DESERT ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD
Part 1—Moses, Prince of Egypt

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Readings: Exodus 1-3; Luke 20:37; Acts 7:22, 30-35; Hebrews 11:23-27

Moses lived at the court of Pharaoh. This may well have been Pharaoh Ramses II, also called Ramses the Great. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was automatically adopted as a son of Pharaoh and so he had a claim to the throne. In those days adopted children received the same rights and privileges as biological children. Presumably at Pharaoh's court the name of Moses would have been just as prestigious and influential as Pharaoh. So Moses was destined for a leadership position, either as head of the priests or of the military. In those times Egyptian princes were highly educated in all the sciences.

Moses was a powerful man with immense potential. A brilliant career lay ahead of him. He had been set apart from his race and people, who were mere slaves, uneducated, deprived and insignificant. He was cut off from them too. Cut off from the faith of his people Israel. Moses would have grown up worshipping the sun and all the other deities in Egypt's pantheon of gods, possibly even serving in this pagan cult. But through his sister Miriam, who knew of his origin, he may have secretly heard news of his people and their faith and God's promises. In him the assurance may have grown that God allowed him to be educated at Pharaoh's court because He intended him to be a liberator for his people like Joseph (Acts 7:25).

So one day he went to visit his people at forced labour in the mud pits. He must have cut a striking image. He exuded power. Everyone had to do his bidding. He could determine over the life or death of a person. So when he caught an Egyptian unjustly tormenting one of his fellow countrymen, he knocked him out flat, killing him. He told himself he couldn't stand the injustice. So he acted, disregarding the wrath of Pharaoh and the risk to his life. Though prompted by the best of motives, Moses was unbroken in his arrogant, overconfident and hot-tempered nature. Undoubtedly God's calling was on his life. Moses was called to be a deliverer not just of any people but God's chosen people. But first Moses had to go through a purifying process.

The future leader of God's people had first to become a tool in the hand of his God. That meant God and not Moses was in control. God decided, God led, God took action – and not Moses. Moses was to become a pliable tool in the Master's hand, so that God could use him as He saw fit. And one thing is certain. It is not God's will that we commit murder. So if Moses wants to act on God's behalf, he cannot save his people from slavery by committing murder in disregard of God's will.



Here we see that Moses' arrogance stands in the way of God's rule and glory. This is why God intervenes. His ultimate design is to use Moses as His instrument to deliver His people. But for that to happen, God sets certain events into motion. Moses is evidently reported to Pharaoh as a traitor for killing an Egyptian. He is forced to flee. Overnight he loses power, prestige, position, future and home. God deposes and dethrones him.

What a dethronement that is. Stripped of his rights, the king's son, the man destined for leadership, sinks to the level of a nomad. The name of Moses, held in honour by thousands, is now a term of abuse in Pharaoh's court. Moses, once celebrated by cheering crowds at festivals and parades, walks lonely and unknown in the desert. Moses, a man of culture and great potential, with all the wisdom of an advanced civilization at his disposal, is reduced to abject poverty, without access to papyrus scrolls and any works of art. With not even a tent to call his own, Moses is dependent on others and compelled to earn his living as a hired hand. Moses, who lived in magnificent and luxurious surroundings, is homeless as he wanders aimlessly in the desert. The man with a brilliant future and tremendous potential forfeits it all.

Dethronement. In that moment God lays the foundation for Moses to become a true leader. Moses is now to be trained in godly wisdom, which is humility and reverence for God. The foundation is laid for Moses to lead a people with authority, with the sceptre of humility and self-effacing gentleness. In the silence of the desert, where no voices are heard, his ear was being trained, so that one day he would hear awesome words from the mouth of God. Moses' dethronement signified that the foundation was being laid for an exalted position. Moses was to be elevated to God's side as a friend of God. What can we learn from this event? In the words of a hymn:

"Those whom God would array in glory
high above the starry sky for all eternity
He first leads down into the depths."

So it is a divine law. The way up first leads down. That is God's way with us. God can only endure dethroned souls in His presence.

The Evangelical Sisters of Mary

Translated from the original German, "Mose am Hof des Pharao", *Sinai heute.*

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