

= The Prince of Egypt =

The Prince of Egypt is a 1998 American animated epic musical drama biblical film and the first traditionally animated film produced and released by DreamWorks Pictures . The film is an adaptation of the Book of Exodus and follows the life of Moses from being a prince of Egypt to his ultimate destiny to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt . The film was directed by Brenda Chapman , Simon Wells and Steve Hickner . The film featured songs written by Stephen Schwartz and a score composed by Hans Zimmer . The voice cast featured a number of major Hollywood actors in the speaking roles , while professional singers replaced them for the songs , except for Michelle Pfeiffer , Ralph Fiennes , Steve Martin , Martin Short , and Ofra Haza (who also sang her character 's number , " Deliver Us " , in seventeen other languages for the film 's dubbing) , who sang their own parts .

Jeffrey Katzenberg had frequently suggested an animated adaption of the 1956 film The Ten Commandments while working for The Walt Disney Company , and he decided to put the idea into production after founding DreamWorks in 1995 . To make this inaugural project , DreamWorks Animation employed artists who had worked for Walt Disney Feature Animation and the recently disbanded Amblimation , totaling a crew of 350 people from 34 different nations . The film has a blend of traditional animation and computer @-@ generated imagery , created using software from Toon Boom Animation and Silicon Graphics .

The Prince of Egypt was released in theaters on December 18 , 1998 , and on home video on September 14 , 1999 . Reviews were positive , with critics praising the animation , music and voice work . The film went on to gross \$ 218 @,@ 613 @,@ 188 worldwide in theaters , which made it the most successful non @-@ Disney animated feature at the time . The film 's success led to the direct @-@ to @-@ video prequel Joseph : King of Dreams (2000) and the development of a stage adaptation . The song " When You Believe " became a commercially successful single in a pop version performed by Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey , and went on to win Best Original Song at the 1999 Academy Awards .

= = Plot = =

In Ancient Egypt , Yocheved (Ofra Haza) , a Hebrew mother , and her two children , Miriam and Aaron , watch in horror as the newborn Hebrew boys are taken and ruthlessly killed as ordered by Pharaoh Seti I (Patrick Stewart) , who fears that an alarming increase could lead to rebellion . Fearing for her own newborn son 's safety , Yocheved places him in a basket afloat on the Nile River , not before bidding him farewell with a final but powerful lullaby . Miriam follows the basket to the Pharaoh 's palace and witnesses her baby brother safely adopted by Queen Tuya (Helen Mirren) , who names him Moses .

Years later , Moses (Val Kilmer) and his brother Rameses II (Ralph Fiennes) are scolded by their father for accidentally destroying a temple during one of their youthful misadventures , though Moses tries to take the blame . That evening at a palace banquet , Seti , who wants to give Rameses the opportunity to prove that he is responsible , names him Prince Regent and gives him authority over Egypt 's temples . As a tribute , the high priests Hotep (Steve Martin) and Huy (Martin Short) offer him a beautiful young Midianite woman , Tzipporah (Michelle Pfeiffer) , and Rameses gives her to Moses . Rameses then appoints him Royal Chief Architect .

Later that evening , Moses follows Tzipporah as she escapes from the palace and runs into his siblings Miriam (Sandra Bullock) and Aaron (Jeff Goldblum) . Miriam is overjoyed to see her younger brother again , but Aaron is fearful to watch the confrontation . Despite Aaron 's attempts to protect his sister , Miriam tries to tell Moses about his past , but he refuses to listen . Miriam then sings her mother 's lullaby , which causes Moses to remember the melody . Moses runs to the palace , eager to return to familiar surroundings . The truth about his past is later confirmed by a nightmare , and finally by Seti himself . The next morning , Moses accidentally pushes an Egyptian guard off the scaffolding of the temple when trying to stop him from whipping a Hebrew slave , and the guard falls to his death .

Ashamed and confused , Moses flees into the desert in exile , despite Rameses ' pleas to stay . While in the desert Moses defends three young girls from bandits , only to find out their older sister is Tzipporah , whom he helped escape from Egypt . Moses is welcomed by Tzipporah 's father and the high priest of Midian , Jethro (Danny Glover) . After assimilating this new culture , Moses becomes a shepherd and marries Tzipporah . While chasing a stray lamb , Moses discovers a burning bush through which God tells him to go back to Egypt and guide the Hebrew slaves to freedom . God bestows Moses ' shepherding staff with his power and promises that he will tell Moses what to say . Moses and Tzipporah return to Egypt , where Moses is happily greeted by Rameses , who is now Pharaoh .

When Moses requests the Hebrews ' release and changes his staff into an Egyptian cobra , to demonstrate his alliance with God , Hotep and Huy boastfully recreate this transformation , only to have their snakes eaten by Moses ' snake . Rather than persuaded , Rameses doubles the Hebrews ' workload . Moses and Tzipporah thereafter live with Miriam , who convinces Aaron and the other Hebrews to trust them . Later , Moses inflicts nine of the Plagues of Egypt , but Rameses refuses to relent despite each plague being worse than the one before . Against Moses ' warning (foreshadowing the final plague) , Rameses makes it clear that he will never release the Hebrew slaves . Disheartened by Rameses ' words , Moses prepares the Hebrews for the tenth and final plague , instructing them to sacrifice a lamb and mark the doorposts with the lamb 's blood . That night , the final plague kills all the firstborn children of Egypt , including Rameses ' son , while sparing those of the Hebrews . The next day , a grief @-@ stricken Rameses , mourning the loss of his son , finally gives Moses permission to free the Hebrews . Moses breaks down crying from the guilt of hurting Rameses , and from hearing the cries of numerous families across the city .

The following morning , the Hebrews leave Egypt , led by Moses , Miriam , Aaron , and Tzipporah . At the Red Sea , they discover that Rameses is closely pursuing them with his army . Upon the arrival , Moses uses his staff to part the sea , while a fire blocks the army 's way . The Hebrews cross the open sea bottom ; and when the fire vanishes and the army gives chase , the water closes over the Egyptian soldiers , sparing Rameses alone , who is washed ashore on the other side of the sea . Thereafter , Moses sadly bids farewell to his brother , and leads the Hebrews to Mount Sinai , where he receives the Ten Commandments .

= = Cast = =

Val Kilmer as Moses , a Hebrew who was adopted by Pharaoh Seti .

Val Kilmer also provides (uncredited) the voice of God

Amick Byram provides Moses ' singing voice .

Ralph Fiennes as Rameses , Moses ' adoptive brother and eventual successor to his father , Seti .

Michelle Pfeiffer as Tzipporah , Jethro 's oldest daughter and Moses ' wife .

Sandra Bullock as Miriam , Moses and Aaron 's biological sister .

Sally Dworsky provides Miriam 's singing voice .

Eden Riegel provides both the speaking and singing voice of a younger Miriam .

Jeff Goldblum as Aaron , Moses and Miriam 's biological brother .

Patrick Stewart as Pharaoh Seti , Rameses ' father , Moses ' adoptive father and the first Pharaoh in the film .

Danny Glover as Jethro , Tzipporah 's father and Midian 's high priest .

Brian Stokes Mitchell provides Jethro 's singing voice .

Helen Mirren as Queen Tuya , Seti 's consort , Rameses ' mother , and Moses ' adoptive mother .

Linda Dee Shayne provides Queen Tuya 's singing voice .

Steve Martin as Hotep , one of the high priests who serves as advisor to Seti , and later Rameses .

Martin Short as Huy , Hotep 's fellow high priest .

Ofra Haza as Yocheved , the biological mother of Miriam , Aaron , and Moses .

Director Brenda Chapman briefly voiced Miriam when she sings the lullaby to Moses . The vocal had been recorded for a scratch audio track , which was intended to be replaced later by Sally Dworsky . The track turned out so well that it remained in the film .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Former Disney chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg had always wanted to do an animated adaption of The Ten Commandments . While working for The Walt Disney Company , Katzenberg suggested this idea to Michael Eisner , but he refused . The idea for the film was brought back at the formation of DreamWorks SKG in 1994 , when Katzenberg 's partners , Amblin Entertainment founder Steven Spielberg , and music producer David Geffen , were meeting in Spielberg 's living room . Katzenberg recalls that Spielberg looked at him during the meeting and said , " You ought to do The Ten Commandments . "

The Prince of Egypt was " written " throughout the story process . Beginning with a starting outline , Story Supervisors Kelly Asbury and Lorna Cook led a team of fourteen storyboard artists and writers as they sketched out the entire film ? sequence by sequence . Once the storyboards were approved , they were put into the Avid Media Composer digital editing system by editor Nick Fletcher to create a " story reel " or animatic . The story reel allowed the filmmakers to view and edit the entire film in continuity before production began , and also helped the layout and animation departments understand what is happening in each sequence of the film . After casting of the voice talent concluded , dialogue recording sessions began . For the film , the actors record individually in a studio under guidance by one of the three directors . The voice tracks were to become the primary aspect as to which the animators built their performances . Because DreamWorks was concerned about theological accuracy , Jeffrey Katzenberg decided to call in Biblical scholars , Christian , Jewish and Muslim theologians , and Arab American leaders to help his film be more accurate and faithful to the original story . After previewing the developing film , all these leaders noted that the studio executives listened and responded to their ideas , and praised the studio for reaching out for comment from outside sources .

= = = Design and animation = = =

Art directors Kathy Altieri and Richard Chavez and Production Designer Darek Gogol led a team of nine visual development artists in setting a visual style for the film that was representative of the time , the scale and the architectural style of Ancient Egypt . Part of the process also included the research and collection of artwork from various artists , as well as taking part in trips such as a two @-@ week travel across Egypt by the filmmakers before the film 's production began .

Character Designers Carter Goodrich , Carlos Grangel and Nicolas Marlet worked on setting the design and overall look of the characters . Drawing on various inspirations for the widely known characters , the team of character designers worked on designs that had a more realistic feel than the usual animated characters up to that time . Both character design and art direction worked to set a definite distinction between the symmetrical , more angular look of the Egyptians versus the more organic , natural look of the Hebrews and their related environments . The Backgrounds department , headed by supervisors Paul Lasaine and Ron Lukas , oversaw a team of artists who were responsible for painting the sets / backdrops from the layouts . Within the film , approximately 934 hand @-@ painted backgrounds were created .

The animation team for The Prince of Egypt , including 350 artists from 34 different nations , was primarily recruited both from Walt Disney Feature Animation , which had fallen under Katzenberg 's auspices while at The Walt Disney Company , and from Amblimation , a defunct division of Steven Spielberg 's Amblin Entertainment . As at Disney 's , character animators were grouped into teams by character : for example , Kristof Serrand , as the supervising animator of Older Moses , set the acting style of the character and assigned scenes to his team . Consideration was given to properly depicting the ethnicities of the ancient Egyptians , Hebrews , and Nubians seen in the film .

There are 1192 scenes in the film , and 1180 contain work done by the special effects department ,

which animates everything in an animated scene which is not a character : blowing wind , dust , rainwater , shadows , etc . A blend of traditional animation and computer @-@ generated imagery was used in the depictions of the ten plagues of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea . The animated characters were digitally inked and painted using Cambridge Systems ' Animo software system (now merged with Toon Boom) , and the compositing of the 2D and 3D elements was done using the " Exposure Tool " , a digital solution developed for DreamWorks by Silicon Graphics .

= = = Creating the voice of God = = =

The task of creating God 's voice was given to Lon Bender and the team working with the film 's music composer , Hans Zimmer . " The challenge with that voice was to try to evolve it into something that had not been heard before , " says Bender . " We did a lot of research into the voices that had been used for past Hollywood movies as well as for radio shows , and we were trying to create something that had never been previously heard not only from a casting standpoint but from a voice manipulation standpoint as well . The solution was to use the voice of actor Val Kilmer to suggest the kind of voice we hear inside our own heads in our everyday lives , as opposed to the larger than life tones with which God has been endowed in prior cinematic incarnations . " As a result , in the final film , Kilmer gave voice to Moses and God , as well , yet the suggestion is that someone else would have heard God speak to them in their own voice .

= = Music = =

Composer and lyricist Stephen Schwartz began working on writing songs for the film from the beginning of the film 's production . As the story evolved , he continued to write songs that would serve to both entertain and help move the story along . Composer Hans Zimmer arranged and produced the songs and then eventually wrote the film 's score . The film 's score was recorded entirely in London , England .

Three soundtrack albums were released simultaneously for The Prince of Egypt , each of them aimed towards a different target audience . While the other two accompanying records , the country @-@ themed " Nashville " soundtrack and the gospel @-@ based " Inspirational " soundtrack , functioned as film tributes , the official The Prince of Egypt soundtrack contained the actual songs from the film . This album combines elements from the score composed by Hans Zimmer and film songs by Stephen Schwartz . The songs were either voiced over by professional singers (such as Salisbury Cathedral Choir) , or sung by the film 's voice actors , such as Michelle Pfeiffer and Ofra Haza . Various tracks by contemporary artists such as K @-@ Ci & JoJo and Boyz II Men were added , including the Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston duet " When You Believe " , a Babyface rewrite of the original Schwartz composition , sung by Michelle Pfeiffer and Sally Dworsky in the film .

= = = Musical numbers = = =

" Deliver Us " ? Ofra Haza , Eden Riegel , and Chorus
" All I Ever Wanted " ? Amick Byram
" River Lullaby " - Amy Grant
" All I Ever Wanted (Queen 's Reprise) " ? Linda Dee Shayne
" Through Heaven 's Eyes " ? Brian Stokes Mitchell
" Playing with the Big Boys " ? Steve Martin and Martin Short
" The Plagues " ? Byram , Ralph Fiennes , and Chorus
" When You Believe " ? Sally Dworsky , Michelle Pfeiffer , and Chorus

= = Release = =

The Prince of Egypt had its premiere at the UCLA 's Royce Hall on December 16 , 1998 , with its

wide release occurring two days later . Despite being the inaugural production by DreamWorks Animation , it wound up the second to get a theatrical release , as Antz was rushed to reach theatres in September . The international release occurred simultaneously to the United States , as according to DreamWorks ' distribution chief Jim Tharp , opening one week prior to the " global holiday " of Christmas , audiences all over the world would be available at the same time .

The accompanying marketing campaign aimed to bring more adults , usually averse to animated films . Merchandising was limited to a line of collectible figures and books . Wal @-@ Mart served as a promotional partner , and offered in stores a package featuring two tickets to The Prince of Egypt , a storybook and the film 's soundtrack .

== Home media ==

The Prince of Egypt was released on DVD and VHS on September 14 , 1999 . The ownership of the film was assumed by DreamWorks Animation when that company split from DreamWorks Pictures in 2004 ; as with the rest of the DreamWorks Animation catalog , it is available for streaming on Netflix in HD . However , both the DVD release and the streaming versions used a 35mm print of the film , rather than using the original files to encode the movie directly to digital .

== Reception ==

== Box office performance ==

On its opening weekend , the film grossed \$ 14 @. @ 5 million for a \$ 4 @, @ 658 average from 3 @, @ 118 theaters , earning second place at the box office , behind You 've Got Mail . Due to the holiday season , the film gained 4 % in its second weekend , earning \$ 15 @. @ 1 million and finishing in fourth place . It had a \$ 4 @, @ 698 average from 3 @, @ 218 theaters . It would hold well in its third weekend , with only a 25 % drop to \$ 11 @, @ 244 @, @ 612 for a \$ 3 @, @ 511 average from 3 @, @ 202 theaters and once again finishing in fourth place . The film closed on May 27 , 1999 after earning \$ 101 @. @ 4 million in the United States and Canada with an additional \$ 117 @. @ 2 million overseas for a worldwide total of \$ 218 @. @ 6 million . The Prince of Egypt was the second non @-@ Disney animated feature to gross over \$ 100 million in the U.S. after Paramount / Nickelodeon 's The Rugrats Movie . It remained the top grossing non @-@ Disney animated film until being surpassed by the 2000 stop motion film Chicken Run , also distributed by DreamWorks , and remained the highest grossing traditionally animated non @-@ Disney film until 2007 , when it was out @-@ grossed by 20th Century Fox 's The Simpsons Movie .