian of the first century AD, confirms the authenticity of the birth of Moses as documented in the Old Testament (Whiston, 67-68).

Moses – Prince of Egypt

Moses was born during the period of the 18th dynasty kings of Egypt. These rulers were Thutmose 1(1541 – 1524 BC), Thutmose II (1524 – 1504 BC) and Queen Hatshepsut (1504 -1486 BC) (Neufeld 1979). Queen Hatshepsut was most likely the Pharaoh's daughter that adopted Moses as son. She was the daughter of Thutmose I and later married Thutmose II (Rattinis 2019). Her marriage to Thutmose II would have qualified Thutmose II to be a Pharaoh because he was a half-brother to Thutmose I, but the union failed to produce a male heir to the throne. When Thutmose II died, Hatshepsut governed Egypt until about 1486 BC. Moses first forty years in Egypt were spent in the reigns of Thutmose I, Thutmose II, his foster mother, Hatshepsut and Thutmose III who served as Coregent to Hatshepsut (Moses – Christian Resource Centre).

Moses became the son of Hatshepsut in circunstances only divinity would have ordained. The law of the land at the time he was born, granted the Egyptians freedom to cast every male born to Hebrews into the Nile; females were spared. (Ex. 1: 22). Kris Udd (2022) avers that Pharaoh Ahmose was the one who defeated the Hyksos who had ruled Egypt for about 200 years. He became the first Pharaoh

of the new 18th dynasty. Joseph became a prominent leader in Egypt during the reign of the Hyksos kings who were expelled by Ahmose. Pharaoh Ahmose fits into the expression: "a new king, who did not know about Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). Successive kings to Ahmose did not have male children, "for several generations only girls were born to the legitimate queens, so that one king after another was a commoner, who held the throne through his legitimate wife"(Neufeld 1979:310).

Moses in the Court of Pharaoh

Moses remained with his parents until he reached the age of twelve years. Here it is implied that his father and mother in their Hebrew home provided his nursery and primary education. For the next 28 years, he would grow up into manhood in a pagan palace. White (Patriarchs and Prophets 525) states that at the court of Pharaoh, Moses received the highest civil and military training.

The monarch had determined to make his adopted grandson his successor on the throne, and the youth was educated for his high station. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." Acts 7:22. His ability as a military leader made him the favourite with the armies of Egypt, and he was generally regarded as a remarkable character (ibid).

Moses was very active during his first forty years in Egypt. Although involved in secular activities, he avoided the ones that would conflict with the service of Jehovah. He was conscious of the fact that he was a Hebrew. The top-ranking officials in Egypt knew him to be Hebrew but his loyalty to the throne earned their love and respect for Him.

According to White, (Connecting with Christ, nd:96u), Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Feldman, (2007), lent credence to the fact that Moses was a military general.

Moses took the decision to remain a Hebrew slave. He rejected the wealth of Egypt. For him, graduating in his career as Pharaoh of Egypt was nothing compared to the eternal riches of the God of Abraham.

Moses in Midian

It is certain that from his childhood days, Moses clearly understood from the events surrounding his birth (which culminated in his deliverance from the Nile that God had chosen him for a mission, the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. What mattered most to Moses was God's assignment, not the splendor of the courts of Egypt. Moses was convinced that the God of the Hebrews, who arranged for him to be picked up by Pharaoh's daughter despite the prevailing decree aimed at eliminating him, was mightier than all that Egypt offered. No longer ready to sit and watch the pains inflicted upon his brothers by Egyptian task masters, he killed one of them. **Ex. 2:11, 12.** Killing an Egyptian would not have created a ruse for Moses but for the fact that Pharaoh Thutmose III, who succeeded Moses' foster mother, Queen Hatshepsut, hated her and her adopted Hebrew son.

Thutmose III actually was an illegitimate son of Queen Hatshepsut's husband, Thutmose II. Since both the queen and Pharaoh were childless and Moses had refused to be part of the Egyptian culture preferring the God of his fathers over the Egyptian deities, the priests installed the boy, Thutmose III as coregent to **Hatshepsut.**

Moses being an outstanding military leader and statesman, his popularity among the people would have earned him much hatred from his arch rival, Thutmose III, who most likely assumed the official Pharaoh title when Moses' foster mother died (Wilson 2006).

Moses' interest in liberating Israel would have increased, leading to the murder of an Egyptian task master. This unfortunate event could have provided the needed platform for accusing Moses of rebellion and pronouncing him a dangerous military leader. Allowed to live, he could marshal out numerous Hebrews against the state of Egypt. The land of Egypt had in the past undergone such a period under the domination of the Hyksos Kings -a Semitic people that conquered and

ruled the land of Pharaoh until about 1570 BC, when they were expelled.(Hansen 2000: np).

Moses' frustration and desperate act of killing an Egyptian was not a smart idea although he had assumed it would be concealed by his brethren; but it was not. He played into the hands of his arch rival, Thutmose III, who from childhood had seen him a threat to his ambition of becoming Pharaoh. Interestingly, Thutmose III was an illegitimate son adopted by Thutmose II, while Moses was the son of Hebrew slaves adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, Queen Hatshepsut. Moses left Egypt and sought refuge in Midian into the home of Jethro, one of the descendants of Abraham and a believer in the true God (Linsley: who was Jethro?)

Encounter with God in Midian

The book of Genesis was written by Moses in Midian. The Bible teaches that, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness." **2 Tim. 3:16.** Moses was inspired in Midian to write the first book of the Bible about 1500 B.C. The period of forty years he spent in exile in Midian became a school through which the purposes of Jehovah were made much clearer to him.

Moses while in Midian was well-acquainted with events in Egypt. His people, Israel, knew he was alive and in Midian. It is most likely the Egyptians also knew, especially Pharaoh's palace.

The peak of his encounter with God in Midian was at the event that took place on Mount Sinai. The burning bush brought Moses face to face with the Almighty God. He is the Great I AM.

Although Moses had for forty years in Midian bowed low to the God of his fathers, the burning-bush experience added a new dimension to his calling. He would have wanted someone else to be the "Liberation Commander" while probably he served as a lieutenant. But God said, "I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt." **Ex. 3:10.**

The Egyptians and the pagan world had official names for their gods. For hundreds of years, Israel's God was known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The encounter with the burning bush on Mount Sinai presented an opportunity for Moses to inquire of the name of Israel's God. And the name was awesome, I AM THAT I AM

> Moses said to God, "suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you; and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you" **Ex. 3:13,14.**

"I AM has sent me to you." God is the self-existent One. Apart from Him, there is no other. It occurred to Moses he was standing before the King of the universe. The Mighty God had earlier promised, He would be with him. **Ex. 3:12.** Moses believed God.

Encounter in the Court of Egypt

Pharaoh Amenhotep II was most likely the Pharaoh of the Exodus experience. He was the son of Thutmose III. History reveals that he was "a cruel and ruthless son."(Neufeld 350) Even in the face of hatred and animosity against the Israelites, Moses walked into Pharaoh's palace. Moses knew before meeting with Pharaoh, that the monarch had been defeated. Forty years encounter with Jehovah in Midian had prepared him for this occasion. Pharaoh needed a sign to assess the power of the God of slaves. The scripture says that Moses' rod was turned into a snake before Pharaoh and his officials. His priests also produced snakes with their staff. White states in (Patriarchs and Prophets 1958:350), that the magicians did not really cause their rods to become serpents; …

> The magicians did not really cause their rods to become serpents; but by magic, aided by the great deceiver, they were able to produce this appearance... The prince of evil, though possessing all the wisdom and might of an angel fallen, has not the power to create, or to give life; this is the prerogative of God alone.
> But all that was in Satan's power to do, he did; he produced a counterfeit. To human sight the rods were changed to serpents.

Such they were believed to be by Pharaoh and his court.

The Bible states that Moses' serpent swallowed Pharaoh's serpents

The book of Exodus records that ten plagues were unleashed on Egypt by Moses. This was as a result of Pharaoh of Egypt refusing the Hebrews to leave. The tenth plague brought death to all the first born of Egypt. Pharaoh yielded to the pressure mounted on him and his court by Moses to let Israel go. "Douglas Petrovich, for example agrees with a high-chronology of Amenhotep II beginning 1453 B.C.E, with an Exodus date of 1446 B.C.E. (derived 480 years from temple-construction date of 967 B.C.E), thus putting the Exodus within year 9 of his reign." (Eames 2023). About two million people under the command of the man, Moses, left Egypt for Canaan. Phillip Bohstrom (2021), argues that what the Bible records in the book of Exodus is true concerning the Israelites as slaves in Egypt. Bostrom posits that in antiquity kingdoms would hardly, on record, associate their beginnings with shameful slavery (ibid). Israel uniquely stands out as a kingdom that authoritative states that their beginning was marked with over 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Bostrom also avers that Egypt would not place on record a defeat by slaves nor would their leader Moses be left to exist anywhere in their archives.

Moses in Religious and Secular History

"Moses (c. 1400 BCE) is considered one of the most important religious leaders in world history. He is claimed by the religions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Bahai as an important prophet of God and the founder of monotheistic belief"(Mark 2016: Moses). These four religions constitute more than 50% of the world population in 2024. "The projected world population on January 1, 2024 is 8,019,876,189" (*Census Bureau Projects U.S and world Population*). The population of the four world religions that recognize Moses as a historical figure, prophet and the impact he made in religious history, is, according to (*World Population Review*) "some 2.38 billion people practice some form of Christianity globally."(*Nations Online Project*) estimates 1.8 billion people identify themselves as Muslims. The (*Times of Israel*) credits the global Jewish population with 15.7 million as at 2023. (*Bahai's Media Information*: *Statistics*) states that there are "more than 5 million Bahais in the world".

With more than 50% of the world population upholding the man, Moses, as a historical leader, a prophet and the general that led Israel out of Egyptian slavery, his impact on history is profound. The miraculous parting of the Red Sea for Israel to cross into Arabia under Moses leadership, is a demonstration of the creative power of God in history, beleved by more than one-half of the earth's population.

Conclusion

In conclusion the legacy of Moses transcends many religions in the world. Four religions with more than one-half the population of the world venerate him as a historical figure with unusual powers. In a summary 50% of the world population accept the person of Moses as a human being used by God to set Israel free from Egyptian slavery and also provide the moral law (ten commandments) to all humans on earth. Some may not accept the commandment as binding on them but the principles of love and life enshrined in its precepts permeates most religious and secular institutions. Finally this article posits that from the facts adduced, Moses provided the basics for the founding of some great world religions; and that the challenges he faced while leading and guiding Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan, aided to classify him a resounding leader for all times.

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