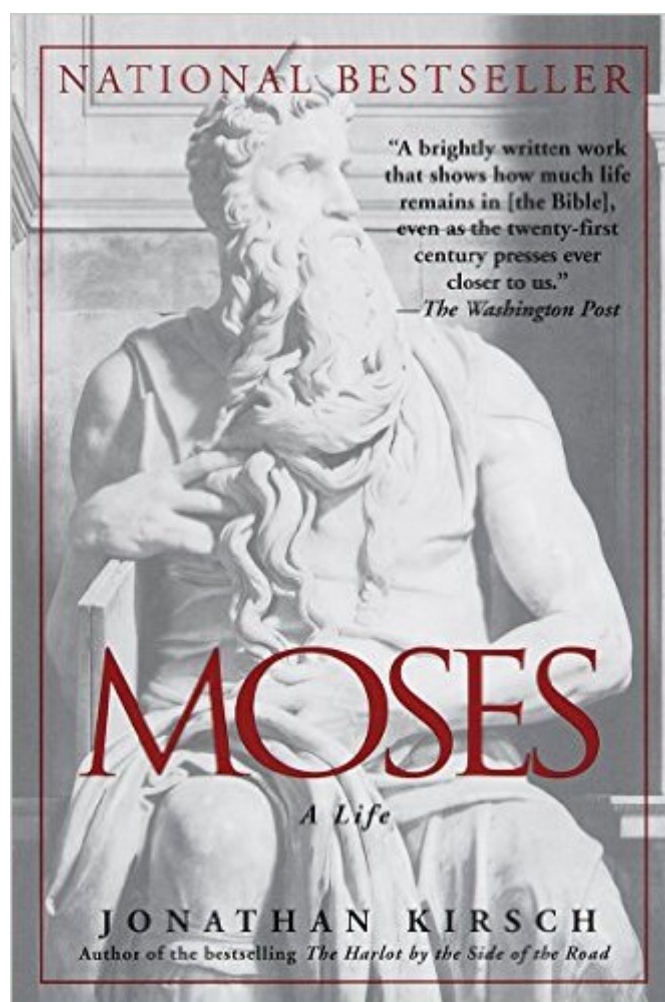


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# Moses: A Life



## Synopsis

Lawgiver and liberator. Seer and prophet. The only human permitted to converse with God "face-to-face." Moses is the most commanding presence in the Old Testament. Yet as Jonathan Kirsch shows in this brilliant, stunningly original volume, Moses was also an enigmatic and mysterious figure--at once a good shepherd and a ruthless warrior, a spiritual leader and a magician, a lawgiver who broke his own laws, God's chosen friend and hounded victim. Now, in *Moses: A Life*, Kirsch accomplishes the wondrous feat of revealing the real Moses, a strikingly modern figure who steps out from behind the facade of Sunday school lessons and movie matinees. Drawing on the biblical text and a treasury of both scholarship and storytelling, Kirsch examines all that is known and all that has been imagined of Moses. In these vivid pages, we see the marvels and mysteries of Moses's life in a new light--his rescue in infancy and adoption by an Egyptian princess; his reluctant assumption of the role of liberator; his struggles to wrest his people from the pharaoh's dominion; his desperate vigil on Mount Sinai. Here too is the darker, more ominous Moses--the sorcerer, the husband of a pagan woman, the military commander who cold-bloodedly ordered the slaying of innocent people; the beloved of God whom God sought twice to murder. Jonathan Kirsch brings both prodigious knowledge and a keen imagination to one of the most compelling stories of the Bible, and the results are fascinating. A figure of mystery, passion, and contradiction, Moses emerges from this book very much a hero for our time. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

File Size: 4379 KB

Print Length: 450 pages

Publisher: Ballantine Books; Reprint edition (October 5, 2009)

Publication Date: October 7, 2009

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B002RLBK5O

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #442,261 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #27  
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## Customer Reviews

Kirsch's book is basically a line-by-line reading of Exodus. He operates from the presumption that the books of the Torah were written by several different people over a period of centuries, and, in looking at the text line-by-line, attempts to resolve certain contradictions that he sees in that book's portrayal of Moses. Kirsch also supplements his reading of the Torah with reference to the Midrash and other rabbinical lore from hundreds or thousands of years ago. In so doing, he finds that there are several different distinct and contradictory versions of Moses to be found throughout what we now think of as the Bible, with even the facts of his life story (his siblings, his wife's country of origin, his number of children, and his father-in-law's name) varying from chapter to chapter, if not verse to verse. Think of his book as secular Bible study. "Moses" is, in that sense, an exhilarating read, an effort to figure out just who Moses might really have been. The book is basically a mystery without a solution: the author notes that there is no archaeological proof of Moses' existence, or of the Exodus from Egypt (note that I chose to read this book during Passover). By looking at the life of Moses, and the story of the Exodus and the wandering of the Israelites through the Sinai Peninsula over a 40-year-period, through the prism of the different strands of Bible authorship, and of the different rabbinic traditions that have sprung up around the life of Moses, Kirsch tells a story that does not move in a straight line, that does not arrive at a single conclusion.

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