

Moses and Early Egyptian Military Training

The Egyptians had profited from the Hebrews for four hundred years. After two hundred years of enslavement the population gets out of hand so the Egyptians try modified genocide. It is in this setting that Moses is born. Adopted by an Egyptian princess, Moses is groomed for leadership. Moses thrives in this setting for forty years. Moses receives the same educational opportunities, and military experience as his peers.

Moses early combat experience with the Egyptians is obliquely referenced in ancient literature. Early manuscripts, used by Jewish historian Josephus present intriguing information about the early years of Moses. Josephus may have accessed sources taken from the temple after the Romans destroyed it in 70 A. D., Josephus tells us about Moses as an Egyptian prince leading an army into battle against the Ethiopians.¹

Another early Jewish historian Artapanus in his work: “Concerning the Jews” credits Moses with leading a campaign against the Ethiopians and taking the city of Hermopolis. According to Artapanus the war and ultimate siege of Hermopolis lasted ten years.²

Josephus places the conflict in the upper part of the Nile instead of Hermopolis. It is doubtful that the war lasted ten years since the campaigns of that period were seasonal in nature, due to the necessity of providing food, water and other supplies.

It is not the purpose of this material to evaluate the information provided by either author. Artapanus’ work no longer exists but parts are quoted by the early Christian historian Eusebius.

¹ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews. Book 2, Chapter 10.

² Artapanus in his work: “Concerning the Jews

I feel the tradition must refer to early events in Moses' life particularly his military training. The ability to murder the Egyptian by Moses with no hesitance reflects training, ability, state of mind. (Exodus 2:11) This murder seems to indicate that Moses was comfortable with killing, knew how, and was confident at the time he could get by with it. As the verses indicate, there is no remorse, no regret, and skillfully accomplished. However, the murder is discovered and Moses flees Egypt.

Moses approached by the Lord forty years later is not responsive to the Lord's offer. A soldier would have known when approached by the Lord the impossibility of leading the Jews out of Egypt. Familiar with warfare, and the lack of any training by these ignorant nomads, and more the untrustworthiness inherent as seen by their betrayal of him 40 years before, forms the basis for refusing the Lord's invitation.

However, Moses' final acceptance is rooted in military tradition. You do not refuse a direct order. Other elements of military tradition may be detected in scripture.

The command structure seen in Exodus through Deuteronomy is unique yet sound. The Commander and Chief is God. He is the General of the Army. He forms the overall strategy and gives tactical instruction to Moses. Moses is a good colonel. He follows the instruction to the letter, except once.

Only a military mind could have played the role. Military experience, tactical knowledge, and the ability to follow instruction form the basis of command. The Lord used the skills possessed by Moses. Each step of the way the Lord explains the tactical situation and provides directions.

Moses previous combat experience provides the foundation needed to accomplish the goals set forth by the Lord. Compare it to an artist who draws a beautiful picture. The artist, possesses the skill, the Lord provides the inspiration.

Moses appearance before Pharaoh provides us with a glimpse of the power and influence Moses possesses in his earlier life . Pharaoh knows of Moses. Forty years have passed since Moses left Egypt. Yet it is as though the rumors of his achievements magnified in his absence. Notice please the first exchange between Pharaoh and Moses.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.’ “ Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.” Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.” But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!” 5 Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.” (Exodus 5:1-4).

Moses is blunt and to the point there is no indication that Moses and Aaron bow

before the Pharaoh, or even give him much of a greeting. Just as if Moses had every right to be there, Moses tells Pharaoh to release the Hebrews.

Pharaoh does not challenge Moses on his right to appear before him rather Pharaoh reasons with Moses almost as if Moses is an equal, a king.

Pharaoh even waits for Moses to leave before he increases the burden of the Hebrews! Moses on the other hand seems to be afraid of Pharaoh. Letting Aaron speak for him serves two purposes; the Pharaoh cannot sense Moses fear, and it makes it appear to Pharaoh that Moses does not honor Pharaohs position. Something Pharaoh accepts, for he never challenges Moses, lack of worship of him nor demands obedience.

This behavior of Pharaoh substantiates Moses stature and reputation before the people. Pharaoh knows the famous Moses and his feats in battle.

With each encounter we see the confidence of Moses grow and the fear of Pharaoh increase. The basic reply of Pharaoh focuses on the loss of income due to the release of the Hebrews. It is not until the last plague, before the deaths of the first born, that Pharaoh gets enough confidence to threaten Moses. Moses snaps right back at him! Pharaoh is furious yet appears impotent! He cannot face Moses. It takes Pharaoh three days to get up the courage to go after Israel.

Some may say this is merely Moses interpretation. However, the lack of action on Pharaoh's part and holding Moses at a distance speaks volumes about Pharaoh's resistance to exert authority over Moses.

One can only guess why Pharaoh would respond in this manner, yet Moses prior deeds no doubt rule over the court of Pharaoh.

It should be a constant awareness with God's children that He has a plan and a purpose for each. Discovering the purpose of one's birth is the richest blessing the Lord bestows on His children.

The Lord has a date with Pharaoh also. The results of that encounter lives throughout history. It is a battle between a man who thought himself a god, and God who was I Am.

The Lord does the same thing with Pharaoh that He tells His people to do before going to war with any people. Offer surrender terms.

Pharaoh laughs at the idea after all Pharaoh is god as well and so he commands his magicians' to do the same signs that the God of Moses does, and they do! Ever wonder how they could do it? Really the answer is simple; we just do not like the truth. Satan is

powerful and he gives his followers the ability to copy the miracles. But as is often the case Satan is not an original thinker, he merely copies and twist what the Lord does. History even tells us who Satan used to produce these miracles their names were Jannes and Jambres (II Timothy 3:8).

It is important that the Lord allowed the signs of Jannes and Jambres to occur. It serves the purpose of hardening Pharaoh's heart by encouraging him to believe in his own godhood. Really, God was challenging Satan to a duel of sorts, God's power verses Satan's as seen in the works of men. Christians should never underestimate the power of God's enemies. It is also notable that the Lord allowed his own people to experience the first miracles of the Nile turning to blood, the frogs, and the gnats. Israel had to learn the power of God, as well as the Egyptians.

The text emphasizes that though Satan could give his magicians the power to perform the miracles, they could not stop the process. Pharaoh had to ask Moses to stop the frogs. Moses, in somewhat of a charitable mood allowed Pharaoh to specify the timing.

So the god's of Egypt take the bait and rise to the challenge of God. The third miracle the coming of the gnats convinces the magicians of their limitations. Convinced the one true God is responsible they try to warn Pharaoh, but he would not listen.

Once again Moses tells Pharaoh to release the Hebrews backed up by a warning of a plague of flies. Again, Pharaoh hardens his heart once the flies are removed, and refuses to keep his word. The miracles to this point have been a nuisance. Now the warnings are over.

Now God strikes at the food supply sending a plague on the cattle, horses, asses, sheep and other flocks. The animals of Israel are spared. Again, Pharaoh hardens his own heart to the plea of Moses.

Now God strikes a little closer to home with boils on man and beast. Even the magicians are afflicted and have to leave the presence of Pharaoh. The text at this point acknowledges a change with Pharaoh as well. Up until now Pharaoh was hardening his own heart, but with the boils God begins to harden Pharaoh's heart.

The miracles cover about a year. It is possible that the hail and fire take place in January and the plague of locust in April. The hail marks another change in approach. God allows those who fear Him among the Egyptians to escape the hail. The hail is also a further attack on the Egyptian food supply, the flax and barley are ruined but the later crops have not come up yet and are spared. Though Pharaoh begs for reprieve, Moses tells him he does not yet fear God.

Afterward, Pharaoh changes his mind and retracts his word. The Lord gives the new crops a space of time to grow and then Pharaoh is told the locust are coming. Pharaoh advisors are terror-stricken and beg Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. He refuses.

The locust plague strikes at the economic heart of the nation. Hurriedly, Pharaoh calls for Moses to ask the Lord Moses God to halt the plague. Afterward, the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart. The last disaster before the death of the first-born is three days of darkness, which does not affect the land of Goshen.

Pharaoh calls for Moses and entreats him to lift the darkness, then curses Moses and threatens him with death if he ever sees him again.

The death of all the first-born breaks the will of Pharaoh and he forces the Hebrews to leave. Why did the Lord choose the death of the first-born as the final plague? What is the nature of the plague?

It is an individualized plague. All of the others were general in nature and could have been natural phenomena at God's direction. However, this plague is personal. No other plague, before or after in history, has singled out a specific person while passing over others. Nothing died in this plague only the first born of human or beast. It made no difference whether one was good, or bad, short or tall, Egyptian, Hittite, or parasite the only determining factor was obedience. I suspect Egyptian believers may well have been safe in the home of a Hebrew.

The Pharaoh finally surrendered, along with Egypt's possessions. Pharaoh tells Moses "Be gone and bless me." Moses departs. (Exodus 12:32). Why the 10 plagues? Why take a year to subdue the Egyptians?

Two hundred years after the Exodus the enemies of God are still talking about His mighty deeds. (I Samuel 4:4-9). Remember the events surrounding the capture of the Ark by the Philistines during the period of the Judges? The Philistines upon hearing of the entrance of the Ark into the camp of Israel quake with fear and rehearse all the mighty deeds done by the Lord, those deeds include what the Lord has done to Egypt.

God wants people to believe. He gives them plenty of time and proof that He is God. However it is not just belief that God is, but trust that He rewards those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6). Ten plagues against Egypt convince the Hittites, the Amorites and the other nations that God is to be feared. The God of the Israelites was powerful and not to

be challenged. Thus, the purpose of a multitude of signs over a year's time adds strength to the belief that God did the deeds.

But God is not through with the Egyptians. He knows the Egyptians will never give up trying to reacquire their slaves. Moreover, God is a war God, and He does not make treaties, nor take prisoners. Besides, He has an ambush set, the results of which will be talked about and investigated for the next 3500 years. The first tactical decision occurs as the people are leaving Egypt. A decision right, left, or straight ahead on a southeast heading? The Lord tells Moses straight ahead. To go left means the nation will be embroiled in battle before they receive any training. Going right makes no sense. Why circle around the Egyptian Sinai, the Lord's ambush is straight ahead. It is the shortest marching distance to the Red Sea not the Reed Sea, the people have limited provisions for seven days, that is the unleavened bread, and have a date with destiny.

Israel had to avoid large fortifications in the journey across the peninsula since the enemy is not to be engaged. The Egyptians would be able to track the progress through the existence of watch towers. Signal towers are known to exist. During the day some type of mirror system is in place during the night fires are used to communicate. This is how the Pharaoh knew they were heading into an area from which there was no escape.

The proposed route of travel is the same taken in 1967 by Moshe Dyan when he marched his troops from Nuweiba to Suez City in six days.³ It took Moses seven days. Moses had seven days of supplies. Each circumstance Moses faces, requires that he obey the Army commander at the same time it affirms Moses is competent in military

³ Ron Wyatt, *The Red Sea Crossing*, discusses how in 1967, Moshe Dyan marched his troops from Nuweiba (the crossing site) to Suez City (near ancient Tharu/Succoth) in six days. And they camped at night.

maneuvers and knowledgeable about the terrain. Knowledge acquired both as an Egyptian army commander and later in his travel to what is now Saudi Arabia.

Israel is marching both day and night. That is the purpose of the pillar of fire at night to see. (Exodus 13:21). As Israel approaches Pihahiroth they know they are in trouble. The canyon walls hem them in, the Egyptians coming at a gallop, and the Red Sea before them. They are terrified. The Commander and Chief gives Moses his instructions.

This military type relationship between God and Moses continues. Since the burning bush each situation bears the same marks of military command. Moses, asking for directions, God giving instructions, Moses doing as directed.

This is the model for God's chosen today. His warriors faced with conflict, asking the Commander for directions, then doing as directed.

A word of warning this is not the model for marriage. The husband is not the commander nor does he have the knowledge, wisdom, or experience to play the role of a god with his spouse.

Israel is now in front of Pihahiroth, camped with the Red Sea to their back and the battle of the Red Sea is about begin.