

A comparative analysis of moses

[Science](#), [Genetics](#)



The biblical Moses and the Moses described by Zora Neale Hurston in her book *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, are both based upon the Exodus story, found in the second book of the Bible.

Although the stories are similar in many respects, both concerned with the bondage of a people and their cries for a deliverer, who is found in Moses, the biblical Moses is firmly rooted solely in the Hebraic tradition, following the lead of the patriarchs, Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.

Hurston's Moses, however, although still a Hebrew, has a more universal appeal. He speaks in black colloquialisms, creating an extended analogy that can be linked not to the ancient Hebrews, but also to the oppressed blacks in America, and to the modern Jews who were savagely persecuted by Hitler and Nazism.

The Exodus story concerns a male son born to Hebrew slaves. The midwives disobey Pharaoh's command to kill all male newborns. Moses is hidden only to be discovered by none other than Pharaoh's own daughter, who then raises him as her own son, who later discovers his true identity and leads the slaves to freedom. Moses' life is divided into forty year segments: forty years in Egypt; forty years on the back side of a mountain; and forty years wandering in the wilderness.

In Hurston's version, more is made about race. The story discusses the idea of a "people" and their origins to a greater extent. Hurston slants the argument toward the idea of racial origins and perhaps origin more generally as the start of many of the evils of the world. She not only wants to create

doubts about Moses' pure origins, but also about the very concept that was prevalent during 1939 when her book was written: that of racial purity.

As an anthropology researcher she understood racial divisions as idealized abstractions, even though they had concrete functions in the real world. Hurston explored race as a cultural creation rather than a biological fact. Her novel assumes an even greater meaning as Germany, led by Hitler's theory of eugenics-founded on the idea of racial improvement through selective breeding- started the world war in 1939.

In the United States the eugenics movement was related to racist campaigns against European undesirables and blacks. Eugenics was thought to be necessary to produce a great race. Hitler's goal was a Master race who guarded the purity of their own blood. By keeping race "pure," exterminating Jews and Slavs were deemed essential to that undertaking. (Hurston, introduction xii-xiv).

The spectre of Nazism looms over the beginning of Hurston's novel as it starts with the act of marking Hebrew male newborns for extinction. Parents, desperate for places to hide their children, become frantic that the police might get tipped off and come execute their child. In fact, Moses' father is so fearful that he aims to kill the baby himself so that the police won't have that chance. Yet despite their terror, Moses' mother is determined that he lives and hides him. In all this hoopla of extermination, the irony is that there is plenty of Hebrew blood in Pharaoh's family already.

“ That is why he wants to kill us off. He is scared someone will come along and tell who his real folks are. The grandmother of Pharaoh was a Hebrew.” (Hurston, 14).

Besides his murder of male infants, Pharaoh is cruel in other ways. He denies citizenship to the Hebrews, relegating them to slavery. Yet in still another act of irony, Pharaoh ends up with a Hebrew grandson in Moses.

As he grows older, Moses fights for inclusion of the Hebrews in the Egyptian army. But the Egyptians oppose him, remarking:

“ They are not citizens of Egypt, but enemy prisoners, and as such it would bbe rash to put arms into their hands again. Who knows when they might rise up and turn the tables?”