The Questor

Bible history….
….Exodus

We left Jacob and his family in Egypt where his son Joseph, with the blessing of Pharaoh, had settled them on prime land in the Nile delta – having fled the famine in Canaan. That was around 1700BC when the Pharaoh may have been Sobekhotep IV or V.

When the famine was over, they had the option of returning to Canaan and resuming their life there; or they could stay put on good land in a country that welcomed them and which was very sophisticated by comparison with Canaan. They chose to stay.

Around four hundred years passed and, by the period covered by Tutankhamen to Ramses I, they had grown in number to the point where the Egyptians felt they were a threat to them. So they enslaved them in labour camps where they were harshly treated. They also decreed that all Hebrew boys should be killed at birth.

One baby boy escaped because his mother hid him from the Egyptians by putting him in a watertight basket of reeds which she floated at the edge of the Nile while his sister stood watch. The baby was discovered by one of Pharaoh's daughters when she was bathing and she adopted him. She called him Moses and he was brought up in the royal household.

When he was grown up, he was in a place where the Hebrew slaves were working and saw an Egyptian slave master beating a slave. He was angry and killed the Egyptian and hid his body. Word got out and he had to flee for his own life. He fled to Midian, a desert region on the west side of what is now Saudi Arabia. There, he worked for a nomadic shepherd called Jethro and married one of his daughters.

After forty years, Moses was out in the desert with the flocks one day and saw a burning bush which didn't burn itself out. He went close to check it out and was shocked when God spoke to him. He told Moses that he wanted him to go back to Egypt and rescue the Hebrews. Moses protested but God insisted and so Moses returned with a mammoth task.

Here we see that God has been playing the long game – as he usually does! He was concerned about the plight of the Hebrew people who he still regarded as his chosen race; and he wanted to return them to the promised land of Canaan. So Moses was singled out as a baby, brought up in the royal household and then lived as a nomad in the desert. That made him uniquely qualified to negotiate with Pharaoh and then to guide the Hebrews and help them to survive in the desert, once they were out of Egypt.

What follows is told in chapters 3-12 of Exodus in the bible. It's an account of the negotiating process that Moses and his brother Aaron had to go through with Pharaoh and his officials. They wouldn't release the Hebrews until, in the end, God killed the firstborn of every family on one night but passed over the houses of the Hebrews – the Passover. That persuaded Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go.

So now, Moses had to lead this large group of people back to the land of Canaan. The most straightforward route was along the coast road which was used by traders, armies and anyone else wishing to travel north or south. But, from his time in royal circles, Moses knew that Pharaoh had several summer houses by the coast and that the area was heavily armed.

The alternative was a tough one. It involved crossing through the northern end of the Red Sea and going south through the Sinai peninsular. But God was with them and he dried up a channel through the water and the Hebrews crossed over. By now the Egyptians were regretting letting them go so they sent the army to bring them back. But once the soldiers were in the channel through the sea, God allowed the water to flow back and they were all drowned.

Exodus complete.