



# Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of Ramesses the Great (Ramesses II)

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Includes pictures. \*Profiles the life of Ramesses and the cities and monuments he built. \*Includes a Bibliography for further reading. In a temple in Abydos, Egypt, there stands a wall relief, a carving completed during the reign of Pharaoh Seti I. The image shows the Pharaoh looking back across the long list of his many predecessors, Pharaohs that had ruled Egypt before him, with their names elegantly enclosed in cartouches upon the temple wall. Seti's own reign had commenced in 1306 B.C., and in the image he looks back all the way to Pharaoh Menes, founder of the First Dynasty in 2920 B.C. In the image, by Seti's side, also looking across the years at the history that had gone before, is the Pharaoh's son, then a young prince who would one day be Pharaoh himself. This prince's name was Ri'misisu, but he would come to be known in the annals of history by other names. He was called Ozymandias in the Greek tradition, called Great Ancestor by the Egyptians, and his name has also been transcribed sometimes as Rameses or Ramses. But this young prince, born in 1303 BC, would come to be known primarily as Ramesses the Great, the longest ruling Pharaoh that Egypt would ever know. The life story of Ramesses II is voluminously recorded and illustrated through documents and inscriptions, and it is even represented physically through his funerary goods and the well-preserved mummified remains of the man himself. But despite the resources available with which to reason about who Ramesses II was and what his impact might have been, there is also a necessary disconnection between him and those who chronicled his story. It is possible to reason about the past, but it is not possible to access it directly, and for all of the available resources there are biases and motivations in each document that need to be sifted through and assessed independently. Much of what was written about Ramesses II during his lifetime was done so by the Pharaoh himself in order to legitimize his reign, sell his achievements, and expand his power and influence. Monuments recording the achievements of a Pharaoh, commissioned by that very Pharaoh, are obviously more biased than objective, and these biases have led historians and archaeologists to pose the questions of who has written the text and why, in order to understand what if any kernels of truth exist within the legend. The established facts are there, but what they reveal about Ramesses II the man is a topic of ongoing academic debate. Ramesses was a significant figure in his own right as a Pharaoh who led Egypt for over 65 years, but hovering above all of that is the widely spread belief that Ramesses was the Pharaoh depicted in the Biblical Book of Exodus. Everyone even casually familiar with the Bible knows the story of Moses leading the Jews out of captivity in Egypt, and the plagues brought down upon the Pharaoh. The belief that Ramesses the Great was the Pharaoh in Exodus has played a great role in making him one of Egypt's most famous rulers. However, the actual historical record is thorough enough that most scholars now discount the theory that he was the Pharaoh depicted in the Bible. Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of Ramesses the Great chronicles the life and reign of the famous Egyptian Pharaoh. Along with pictures depicting important people and places, as well as a bibliography and Table of Contents, you will learn about Ramesses the Great like you never have before, in no time at all.

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