

Series: The Name of God #1658

Title: Acts 7, Hebrews 11
Moses, the Deliverer?

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Welcome back. You are listening to our series on the names of God and we are on our way to learning God's personal name, Yahweh. God unveils this name in Exodus chapter 3. In setting the context for that, we have started in Exodus 1 and 2, making our way systematically, to chapter 3. Thus far, we have witnessed the harsh conditions under which the Israelites are living in Egypt, and we have witnessed the birth of Moses and his early life. In fact, that is where we left off last time.

Instead of me re-reading the Exodus text, I actually want to read you a passage from the New Testament and the Book of Acts. If you have your Bible, turn to Acts chapter 7. I love this about the Scripture. We have the life of Moses in Exodus, and then a commentary on the same found in the sermon of Stephen all the way over in the Book of Acts. Stephen is giving a lengthy sermon (his last, he will be stoned to death at the end of it, martyred) and he reminds his hearers of what we read in Exodus 2. Let's use this sermon as a commentary on Exodus. This is Stephen's take, beginning in Acts 7, verse 17, **"But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,¹⁸ until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph.¹⁹ It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.**

²⁰ **It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home.²¹ And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.²² Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.²³ But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel."**

Let me end the reading for now here, at verse 23, and make some comments. What we have read is essentially what we read about last time. Notice here that Stephen says Moses was "approaching the age of 40." So when Moses is nearly 40 is when he makes a life altering decision. He decides to leave Pharaoh's household and royal family, to give up on his opportunity to himself be the Egyptian Pharaoh, and he embraces his own people, the Israelites (as Stephen calls them, "the sons of Israel"). At 40 Moses associates himself with the Israelites, not the Egyptians. He gives up his right to rule! Without going into the history now, this was not the first time Moses rejected the throne of Egypt. He could have become the Pharaoh on more than one occasion, yet he refuses.

Listen to Hebrews 11, verses 24-26, **"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward."** Now the writer of the Hebrews is also a commentator on the Exodus text. And how helpful this is for us. *By faith Moses.* As we talked about last time, Moses has been well trained by his birth parents in love, obedience, and service to the God of the Hebrews, and now (at age 40), Moses exercises his faith and "refuses to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He sides with the Jews over and against the Egyptians. Moses gave up *a lot*. At this time Egypt was a major world empire. Moses could have led it, but he chose not to.

In my experience, many Bible readers fail to understand how close Moses was to becoming the Egyptian Pharaoh. Back in Acts 7, verse 22 we read this, "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds." The ancient Jewish historian Josephus in his writing *The Antiquities of the Jews* writes about the military achievements of Moses. He commanded Egyptian armies and won many victories. For example, one time as head of the army he led the defeat of the invading Ethiopians! This is a man who was popular within the military, he was powerful in words, he was well educated, friends, Moses was a powerful man in Egypt, but he gave all of that up to lead the Hebrews.

That says a lot of good about our man Moses, *but* as with us, intermingled with the good is also the bad. Entwined with righteousness is sin. Let's go back to Acts 7 and pick up the reading at verse 24. I am reading Acts 7, verses 24 through 29, "**And when [Moses] saw one [of the Israelites] being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.** ²⁵ **And [Moses] supposed that his brethren [the Israelites, the Hebrews] understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.** ²⁶ **On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?'** ²⁷ **But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?'** ²⁸ **You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?'** ²⁹ **At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons."**

You say, "This sounds familiar!" Yes. We had this last time in Exodus 2. But in Stephen's re-telling he says something *very* interesting. After murdering the Egyptian, verse 25 says, "[Moses] supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand."

I hope you will remember what I have said about Moses' understanding of his own future. Last time we talked about the ardent belief Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, must have had in God and in the promises of God. They instilled in their son the oral tradition of what God said to Abraham in (what is our) Genesis 15. At the end of 400 years of Egyptian oppression and in the fourth generation of Israelites, God will lead His people out of captivity and into the Promised Land. Well, the timing is *nearly* right and so Moses, seeing himself as the deliverer for his people – Acts 7 again – "supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance *through him*," that is through Moses! "But they did not understand."

You see, by killing the Egyptian, by defending his fellow Israelites, and by attempting to correct two Israelites fighting one another (why would you fight someone from your own people?) Moses assumed his time had come to use all his skills and abilities and power to be the deliverer. But while he was right that he will be the man God will use to lead His people, Moses was wrong about the timing and he was very wrong in the way he went about taking the lead. Moses jumped the gun and acted on his own without God.

The response of his brethren must have really bothered Moses. How could it be that they would not accept him as their leader? How was it possible his fellow Hebrew snapped, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? ²⁸ You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?" Moses was so upset about this the text says, "At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian..." What a turn of events.

Remarking on this, Theodore Epp in his excellent, especially devotionally, two-volume work on Moses says, "Imagine what a sad moment this was for Moses. He had renounced his rights to the Egyptian throne because he was so convinced that his own people needed a deliverer, yet he was not recognized or received as their deliverer (56)...The killing of the Egyptian was far from an act of faith. Rather, it sprang from an uncontrolled, selfish zeal. He wanted to do what God wanted him to do; he wanted to emancipate the people. But he took it upon himself to perform this task instead of inquiring about, and waiting on God's orders and God's methods.

Moses still had to learn that spiritual ends are never achieved by carnal means, and that the emancipation of God's people had to be completely God's undertaking. Moses was to be the instrument, but the deliverance itself had to be God's work entirely. Also, Moses' intervention at this time was premature. God's people were not yet ready...Although Moses was of the promised fourth generation, the 400 years were not up yet. Since Moses has several important lessons yet to learn, God took him alone to the desert where He could train him (57-58)." End quote.

We will pick the narrative in the Bible here next time. Trust me, we are building towards God's name. We need to know all of this *before* we can understand what God's name, Yahweh, will mean to Moses and to the Israelites. There is also a lot here of practical application in our lives. If you will ask the Spirit of God to show you how you can apply today's reading to your life, He will! Do that and join us next time because God Is.

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