

I. Introduction

Good morning! Let's begin with a question. Western scholars call the first five books of the Bible the Pentateuch, but Jewish people usually call these same books the Torah. Of course, since Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, it may be easier to just call them Moses's books. But what are these books all about? What is the one main subject of the five books Moses wrote? I will answer that in a moment, but first let's do a bit of review.



As you recall, Stephen was a deacon, a preacher, and a miracle worker. Stephen was full of God's grace and power. But some Jews who belonged to the so-called, Synagogue of the Freedmen, became jealous of Stephen. **Acts 6:11** says, **"Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, 'We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.'"**



They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. And, in **Acts 6:13-14**, we are told, **"They produced false witnesses, who testified, 'This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.'"**

Stephen is innocent of these charges, but the accusation is serious and Stephen is in great danger. Yet, as we have already seen, Stephen's response was not designed to save his own life; Stephen responded with words intended to bring his accusers to repentance and faith in Jesus. Even as Stephen was being stoned, he responded with love. **Acts 7:60**, tells us about Stephen's last moments, **"Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep."** Stephen displays a great love for his accusers and for the Sanhedrin.

The first part of Stephen's response, which we looked at last week, focused on reminding them of the history of Abraham and Joseph; stories which are rich in prophetic meaning pointing to Jesus, the Messiah. Today, in the second part of his message, we will see how Stephen next focuses on Moses and the history of how Moses delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. For the Sanhedrin, the story of Moses is very close to home, because they claimed to be the heirs of the seventy elders chosen by Moses.

In Numbers 11, the people of Israel complained against Moses, and then Moses complained to the Lord that the burden of leading the people was too much for him. **Numbers 11:16**, records the Lord's response, **"The LORD said to Moses: 'Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you.'"** Moses chose seventy elders and brought them to the Lord and the Lord gave them His Spirit so that they might assist Moses in leading Israel.



The seventy members of the Sanhedrin considered themselves to be the rightful heirs of this authority, but Stephen is going to show them that they do not really understand the story of Moses. If they really understood and believed Moses, the Sanhedrin would have welcomed Jesus instead of condemning Him. It is just as Jesus said in **John 5:46**, **"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."** And here is the answer to the question I asked at the beginning. Moses wrote about Jesus, the Messiah to come. The five books of Moses record history, but they are really about Jesus. When we understand this, we learn to read Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy with new eyes, and we begin to see prophetic models and words about Jesus on every page.



Let' read more of Stephen's message in Acts 7:17-36. I think we will see that Stephen understood the things we have been discussing.

II. Scripture Reading Acts 7:17-36, (NIV, 1984)

17 "As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. 18 Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die. 20 "At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. 21 When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. 23 "When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. 24 He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. 25 Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. 26 The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?' 27 "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons. 30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 31 When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. 33 "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.' 35 "This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert.

III. Teaching

As we discussed last week, when the family of Israel went down to Egypt to escape the famine, Joseph was in charge of all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh in authority. Because of this, the family of Israel was treated well and welcomed in Egypt. Joseph saved Egypt from the famine, so this kind treatment probably continued for many years. But time passed and the people of Joseph's time died. Generations came and went, and eventually the new rulers of Egypt forgot about Joseph. By the time of Moses, about four hundred years had passed since the family of Israel first went to Egypt.



During this time, the family of Israel greatly increased and Israel became a people. **Acts 7:17** tells us, **“As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased.”** God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars of the sky and in Egypt their numbers increased rapidly, so rapidly that Pharaoh became worried about the future of Egypt.



Pharaoh could have asked the people of Israel to leave, or he could have made friends with them. But by this time the people of Israel had been reduced to slave status and their manual labor was important to the economy of Egypt. So Pharaoh wanted to keep the Israelites, but he did not want their numbers to increase anymore. He decided to use harsh measures. **Acts 7:19**, **“He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.”**

This was a dreadful time for the people of Israel. They served Pharaoh in bitter labor under harsh taskmasters and at the same time, Pharaoh was determined to kill their sons so that their numbers would not increase. It was at this time that Moses was born. For three months, Moses was hidden by his mother, but when this became impossible, she placed little Moses in a basket among the reeds along the Nile River bank. This was the very place where Pharaoh's daughter came to bath, and she found Moses and took him home and raised him as her own. **Acts 7:22, "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."**



Moses was raised as a prince of Egypt, with every advantage that position offered. But at some point, Moses understood that he was not an Egyptian. And by the age of forty, Moses had become interested in interceding to help his people, the people of Israel. However, his attempt to help went badly wrong and he ended up killing an Egyptian who had been beating an Israelite. This incident quickly became known, and on the following day when Moses attempted to intercede between Israelites who were fighting, he was rejected. **Acts 7:27, "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?'"** And Moses was forced to flee Egypt.



Moses had lived in Egypt for forty years, and next he lived in Midian for forty years where he married and had two sons. Moses exchanged the fine robes of an Egyptian prince for the simple robe of a shepherd and served his father-in-law instead of Pharaoh. In Egypt, Moses had had the best teachers and he had learned many things. But with the desert and a flock of sheep as his teachers, Moses learned something he would never have learned in the Pharaoh's palace; Moses learned humility. **Numbers 12:3** tells us, "**Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.**"

If we wish to serve the Lord, more than anything, we need to learn humility. Moses learned the lesson well, and the day came when the Lord called to Moses from the burning bush and sent him back to Egypt to free the people of Israel. **Acts 7:31-32, "When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look."** The Lord spoke to Moses, gave him power, and sent him to free Israel. In Egypt, Moses demonstrated the power of God again and again until finally Pharaoh could resist no more.



After 400 years, the people of Israel were finally free from Egypt. However, because of their rebellious attitudes, they were not yet ready to enter the Promised Land. It took forty years of life in the desert before Israel was ready to claim the land promised to Abraham. On another occasion, we will take a closer at the Exodus from Egypt and at the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness.

But for today, I want to go back to **Acts 7:35, "This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush."** Why does Stephen say, "**this same Moses**"? Stephen is clearly drawing special attention to the fact that the same man the people of Israel rejected was chosen by God to be the ruler and deliverer of Israel. Why? Because this brings to mind another man who was rejected by Israel, but made Savior and Lord by God.

Like Moses, Jesus was rejected by men, but made ruler and deliverer by God. Stephen has reviewed the story of Moses with special emphasis on this point. And by this, I think Stephen was inviting the Sanhedrin to consider the many parallels between Moses and Jesus so that they would realize that Jesus is the prophet who was to come, spoken of by Moses in **Deuteronomy 18:15**. In this verse, Moses told Israel, "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.**"

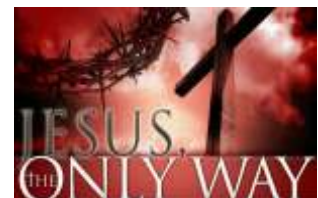
In what ways are Moses and Jesus alike? Let's consider a few parallels in their lives.

Moses	Jesus
Pharaoh tried to kill Moses at birth	King Herod tried to kill Jesus at birth
Adopted by Pharaoh's daughter	Adopted by Joseph, husband of Mary
Grew up in Egypt	Spent early childhood years in Egypt
Had compassion for Israel	Wept for Jerusalem
The most humble of men	Humbled Himself to become a man
Rejected by Israel	Rejected by Israel
Sent by God to be the deliverer of Israel	Sent by God to be the Savior of all who believe
Did great miracles	Did great miracles
Prophet	Prophet
Shepherd of sheep first and then of Israel	The Great Shepherd of all who believe

These are just a few of the ways in which the life of Moses is a prophetic model of Jesus' own life. With a little study, we could probably identify at least a dozen more similarities in their lives and their missions. Of course, we should also remember that there are big differences between Moses and Jesus also. Moses is a prophetic model, or type of Christ, but Jesus is Lord and God. In **John 1:17** it is written, **"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."**

IV. Conclusion

Moses was a great man of God, but for forgiveness of our sins and eternal life, we must look to Jesus. **Acts 4:12** proclaims, **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."** Stephen spoke to the Sanhedrin through Old Testament stories and prophetic models because that was the language the Sanhedrin was best equipped to understand. But the message that Stephen wanted them to understand was a simple one: Jesus is Lord and Savior. Jesus is the only way.



V. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

We praise Your Holy Name and give thanks for Your eternal love and limitless grace. Thank You for the wonders of Your Word, the Holy Scriptures given to us. Thank You most of all for the amazing salvation You have given to all who believe in Jesus. Lord, we confess our need for salvation. We are sinners. We confess our sinfulness and we call upon the Name of Jesus. In the Name of Jesus and by His finished work on the cross, we ask You to forgive our sins and restore us to right relationship with You. Thank You for the great love You have shown in preparing this wonderful salvation for us. Renew our relationship with You and give us the free gift of resurrection and eternal life. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we might learn to boldly tell others of Your love and grace. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus! Lord, come now, and meet the needs of your people. You know each and every need. Comfort those who sorrow, strengthen those who are weak, heal those who are sick. Meet the needs of your people out of your endless love and compassion and for your glory. Be glorified, Lord. Be glorified in our lives, our homes, our church and throughout this land. In Jesus' precious Name I pray, amen.