

# Moses

By Mrs. E. G. White

(*The Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1880)

When Moses was forty years of age, an event occurred which seemed to change the whole current of his life. His soul was deeply stirred with a sense of the wrongs done to his people, and he would often leave the royal courts, to visit his brethren in their servitude, and encourage them with the assurance that it would not be always thus, that God would open the way for their deliverance. One day, while thus abroad, he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. Moses sprang forward and slew the Egyptian. He had taken the precaution, even in this sudden burst of wrath, to see that he was unwatched, and he buried the body hastily in the sand. But the man whom he had rescued failed to keep the secret, and Moses soon found that it was known to others. The next day he saw two Hebrews contending, one of them clearly in the wrong. When Moses reproved the wrong-doer, he at once turned his rage upon his reprover and basely cast against him his previous act: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

There could be no further hope of concealment. The whole matter was made known to the Egyptians by the envious Hebrew, and, greatly exaggerated, soon reached the ears of Pharaoh. The monarch was informed that Moses designed to make war upon the Egyptians, to overthrow their government, and make himself king. Pharaoh was exceedingly angry. He thought that this act of Moses meant much, and that there was no safety for his kingdom while the offender lived. He therefore commanded that Moses should be slain. But the servant of God became aware in season of Pharaoh's intent on his life, and he hastily left the palace and fled toward Arabia.

The Lord directed his course, and he found a home with the priest of Midian, Jethro, a man who worshiped God, and who was highly honored by the people of all the surrounding country, for his far-seeing judgment. After a time, Moses married one of the daughters of his benefactor; and here, in the service of his father-in-law, as keeper of his flocks, he remained forty years.

Moses was too hasty in slaying the Egyptian. He supposed the people of Israel understood that God's special providence had raised him up to deliver them. But the Lord did not design to accomplish this work by warfare, as Moses thought, but by his own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to him alone. Yet even this rash act was overruled by God to bring about his purpose.

Moses had become, in every sense, a great man. As a writer, as a military leader, and as a philosopher, he had no superior. Love of truth and righteousness had become the basis of his character, and had produced a steadfastness of purpose which no fickleness of fashion, opinion, or pursuits, could influence. Courtesy, diligence, and a firm trust in God, marked his life. He was young and vigorous, overflowing with energy and manly strength. He had deeply sympathized with his brethren in their affliction, and

his soul had kindled with a desire to deliver them. Surely, it would appear to human wisdom that he was in every way fitted for his work.

But God seeth not as man sees; his ways are not as ours. Moses is not yet prepared to accomplish this great work, neither are the people prepared for deliverance. He has been educated in the school of Egypt, but he has yet to pass through the stern school of discipline before he is qualified for his sacred mission. Before he can successfully govern the hosts of Israel, he must learn to obey, he must learn self-control. For forty long years he is sent into the retirement of the desert, that, in his life of obscurity, in the humble work of caring for the sheep and lambs of the flock, he may gain the victory over his own passions. He must learn entire submission to the will of God, before he can teach that will to a great people.

Short-sighted mortals would have dispensed with that forty years of training amid the mountains of Midian, deeming it a great loss of time. But Infinite Wisdom placed him who was to be the mighty statesman, the deliverer of his people from slavery, in circumstances, during this period to develop his honesty, his forethought, his faithfulness and care-taking, and his ability to identify himself with the necessities of his dumb charge. Those to whom God has intrusted important responsibilities have not been brought up in ease and luxury; the noble prophets, the leaders and judges of God's appointment, have been men whose characters were formed by the stern realities of life.

God does not select for his work men of one mold and one temperament only, but men of varied temperaments. The human element is seen in all who have been chosen to accomplish a work for God. They have been men of intellect, of depth of feeling; men who would do and dare, whose powers could be directed in the right channel, and who would learn wisdom from God. Said Christ, "If any man will *do* his will, he shall *know* of the doctrine." Those who, by earnest, anxious inquiry, seek to learn the will of God, who seize upon and improve every ray of light shining upon their pathway, God will lead. They will not be left to walk in doubt and darkness. Connected with God, the source of all wisdom, man may reach any height of moral excellence.

But inspiration will not come to man in darkness, while he makes no effort to press toward the divine light. Moses must realize his great weakness and deficiency, and his soul must be drawn out for special help from Him who can help. Moses must closely apply his mind to the great change to be wrought in himself. Had he taken matters in a listless, easy, and indifferent manner, shunning care, hardship, and disagreeable responsibilities, as do many young men of to day, God would never have intrusted him with a sacred and important work. He was aroused to the highest kind of thought, and to his great want of experimental knowledge of God; and his prayer came forth from a soul burdened with a sense of need and poverty. He hoped, he longed, he prayed, for close connection with God.

Moses had been learning much which he must unlearn. The influence which had surrounded him in Egypt,—the love of his adopted mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the enchantments of grandeur in art, the dissipation on every hand, the imposing display connected with the idolatrous worship, and the constant repetition, by the priests, of countless fables concerning the power of their gods,—all had left deep

impressions upon his developing mind, and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. These impressions, time, change of surroundings, and close connection with God, could remove. Yet it must be by earnest, persevering effort, a struggle as for life, with himself, to uproot the seeds of error, and in their place have truth firmly implanted. At every point, Satan would be prepared to strengthen error and dislodge truth; but while God designed that Moses should be self-trained by severe discipline, he himself would be his ever-ready helper against Satan when the conflict should be too severe for human strength.

With the wild mountains surrounding him, alone with God, Moses had a precious opportunity to learn himself, to discern his pride and self-exaltation, and to overcome the habits formed amid the luxury, ease, and indulgence of court life. The magnificent temples of Egypt were no longer before his eyes, impressing his mind with their superstition and falsehood. Amid the towering rocks and everlasting hills he could behold the evidences of the Creator's greatness and majesty, and power, and contrast with the insignificance of the gods of Egypt. Every where the Creator's name was written. Moses was surrounded with his presence, and covered with his overshadowing glory. God himself was speaking to his servant through these mute representatives of his power.

The light of nature and that of revelation are from the same source, teaching grand truths and always agreeing with each other. As Moses saw that all God's created works act in sublime harmony with his laws, he realized how unreasonable it is for man to array himself in opposition to the law of God. The conflict was most trying, the effort long, to bring heart and mind on all points in harmony with truth and with Heaven; but Moses was finally a victor. He came forth from the proving of God, mild in spirit, patient in temper, generous toward the erring, kind, reverent, and humble, one of the meekest of men in his intercourse with the world. Every child of God will have a similar experience. It is only after sore discipline and severe instruction that man, in obedience to Christ an heir of glory, can learn to wear divine honors with grace and dignity becoming to his position as a member of the royal family.

As year after year passed by, and left the servant of God still in his humble position, it would have seemed to one of less faith than he, as if God had forgotten him; as if his ability and experience were to be lost to the world. But as he wandered with his silent flocks in solitary places, the abject condition of his people was ever before him. He recounted all God's dealings with the faithful in ages past, and his promises of future good, and his soul went out toward God in behalf of his brethren in bondage, and his fervent prayers echoed amid the mountain caverns by day and by night. He was never weary of presenting before God the promises made to his people, and pleading with him for their deliverance.

Those prayers were heard. Could his eyes have been opened, he would have seen the messengers of God, pure, holy angels, bending lovingly over him, shedding their light around him, and preparing to bear his petition to the throne of the Highest. The long years spent amid desert solitudes were not lost. Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.