

Synopsis

Act I

Ancient Egypt, more than 3,000 years ago. As Hebrews labour, desperate for deliverance from slavery, Egyptian soldiers, under orders to kill all Hebrew firstborn boys, snatch babies from their mothers' arms. Yocheved sings a last lullaby to her newborn, then places him in a basket and sets it out on the Nile, where it drifts into the Queen's pleasure garden. Queen Tuya is there with her infant son, Ramses, but when she finds the new baby in the bulrushes, she decides to adopt him and gives him his name: Moses (Deliver Us).

18 years later, high-spirited teenagers Moses and Ramses race their chariots, destroying the marketplace and part of a temple, infuriating the high priest, Hotep (Faster). Afterwards, their father Pharaoh Seti berates Ramses for his irresponsibility (One Weak Link) and tells him he must marry the arrogant and ambitious Princess Nefertari as a political alliance. Moses defends Ramses to his father, but left alone, he wishes he could leave a mark on the world as his brother will one day (Footprints on the Sand).

Some months later, Seti returns from a desert campaign against the rebellious Midianites (Seti's Return). To celebrate his victory, Seti gives Ramses a captured Midianite girl as his slave, Tzipporah (Dance to the Day). Later that evening, Tzipporah breaks away from her guards and winds up in Moses' bedchamber, where she defiantly says she will always be free and escapes.

Moses pursues Tzipporah into the marketplace, where he runs into Miriam, his real sister, and his brother Aaron. Miriam tells him the truth about his birth, and when he refuses to believe her, sings him their mother's lullaby, which stirs old memories in Moses. Distraught, he races back to the palace, but cannot escape his memories. Tuya finds him and tells him the truth: he is a Hebrew, but now he must forget that and continue to live as he always has, and Moses agrees (All I Ever Wanted).

The next day, Moses is with Ramses and Hotep at the temple worksite. He attempts to act as if nothing has changed, but when he sees a guard whipping a Hebrew slave, he attacks the guard and accidentally kills him. Hotep proclaims that Moses must be punished. Moses runs off and Ramses pursues him, saying he will hide the truth of Moses' identity. Moses says that isn't possible and runs into the desert (Make It Right).

Barely surviving (Moses in the Desert, Moses encounters the Midianites, led by their High Priest Jethro, who welcomes him into their tribe and tells him their philosophy (Through Heaven's Eyes).

As the time passes, Moses and Ramses miss one another (Faster, Reprise), but Moses has become a shepherd and fallen in love with Tzipporah, Jethro's daughter, whom he has re-encountered (Never in a Million Years).

Then one day, following a stray sheep, Moses encounters a miraculous burning bush and hears the voice of God commanding him to return to Egypt and free his people. Moses sets off with Tzipporah as, back in Egypt, Seti dies and Ramses is crowned Pharaoh (Act I Finale).

Act II

Moses returns to Egypt (Return to Egypt) and confronts Ramses, now married to Nefertari and the father of a son. Ramses agrees to free the Hebrews if Moses will come back to court as his adviser (Always On Your Side), and the exultant Moses informs the Hebrews they have been freed (Simcha).

But Hotep appears holding a royal decree that doubles the Hebrews' work load. Under the influence of Hotep and Nefertari, Ramses has broken his promise to Moses. The Hebrews angrily drive Moses away (Deliver Us, Reprise). Moses finds Ramses, sailing down the Nile on the royal barge, and warns him that if he does not keep his promise, Egypt will suffer. When Ramses refuses, the waters of the Nile are turned to blood, and further plagues of disease, fire and darkness ravage Egypt. Urged by Tuya to make peace with his brother, Moses pleads with Ramses to free the Hebrews, but Ramses will not relent (The Plagues).

And so, the final plague occurs, the death of the Egyptian first born, including Ramses' and Nefertari's son. Moses is devastated by the death and destruction he has caused (For the Rest of My Life).

Ramses tells Moses that the Hebrews can go, while Nefertari grieves over the dead body of their son (Heartless). Moses tells Miriam the Hebrews are finally free, but he is too distraught to lead them.

Miriam and Tzipporah, along with the freed Hebrews, revive his spirits (When You Believe).

Moses leads the Hebrews to the edge of the Red Sea, where Tzipporah mourns the fact that she will never see her family again (Never in a Million Years, Reprise). Suddenly, the Egyptian army appears in the distance, led by Ramses and Hotep, and the Hebrews appear to be trapped. Needing a miracle to escape, Moses holds out his hand and the Red Sea parts. The Hebrews pass through the Red Sea while Moses remains to offer himself as a ransom to Ramses for the Hebrews' freedom. Hotep urges Ramses to kill Moses, but Ramses refuses, saying there has been too much death, and he will be the weak link, breaking the chain of destruction. Moses and Ramses embrace, brothers once again, and then Moses and Tzipporah follow the Hebrews. Hotep commandeers the Egyptian army and pursues Moses and the Hebrews into the parted Red Sea, but once the Hebrews have reached safety, the waters fall back, drowning Hotep and the soldiers.

On opposite sides of the Red Sea, Moses and Ramses face their separate destinies, knowing that they will always have a brother who supports and understands them (Act II Finale).