

INT. PHARAOH AKHENATEN'S PALACE – DAY

SUPER 1: "THE PALACE OF PHARAOH AKHENATEN"

SUPER 2: "77 YEARS BEFORE THE EXODUS"

A lavish dinner banquet: bewigged and bejeweled guests, plentiful food and wine, blue lotus blossom centerpieces, music. At the royal table, KING AKHENATEN is flanked by QUEEN NEFERTITI on his left and their daughter PRINCESS MERITATEN, holding her 3-year old adopted son Moses on her lap at his right. The king's young viceroy, AY, is also seated at the table.

QUEEN NEFERTITI

Try this, my majesty. Our new cook makes delicious goose stew!

She motions to a steward. He prepares a serving of goose stew for the pharaoh, who samples it.

PHARAOH AKHENATEN

Mmmm. Yes, my great wife. Finally we have found a chief cook worthy of the title.

They look at each other affectionately as they both sip wine. Moses squirms off Meritaten's lap onto Akhenaten's.

PHARAOH AKHENATEN

(lifting the boy)

Moses! You grow strong!

PRINCESS MERITATEN

Moses . . .

Meritaten moves to retrieve Moses from Akhenaten. Before she can do so, Moses lifts the royal Blue Crown from the king's head and sets it upon his own. It is too big and slides down his head, stopping at his nose.

MOSES

Look father! I am king!

The music stops. Gasps of surprise and horror ripple through the guests, then a tense silence. All eyes turn to the king.

PHARAOH AKHENATEN

Steward!

An attendant rushes forward. Trembling, he removes the crown from the boy's head and replaces it on the king's head. Moses bursts into tears. Meritaten tries to soothe him to no avail.

PHARAOH AKHENATEN
(To Meritaten)

Daughter! Leave my presence!

She scurries off, carrying Moses, still kicking and screaming.

QUEEN NEFERTITI
Have patience with them, my majesty; Moses is just a child.

PHARAOH AKHENATEN
(still infuriated)

Do you not understand? My crown contains great power. The pharaoh's supreme authority comes to he who wears it - even if he is but a child.

Later, Moses as a grown man is guided by Jethro, the father of his wife Zipporah, who tells Moses that he will learn his destiny at Mount Sinai.

EXT. MOUNT SINAI – NIGHT

Moses' face is illuminated by the light of the smoldering bush. An ANGEL suddenly appears in the fire; Moses falls prostrate at the sight.

ANGEL
(male voice)

Moses. Approach unshod and draw near to hear the Word of The Eternal One.

Moses removes his sandals and prostrates himself again. The Angel vanishes. The bush, which had been smoldering, is suddenly engulfed in flames. A fiery Cloud of Glory descends from the sky and hovers above the scene. Moses is overcome with awe and terror.

THE ETERNAL
(female voice throughout)

Moses.

MOSES

In whose presence am I?

THE ETERNAL
I am The Eternal One, the God of your ancestors: the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of Isaac and Rebekah, the God of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, the God of Amram and Yochebel. You are My chosen one. It is I who have preserved your life from birth, it is I who caused you to be raised in the palace, and lo, it is I who have been speaking to you these many years, yet you have not heeded My Voice.

MOSES

Speak, O God of my ancestors, I hearken to you with all my heart.

THE ETERNAL

I have summoned you to show you this wonder: as this bush burns but is not consumed, so the Hebrews suffer but will endure in My sight. Now you learn your life's purpose - you are My instrument to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt. Together we will accomplish justice as a sign to all nations that I am the hope of the oppressed.

MOSES

But O Eternal One, my life is sought in Egypt for death, and I am not fluent in the Hebrew tongue. Surely there must be another who is better suited . . .

THE ETERNAL

I am The Eternal One, and I will provide the strength and aid you require. I will send your brother Aaron and your sister Miriam; they will speak for you. With them you will surely accomplish My decree that Egypt's enslavement of Israel shall end.

MOSES

But I have no army at my command. How can I conquer a power as mighty as Egypt?

THE ETERNAL

Take the staff in your hand and throw it to the ground.

Moses does so; it morphs into a venomous cobra. Terrified, Moses backs away from it.

THE ETERNAL

Do not fear the poison of any adversary. All are drained of strength before Me, but lo, I have put My power in your staff. Take up the snake in your hand.

Moses warily grabs the snake by its tail. It reverts back to a simple walking stick.

THE ETERNAL

Take your hand and place it upon your breast.

Moses parts his robe at the chest and places his right hand on his breast. When he withdraws his hand, it is leprous. Moses gasps, then moans in pain and terror.

THE ETERNAL

Place your hand again upon your breast.

Moses does so. When he draws out his hand, it is healthy.

THE ETERNAL

I alone rule over strength and weakness, health and frailty, life and death; this the king of Egypt will come to know. It is not your might but Mine that will free the Hebrews from

bondage. Once Israel is free, they will worship Me on this holy mountain. Go! – in the knowledge that I am with you.

MOSES

But Eternal One, I came of age knowing names of the Egyptian gods only, above all the sun-god Aten worshiped by the king. And I have my heard my Hebrew brethren speak of their God, yet I do not know Your name.

THE ETERNAL

My Name is too great for you. All you need know is that I AM and I WILL ALWAYS BE. That is My Name to you.

Moses worships. As the fiery Cloud of Glory dissipates, the fire in the Bush wanes but still smolders. Moses lapses into a deep sleep in its warm glow.

THE ETERNAL

Moses, I give you the gift of My light for use in My service. What I have declared in heaven will take form upon earth.

The Bush gently transfers its light to Moses' face, the fire dying out as his face begins to glow. (From this point forward Moses' face glows when he is serving as the conduit of God's words to Israel - these "glowing moments" are noted below; at all other times his appearance is normal.) The sky brightens as dawn approaches.

EXT. THE FOOT OF MOUNT SINAI – DAWN

Jethro and Zipporah have remained at the foot of Mount Sinai. They are keeping vigil by a dying campfire, wrapped in animal skin blankets.

JETHRO

What is troubling you, my daughter?

ZIPPORAH

Why do you ask, father?

JETHRO

There is pain in your eyes.

ZIPPORAH

Well, father, if you must know, I am afraid.

JETHRO

What do you fear?

ZIPPORAH

There is so much I don't know about my future. I always dreamed of marrying a Midianite man, bringing children into the world in my country, in the midst of my family, my people.

JETHRO

Does Moses displease you?

ZIPPORAH

I do not know him, he seems kind, but there is something about him that feels . . . different. He is a Hebrew, raised in the royal palace, in Egypt. I know nothing of Egypt, I am not royal, and I know even less about the Hebrew people.

JETHRO

My daughter, Moses is a great man with the hand of God Most High upon him. You are the wife of a man who is destined to change the world.

ZIPPORAH

Am I strong enough to be wife to such a man? Among strangers? What if they do not accept me?

JETHRO

My daughter, you are more than capable of fulfilling the promise that God Most High has for you, by Moses' side. Quiet your heart, calm your fears.

ZIPPORAH

But what is expected of us?

JETHRO

We will find out soon enough, when Moses returns.

Zipporah spots Moses as he makes his way down the mountain, his face glowing through the waning darkness.

ZIPPORAH

Look father. There he is!