

# Moses

Hi, I'm Gemma and I'm going to talk about Moses.

The primary school I went to was not aligned to any religion. I only remember doing one bit of religious studies. As about 1/2 the children were Jewish and nearly 1/2 Christian, to avoid offending, we did Moses.

When I was at secondary school I had dyslexic support lessons instead of doing some of the subjects on the curriculum, one of the subjects I missed was religious education, I only ended up going to one R.E. lesson. It was about Moses.

Then when I was 23 I went to a gay synagogue and after the sermon we did a bit of Torah studies - which happened to be on Moses!

You can imagine my surprise when I came to MCC North London and didn't do Moses!

But it was good learning about him, he was an amazing person.

- We learnt about him negotiating with the Pharaoh,
- and inspiring the slaves of Egypt to leave and find freedom
- He communicated the 10 commandments to his people
- And much more.

He was a man who was obviously very close to God. To me he is like Gandhi, someone to be looked up to.

I'd like to now share the passage about Moses which explains why he is my personal hero. (Ex4:10)

"Moses said to Yahweh, 'Please, My lord, I have never been eloquent, even since you have spoken to your servant, for I am slow and hesitant of speech.' 'Who gave a person a mouth' Yahweh said to him 'who makes a person dumb or deaf, gives sight or makes blind is it not I, Yahweh?'

Moses was slow of speech!

Why weren't we taught that he was slow of speech? None of the times!

Was it not relevant? Did the things God asked of Moses not include speech? But then... Why did God choose Moses when God knew that Moses was slow of speech?

These two questions are at the heart of what I'm going to be focusing on. I will also be thinking about what we can learn from this small passage in the Bible?

But first we have to put the passage into context both with the Bible and, as I've learnt from MCC, with its historical context.

Directly preceding this passage in the Bible is one about God's preparation of Moses. God gave Moses a magic staff, the ability to change water into blood, and to make his hand diseased and un-diseased so that he could show he was sent by God. All this to help Moses in his God's Calling. For me what stands out in this proceeding passage is that with all these gifts, God did not see fit to make Moses a fluent speaker!

In the passage directly after: God did offer Moses his brother Aaron's help and say he'd help them both with what to say. But I think we'd all want help in fighting for the abolition of slavery, to me this doesn't take away from the fact that God asked someone who was slow of speech to do all that He asked Moses to do.

## **Historical Context:**

Well I wasn't around in the Late Bronze Age and I don't know much about it, but luckily for me I'm married to a Classicist. When I first mentioned to her that Moses was slow of speech she said, "Well some ancient cultures believed that people with disABILITIES were closer to God. They just said that to emphasise how close Moses was to God." Hmm... there are people in the Bible close to God who weren't reported to have any disability aren't there? And why this specific disability? And whenever I've read the Bible it always seems to say that God is for all his people not just those that are traditionally close to God. To me there would have to be Characters in the Bible -some of them even with main storylines, who have disABILITIES in order to make the Bible realistic.

So to return to the first question: Why weren't we taught that he was slow of speech?

As a child growing up with Auditory Dyslexia I was slow of speech and often had difficulty with pronunciation. So, obviously it would have been great to learn that there were people who were slow of speech that God trusted with such important work. But conspiracy theories aside, maybe we weren't told because it was not a great part to the story, despite it seeming so relevant to me. Maybe, to the people who were presenting the story to me, what he achieved was far more important than what he didn't. Perhaps this is the first lesson which can be taken from this biblical example of a person succeeding with disABILITIES, it is possible to do just that - not only did Moses succeed despite a disability, he succeeded despite a disability in the very area which would seem to be of utmost importance to what was required of him.

Why did God choose Moses when God knew that Moses was slow of speech?

We are not told the cause of Moses' slowness of speech, it could have been one of several neurological or physical disabilities. We don't know which, we have to make a stab in the dark, any guess is as good as another. So, for the purpose of this presentation let's say Auditory Dyslexia caused Moses' slowness of speech. Auditory Dyslexia is caused by the brain not being able to process sound that changes faster than 1/40th of a second. This really isn't a problem when listening to anything other than speech, but as there are sounds within speech that change at 1/80th of a second the knock on effect is what's known as a Phonological Processing Impediment. Which is difficulty in blending and pulling apart the sounds within words. Which amongst other difficulties can cause slowness of speech. So let's say Moses had this condition: what assets would it give him to make him a suitable candidate for God to choose for this rather difficult mission?

With any neurological impediment that a person is born with or acquires as a small child the knock on result is that another part of the brain over develops in compensation in order to minimise the effects of the impediment so the person can better cope. In the case of Auditory Dyslexia, it is an ability to see the big picture that overdevelops, as it is needed for the contextual reasoning required to work out what is being said. What I mean is that for example the p in pee and the b in bee both have sound ways that change more rapidly than 1/40th of a second and so sound the same. Lip reading does no good, as p and b look the same. So the way we work out what words are being said is to build up the picture as a whole and then slot the unknown words into place.

This process when continually practiced as a child leads to a better than average ability at seeing the whole. Also intuition as it offers clues, and, in my opinion, the ability to come up with ideas, as we have to find other ways of doing things. I think all of these would be very useful skills for Moses to have to fulfil the tasks God asked of him.

What I'm trying to say by this example is that there are built in positives to disABILITIES that can make people better rather than worse for a given job. This I think is true for all disABILITIES not just neurological.

Well known examples of overdeveloping one ability to compensate for difficulties in another are: blind people having better hearing and people in wheel chairs who are otherwise able-bodied having better upper body strength.

These examples I hope illustrate the positives of disABILITIES and so whatever the cause of Moses' slowness of speech, he would have had strengths in other areas above his peers.

What can we learn from this small passage from the Bible?

- Moses is remembered for his communication with God, the Pharaoh and the slaves of Egypt, -not for his slowness of speech. - not only did Moses succeed despite a disability, he succeeded despite a disability in the very area which would seem to be of utmost importance to what was required of him. - Not all disabilities in the bible were seen as needing to be cured. - God was an equal ops employer!

Any Questions?