When a movie is based on a well known story, one has to ask, “Is it true to the original story? “ In this case, we ask, “ Is it true to the Biblical records”?

•ACCURACY: Here are the comparisons

1 Prophecies:
THE MOVIE: there were two prophecies about Moses:
a. “One leader will be saved, and his saviour will one day lead” (by the Egyptian priestess)  
b. “the liberator of his people” (referred to by a man named Nun as the reason for why there was the order to kill Hebrew babies)
THE BIBLE: No such mention of both prophecies. 
The reason for why the Hebrew babies were killed was because the Pharaoh feared the population explosion of the Hebrews in their midst.

2. Moses’ Age
THE MOVIE: showed him as a man in his prime. Middle aged but strong, every bit a general.
THE BIBLE: Moses left Egypt probably when he was in his 40s. He married and settled down with the Midianites for the next 40 years. He was 80 when he had the burning bush experience and returned to Egypt.

3. Moses vs the Pharaoh
THE MOVIE: Moses threatened him with his sword at the stable. He led an underground militia against the Egyptians and trained his Hebrew soldiers in secret. 
THE BIBLE: did not state any military engagements against Pharaoh by Moses nor the Hebrews.

4. Why Moses left Egypt:
THE MOVIE: Pharaoh found out that Moses was a Hebrew when two Hebrews who eaves dropped at the secret meeting with a man named Nun, reported it to an Egyptian governor (Moses’ enemy) and the man reported it to Ramses. Ramses threatened to cut off the arm of Moses’ sister Miriam unless she will confess to her knowledge of Moses’ real identity.  
Moses – though not convinced of his ‘Hebrew roots’, confessed that he knew his roots all along in order to save Miriam and was exiled from Egypt as a result.
THE BIBLE: he left Egypt (actually he ran for his life. He was not banished) because his murder of an abusive Egyptian (who was beating a Hebrew) was found out. In the movie, while he killed one
Egyptian soldier and wounded another, the killing was not shown to be the reason of his leaving the country.

5. How Moses got to know his Hebrew roots:
THE MOVIE: A Hebrew elder named Nun told him at a secret meeting
THE BIBLE: didn’t say exactly how Moses found out his Hebrew background. The fact that his nursemaid was his birth mother could mean that he was told of it by her. But that he knew his roots was found in Hebrews 11:23ff.
There was no such man called Nun in the Bible who educated Moses re his roots.

6. The Burning Bush experience
THE MOVIE: Moses fell, hit his head in a mudslide and woke up to see the Burning Bush and the Child.
THE BIBLE: Moses was minding his own business, tending to the flock of his father in law when he saw the Burning Bush. He was curious and went nearer to explore. That was when God spoke to him.

7. Who spoke to Moses from the Burning Bush?
THE MOVIE: A Child who is ‘God’
• Some critics objected to this with very strong terms:
  “Depicting God as a child who is being channelled by the Lord is ‘not only unfaithful to Bible, it is blasphemous…”
THE BIBLE: says
• an Angel spoke to Moses and then its God who speaks. The Greek word for Angel means : Messenger. We were not told what form the angel took. It is a case of artistic licence when the movie director chose a child to be that form.
• However, after the angel…the Bible says it is God who speaks. To continue using a ‘messenger’ to represent God (in this case, the Child), would be inaccurate.

8. The Child’s Character:
Some critics saw the Child as ‘vindictive and impetuous’ and took issue with that. BUT
Was the Child in the movie really ‘vindictive and impetuous’? The dialogue between Moses and the Child showed that Moses had
a. not fully identified himself with his Hebrew people and felt their suffering. He was more a kin to the Egyptians and felt for their suffering from the plagues.
b. had limited vision re: the suffering of his people for 400 years. The Child saw the 400 years of oppression and in that perspective, the punishment on the Egyptians was just.
9. Who prepared the 10 Commandments?

**THE MOVIE:** Moses was chipping away the words, contending with the Child (representing God) about its contents.

**THE BIBLE:** God wrote the 10 Commandments Himself. It was only after Moses broke the tablets in anger against the idolatry of the Hebrews that God made Moses write a new one.

10. Moses' character

**THE MOVIE:**
- A skeptic- agnostic who slowly and reluctantly becomes one who has faith after seeing God delivering His people with the various plagues and the parting of the Red Sea.
- A warrior, a general who trusts the sword that has been given to him and his skill with the sword. Moses gave his shepherd’s staff to his son when he left his family for Egypt. God needed a general to fight His cause. One who trains his people for battle and fights for them.
- One who – as his conversation with the Child (God character) shows- has not yet fully identified himself with his Hebrew people nor feels as much for them as for the people he grew up with (Egyptians).
- One who undertook this task to liberate his people not as a ‘passionate calling’ from God but more as a task he had to fulfil for God. While the film fleshed out his love for his wife and son “above everything” and stated that his leaving his family was a big sacrifice…yet WHY he had to do it was not that clear.

**THE BIBLE:**
- Moses had an encounter with God and right from the start, there were signs and wonders that he was shown which convinced him of God’s presence, his calling and the way he should approach Pharaoh. His encounters with Pharaoh had supernatural elements: there was a power showdown with the court magicians. Each time there was a plague, Pharaoh was given a chance to comply with Moses' demands but he consistently refused, resulting in the death of the Egyptian firstborns. Even as the Hebrews departed from the Egypt, there was God’s pillar of cloud and fire leading and protecting them.
- Moses was a shepherd and a shepherd under God. His symbol and authority was in the shepherd’s staff/ rod which God used to show His power. Moses left the Burning Bush place with ‘the rod of God’ in his hands. He used the rod for several miracles before Pharaoh and for the parting of the Red Sea. Nowhere does the Bible talk of Moses carrying a sword. God was not looking for a general. He was looking for a spokesman to speak to Pharaoh (and in any case, Moses was not good at speaking so Aaron his brother was his spokesman when they went to see Pharaoh together).
Moses’ ‘fight’ with Pharaoh was with spiritual weapons ie the plagues. It can be argued that he might have a part in the martial training of his people when they were in the wilderness (since he above all others was qualified in the skills being a well educated Egyptian royal) but there was no mention of it in the Bible. He certainly did not train and run an underground Hebrew militia in Egypt.

Moses’ main motivation (other than this being his calling from God) for confronting Pharaoh was that he felt passionately for his people the Hebrews right from the start. It was the reason why he killed the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. Moses shared the pain of God for his people.

B. OTHER ISSUES

1. Moses/ Pharaoh ‘s Commander’s dressing: It seemed rather strange that Moses, a royal Egyptian, should
   ✔ Wear a beard
   ✔ Have a head of hair
   ✔ Wear clothes so different from his Egyptian people.
   • Egyptians were very particular about cleanliness, purity and hair. Men and women shaved themselves bald, wore wigs, wore eye shadows. Hebrews on the other hand, had beards and hair.
   • Since Moses was supposed to be a royal (whether or not he was aware of his roots at that time), he would certainly not be dressed in such a manner that shouts out his foreign identity before everyone.
   • Strange too that the Commander in chief had a crest on his chest that looked like an eagle, more akin to those worn by the Roman commanders centuries later.

2. Wrong Pharaoh: Scholars have indicated that Pharaoh Ramses II lived 200 years after the Exodus.

C. THE PROBLEM WITH THE MOVIE

To me the main problem with this movie is that it sought to remove the supernatural elements as much as is possible, giving possible explanation to the sequence of the plagues (although to this moment, I cannot imagine how the bloody deaths of some crocodiles and humans can bloody the whole Nile), how the Red Sea parted and how Moses was called to lead his people to freedom. To do that, it had to portray Moses as a totally different man- out of character with the Moses of the Bible.
• Moses was the man of the sword, the general. The Bible spoke of him as the man with the shepherd’s rod, which became ‘the rod of God’.
• Moses hence had to be a younger man
• His motivation was poorly drawn out. If it wasn't passion for his people or a clear call from God, it was in a sibling squabble blown out of proportion and a task that HAD to be done (with no clear 'because').
• Having a concussion helps in explaining his sudden unexplainable decision to return to Egypt to carry out the task.

D. WHATS GOOD ABOUT THE MOVIE?

• The contrast it gives to human and God’s perspectives about justice and judgment: the screen Moses could see only the enslavement of his people during his lifetime. The Child (representing God) saw the 400 years of suffering.
• The humanity of Moses who probably had his doubts as a human being, leading a ‘nation’ of Hebrews into the wilderness via the Red Sea
• THE CGI was good and exciting when it came to showing the return of the waves after the ‘parting’ of the Red sea.
• It was probably more realistic than TEN COMMANDMENTS AND PRINCE OF EGYPT in that the Hebrews had to wade into the waters by faith some parts of the way…and not walk on dry land throughout their Red Sea episode.
• The ‘promised presence of God’ with His people represented by the Child walking in the midst of the Hebrews into the Promised Land.

CONCLUSION:
I am usually more gentle with controversial “Christian” movies. As a teenager, I saw Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar. Trinity Methodist Church’s Youth Fellowship (probably the only one in Singapore which appreciated the latter movie) sang some of the songs and had one month of Bible Study on the gospels after our viewing of it. But for EXODUS: Gods and Kings, my advice is this:
1. Save your money. Go watch Ten Commandments and Prince of Egypt. Both (especially the first one) are closer to the Biblical account. Forget this one. Its ending is flat and there is no inspiration except for the CGI wave effects. A disappointment really.
2. Read the Biblical account for yourselves. Read Exodus chapter 1-14, 32-34; Acts 7:20ff; Hebrews 11:23 ff.
Enjoy!

-Rev Dr Lorna Khoo,
-Pastor in charge
Aldersgate Methodist Church
Singapore