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Moses, 1925.

"MOSES."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING

JANUARY 25, 1925, CLEVELAND, O.

WRHS



JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

I have chosen to speak of Moses first in this series of lectures on the great founders of the religions of the world not because the religion which Moses founded was the first among the religions of the earth; the religions of Babylon and Assyria had been highly developed and systematized long before these wild nomadic, Semitic tribes appeared upon the fringe of Canaan and began their career of religious domination of mankind; similarly was the faith of Egypt quite highly elaborated centuries before Moses was born. I have chosen to speak of Moses first for two reasons: first, because Judaism, in point of time, is the first great religion of antiquity which has survived to this day; and, ~~secondly, because Moses, in point of time, is the first~~ great religious personality which appeared on the scene of history.

~~The last is quite important.~~ Up to ^{his} ~~the~~ time ^{folk-creation} of Moses all religions were anonymous. They were not the ^{achievements} ~~creations~~ of any great outstanding personalities. The religions of India, of Assyria, of Babylon, of Egypt, were the precipitates of ^{spiritual} ~~vast~~ impersonal forces. They were the ^{early} unconscious adjustments of ~~primitive~~ man to his environment. All the religions of primitive man had most things in common. Spirits, sacrifices, priesthoods, taboo customs, rituals, magic, incantations,--these were common to all religions.

WRHS



~~Scholar~~ ~~have~~
Students, ~~the public~~ ~~but~~ have been impressed
by the intense personality, the poet, the public.

whether among the peoples in the Nile Valley or the Euphrates Valley, or the valley of the Jordan, or, in fact, distant India. They were not the creations of individuals; they were ^{folk} social creations.

With Moses the prophetic personality ~~begins~~ to enter the arena of religious thought, the great one-man who, rising above the mass, ~~begins to reinterpret~~ social ^{belief and} custom and ~~social usage~~, and consciously and quite deliberately ^{then a new and} to give definite direction and ~~a new direction to the~~ religious ~~sentiments and beliefs of his day~~. ^{And that marks} the beginning of ^{conscious} religious progress, ^{spiritual} for progress moves along the channels of personality. (progress, conscious progress--reformation, revolution, advancement, are made possible by the strivings first of one great soul who transmits his faith, his hope, his passion to the masses.

stop ✓

(And so Moses is the first in point of time of these great, titanic religious personalities who give direction and new meaning to the religions of their day.) In connection with this thought which I am endeavoring to stress this morning, it is not amiss to note that a great religious writer--Montgomery--(in speaking of the God of Israel) makes this keen observation: "the unique character ^{of} the God of the Hebrews is his intense personality. Throughout the Bible you catch the refrain: "I am the Lord. I am He. I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." "Love thy neighbor as thyself, for I am the Lord." There is ^{a reiterated emphasis on revelation and} the constant reiteration of a

stop

tremendously real and ~~omnipresent~~ and all-pervasive personality.

Begin

The God of the Bible was not a pale, meta-physical abstraction; ~~the God of the Bible was not an~~ ^{an} ethical, imperative, and intellectual necessity; ~~the God of the Bible was a vital, vigorous, living, creative personal~~ ^{He is ~~life~~ ~~being~~, ~~life~~ ^{and power} ~~and power~~ "I am that I am"} ~~ity, moving~~ ^{He moves} through the history of ^{Israel} ~~the people~~, ^{as a living Presence,} ~~guiding,~~ ~~them propelling them, controlling them,~~ a personality so overpowering, as ultimately to crowd out all spirits and all deities and ~~all~~ ^{and alone} ~~gods~~ and remain supreme.

That is a keen observation, and It is ^{not unlikely} ~~very~~ likely that the great personality ^{of} Moses first ^{endowed} ~~gave~~ the God conception of the ancient Hebrews this unique ^{with} ~~quality~~ ^{of} masterful personality, which ^{Jehovah} ~~Jehovah~~ ^{this day has had in} Israel. (Judaism with Moses became a religion conscious, deliberate, the creation of great individuals, and therefore the most advanced and progressive of religions.)

stop

Now, who was this man Moses? Very little is known of him that is not legendary. The great mists of history ^{envelop} ~~wrap~~ him about. (The records of the Bible come from a much later time, and already show the traces of the embellishments which the imagination of the race in the succeeding centuries added to the rare personality of this man Moses.) ^{But} ~~You know~~, legend is the tribute which a race pays to its great men. (A people likes to live its life in its great heroes.) A great man is the product of his race in a two-fold sense. Not only does his race ^{give him his heritage,} ~~endow him~~ ^{in life.}

but in death it

his mission, his challenge and
~~during his life with his environment, with his opportunities,~~
~~and with his heritage, but a people endows a great man~~
continuously developed by his own his essential self.
~~after his death, by continuing to develop his personality~~

Lincoln today is much more than Lincoln was during his lifetime, and means much more to us even than he meant to the people of his day. The race is recreating his personality continuously.

A people endows its heroes with evolving life after death.

~~So that the personality of a great man grows,~~

~~and legend is the story of the growth of a personality after his death.~~

~~after the hero is dead. (Legend is the attempt of society to develop and to perpetuate the great men. And so the legends of Moses are tributes to what must have been a rare and tremendously potent personality; a man who stood at the dawn of the people's life and threw his shadow over all succeeding generations.)~~

Moses is identified with the great epoch of the exodus, which took place some thirteen hundred years before the common era. Some wild Semitic tribes had migrated into the delta of the Nile. For a time they were prosperous and enjoyed freedom. A change of dynasty occurred and these tribes were subjected to oppression and to tyranny. They were made to do the hard tasks of the Egyptians, to build their fortified cities and their pyramids. They were ~~enslaved~~ *enslaved*. But the more they were oppressed;--so says the keen philosopher writing that chapter of the Bible--the more they grew and the more they multiplied; which is a marvelous bit of historical philosophy, or the



Between pride and loyalty he chose
loyalty

philosophy of history, true unto this day. "The more they oppressed him, the more he increased and the more he multiplied."

love of The ~~passion~~ ^{yearning for} for freedom, for that wild freedom of the desert which these tribes once experienced and never forget, remained with them, smouldering, until the time came when oppression ^{waxed} was so great that the fires of rebellion began to ^{boil in} burn the souls of these ~~enslaved~~ ^{men} freemen. And Moses appeared ^{TP} on the scene. We are told that Moses was doomed to death, as were all ^{the} male children ^{born to} of the

ark of bulrushes Israelites in Egypt. But his mother placed him in a little ~~boat, an ark,~~ ^{among the flags but} on the waters of the Nile--very much like

Romulus and Remus were placed upon the waters of the Tiber,

(very much like ^{WRHS} was placed upon the waters of the

Euphrates.) ^{AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES} But ~~the~~ ^{himself} man who was destined to be the deliverer of his people was delivered from death ^{the day after} himself by a princess ~~of the house~~ of Pharaoh, and Moses grew up a prince in the house of the king.

Moses was ^{thus} raised as ~~a non-Jew~~ ^{an Egyptian} amidst the splendor of the courts of the ancient Pharaohs; but when ~~Moses~~ ^{he} grew up, (unlike many of his descendants today, who, when they grow up leave their brethern,) Moses ^{he} sought his ^{out} ~~brethern~~ ^{books of the slaves}

Day by day ~~brethern~~ From the palace he descended ~~into the~~ ^{valley}, and saw the heaving multitudes toiling under the burning

heat of the Egyptian skies, slaving for Pharaohs, groaning under the yoke of the task-masters, ^{knew then what} ~~and~~ Moses ~~there and then~~ ^{would be} conceived of his destiny and of his mission in life. Some

day he would be the emancipator of his enslaved brothers.

One day, seeing an Egyptian brutally beat an enfeebled Hebrew, who could no longer perform his task, Moses, in ~~the~~ ⁱⁿ wrath and the passion of youth, arose and slew ~~that~~ ^{the} Egyptian, ~~and some days later~~ ^{later} he was betrayed by a fellow Jew, and Moses had to flee the land of Egypt. He became an exile, ~~and~~ ^{many} For ~~forty~~ years he lived in the wilderness of Midian--an exile and a shepherd. ~~And it is very likely that~~ ^{quiet} During those ~~forty~~ years in the wilderness Moses ~~had time to struggle that think and to dream, to store up~~ ^{had} gained that marvelous insight into divinity and into human-
~~ity~~ ^{that vast spiritual energy} that enabled him later on, when the challenge and the opportunity came, to become the ~~speaker of divinity~~ ^{leader of his people} and the ~~leader of humanity~~ ^{teacher of mankind} in the wilderness.

~~The three great religions of our day--Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, have come out of the wilderness, out of the great Arabian desert. Somehow, the wilderness, away from the involved life of our urban civilization--this furious rush and hunger after possessions and wealth and acquisition,--somehow, out there in the clear air, under the open skies, where there is nothing, as the Arabs say, but God--Allah,--somehow, out there a man is able to come into communion with the all-spirit of the world, and out of the great Arabian wilderness those mighty ideals have come which have shaped the destiny of half of the world.~~ ^{is the fruitful land of the spirit.} ^{where, as the Arabs say, there is nothing but Allah.}

Moses lived ~~in the quiet~~ in the peace of that wilderness for ~~forty~~ ^{many} years. He was a shepherd. He

learned, so say the Rabbis, how to be a shepherd of ~~his~~ ^a
 people by being a shepherd of a flock. ~~He learned leadership~~ ^{He tasted, too, of that}
~~ship there, and he imbibed, too, that overwhelming hunger~~
~~for freedom which the desert~~ ^{proffers} ~~imparts to its children.~~ None
 are so free as the nomad of the wilderness. And then one
 day ~~this~~ ^{his} long period of ~~meditation~~ ^{spiritual}, of gestation, ~~as~~ ^{received at}
~~spiritual cultivation, having been ended, the revelation~~
~~comes.~~ ^{as imperious and undeniable} A voice ^{to him} calls Moses to his life's work. God revealed
 Himself ~~as a burning flame,~~ ^{and incandescent} as God always reveals himself to
 his children, ~~as a consuming flame,~~ as an overpowering and
 burning conviction. ~~But~~ ^{now} Moses realizes that he must ~~now~~
 leave the quiet and the peace of ~~the~~ ^{his} desert world and ~~go~~ ^{return}
~~back~~ to that world of master and slave, of king and serf,
 of pleasure and suffering, ~~and there~~ ^{to} toil and suffer in
 order that he may become the emancipator of his people.
~~And Moses~~ ^{hesitates,} ~~does not want to go.~~ ^{He knows before}
~~hand~~ ^{hand} how, by keen intuition, realizes the martyrdom of the
 prophet and ~~the~~ leader. ~~Moses~~ ^{He} senses the crushing burdens
 of leadership, and Moses does not want to go to Egypt. Five
 times, so says the Bible, Moses ~~refused to go.~~ ^{recoils from his mission} "Who am I?"
 "who should go?" He is not sure of his mandate. Says
~~Moses:~~ ^{unto them} "Who sends me?" What shall I say?" ~~And then again:~~
 "They ~~people~~ will not believe me." ~~And then again:~~ "I am not
 a man of words. I am weak and impotent, unqualified. Send
^{him whom thou wilt send} ~~thou,~~ says Moses, "whomsoever thou wilt send, but send not
~~me.~~" The anger of the Lord is great. A conviction, once
 it becomes strong in the soul of a man, cannot be downed.

The King will see to it that no middle
will wait "the people to break loose from
their unit." make heavier their burdens
and break their spirit still more



"a burning fire shut up in our bones" On
It becomes imperious and masterful and consuming, and it
wearing himself to hold it in, but cannot.
drives you on whether you will it or no.

So Moses ^{leaves} left the wilderness and returned to
Egypt, and there begins that long, tragic period of struggle,
not only to convince a cruel king to mitigate his hardship,
but to convince a people that for four hundred years ~~have~~ ^{has}
been steeped in slavery, to knock off its shackles and to ~~struggle~~
^{out for} ~~seek~~ freedom. ~~And~~ His mission ^{at first} fails. Far from easing the
burdens of ~~the~~ ^{his} people, ~~the~~ ^{his} king, ~~enraged~~ ^{who is} at the offensive
forwardness of this rebel, ~~(superimposes)~~ ^{superimposes} additional burdens ~~on~~
on the ~~people~~ ^{us}, and ~~the~~ ^{slaves} people, ~~the~~ ^{on} slaves, begin to grumble.
and to become resentful. "The Lord look upon you, and judge;
because ye have made our saviour to be a deliverer, and judge;
liverer, accomplishing nothing, but adding burdens unto
Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us."
our heavily burdened shoulders?" But Moses, once embarked
^{Between a reluctant and love of his people, he chose to}
upon his work, persists. He preaches, he speaks, he exhorts ^{his}
^{he persuades,} he teaches, ~~he speaks~~, he challenges; and soon that ^{ancient} hunger
for freedom ^{is aroused again} becomes masterful and overpowering in the ^{hearts} lives
of these slaves. ^{the ancient memories and undying hope.} The fires of rebellion are kindled, and as
^{The people} ~~one man~~ ^{Thus} they arise, break out through the confining walls of
Egypt, out to the open stretches of the desert, ^{on to the promised land} The exodus
^{takes} ~~has taken~~ place.

But Moses knows that it is not enough to
emancipate a people politically, ~~that~~ If Israel is to become
a great ^{nation} ~~people~~ ^{he} it must emancipate itself spiritually. He
must give ~~unto~~ Israel a law, a code, by which these peoples
recently set free from slavery may guide themselves; for
^{there is no} ~~there can be~~ freedom ^{without law} only within the law. And so soon after

And at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses
covenants his people to ~~their~~ ^{its} destiny. Israel
is to be a unique people among the people
of the earth, "a kingdom of priests and a
holy nation". The heavy burden of a
concrete mission is placed upon it.

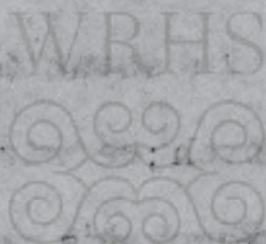
But while the people, the masses, multitudes
~~gladly~~ readily accept the prophetic mandate,
it is not prepared for it. The spirit of
Egypt, the age-old brand of servitude, is
still upon its soul. The golden calf
is the tragic symbol of a generation that
can never be free. Moses realizes
that one generation cannot bridge the ^{vast} gulf
between the slave-people of Egypt and the
land of promise. ~~There who wander after~~
~~the pharaohs of Egypt~~ ^{A new generation} be ~~pushed~~ ^{carried} out
of men who wander after the pharaoh
of Egypt.

he leads the people
the exodus Moses ~~takes these slaves and brings them to the~~
He formulates for them
foot of Mount Sinai, ~~and there gives them the minimum of code of~~
- the Ten Commandments - which have become
social legislation ~~these laws which have since come to be~~
the digit of civilization. These commandments hold within
~~known as the Ten Commandments. We do not know whether~~
themselves the germinal ideas of all future laws
~~Moses actually gave them these Ten Commandments or not; per-~~
haps these Ten Commandments are a later formulation of those
haps these Ten Commandments are a later formulation of those
laws which Moses gave unto the people; but it is clear that
the laws which he gave to those emancipated serfs contained
within themselves all future religious and ethical ideals.

Moses did not wish his people to be like any
other people. Moses, having gone through the tragedy and
the suffering of exile and serfdom, and having redeemed his
people, desired to make of his people a unique people; and
so he covenanted with God; he established a unique covenant
between his people and Jehovah; he riveted the soul of Israel
to Jehovah; he made Israel Jehovah's people; a people with a
peculiar mission and therefore a peculiar destiny. Having
accomplished that, Moses was now ready to lead his people
unto the promised land, the consummation of his life work.
Ah, but the people whom he led was a people of slaves; the
physical evidences of serfdom may have been lost, but the
spiritual, the psychic imprint of four hundred years of
serfdom remained. His people began building unto themselves
golden calves; hungering after the fleshpots of Egypt, the
people began to grumble and complain; whenever they faced a
hardship, a difficulty, an enemy, they turned upon their
leader and sought to destroy him; for at heart they were

Such men must die in the wilderness. A
new generation, ^{like} who did as Kam Pharaoh
must arise ere Jordan can be crossed.

After long wanderings, many hardships,
and desperate battles, Moses brings the new
generation to the threshold of Canaan. There
his work ends. He was not destined to enter
the Promised Land. A leader must die
with his generation. The new day called
for new leaders.



cowards, with that peculiar type of cowardice which oppression and slavery sinks into the soul of a man.

Moses soon realized that these people cannot enter the promised land; that with this material, out of it a great nation cannot be built; they will have to perish in the wilderness. And so for forty years he led them along devious ways through the wilderness, until the entire generation of Egypt perished, and a new generation of children, who knew not the "chaldron of fire," grew up. These free men were to be the founders of the Hebrew nation. When the forty years were over Moses led his people to the River Jordan, on their way to the promised land.

Moses was never destined to enter the promised land. The voice of God came to him and said: "Moses, get thee up to the top of Mount Nebo and see the land from afar off, but hither thou canst not come." He alone of the old generation could not enter the promised land. He had to die with those whom he brought out of Egypt. The old order had come to a close, and Moses' death was to mark the close of that chapter. And Moses strained his tired, age-wearied eyes over the land of Canaan and saw that beautiful land, the sight of which sustained him throughout the many years of wandering--the hope of being there, of living there, of spending the last few years of his life there; inspiring him during the terrible years of the wilderness.

~~He saw the land but he could not enter.~~ *Upon Mount Nebo,*

legend says, ~~that~~ the angel Gabriel spread out his couch,

For no mortal man must be worshipped
by man, only the God is man.



~~prepared his couch for him~~, and the angel Michael spread his silken robe upon him, and the angel placed a silken pillow under his head, and God himself descended, and with a kiss took Moses' soul to heaven. And so Moses died, *"no man knows his ~~burial place~~ unto this day"*, and the children of Israel mourned his death.

~~Three things may be said of Moses. He was an~~
Moses was
~~emancipator~~ the first great emancipator of the human race. *He*
was the first revolutionist of history.
And ~~that~~ thought remained with the people of Israel ~~the~~ *always* *It never*
any of *life*
thought that its national existence ~~and its religious life~~
a revolt against tyranny and oppression
began with an act of emancipation, that remained as a con-
~~secrating influence in the lives of our people to this day.~~
Freedom became the keynote of Israel's life--political
~~freedom, social freedom, economic freedom, religious freedom;~~ *This is the very*
heart of Hebrew prophecy.
~~the breaking of shackles, the smashing of iron, the tearing~~
~~down of the walls which confined and incarcerated the human~~
"Bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and chain
spirit, to lead the imprisoned out of the prison house; that
that sit in darkness out, the prison-house"
became the great passion of Israel, and survived unto this
~~day.~~

No people's history is so resonant with ideals of emancipation as the history of the children of Israel; a people which loved freedom, a people which hated royalty, and tyranny and hierarchy; a people which insisted that God speaks unto man by grace and not by privilege; that birth and position and rank and ancestry mean nothing in the sight of God.

Moses was a layman, remember--just a layman; and so was Abraham, and so was Amos, and so was Jeremiah;

~~Search~~ Tradition maintains, in the great
Moses ~~was a law-giver~~ ^{and the great prophet} ~~the prophets.~~ ^{in Israel's history.}
of the people, ~~the prophets.~~ ^{Some} unlike the great religious
leaders, Moses was not a mystic. ~~was not~~ He
was a social prophet, the architect of a social
order built upon the durable foundations of righteousness.

Moses was the great law-giver. The Torah is the
Torah of Moses. The Ten Words are his, not by
his own writing, but of his essential inspira-
tion. Both the written and the oral law trace
their lineage to him and to the authority of his
personality.

Moses was a leader of men, and he knew the agony
of leadership. How often did the slaves ^{lead on the long journey to freedom} ~~in rage and fury,~~ ^{whom he had to lead} ~~to destroy him.~~ ^{upon him.} How often did
with Abraham we have the story of a
tribe. Moses began the history of the
nation.

And, fittingly enough, this ^{leader of a rebellious host} ~~prophet and leader,~~
this law-giver and nation-builder, ~~was~~
~~known~~ this prophet whom "the Lord made face
to face" was ~~known~~ crowned with humility.
"Now the man Moses was very humble, above
all the men that were upon the face of the
earth".

The heart of his people, knowing his humility,
was not awed by his greatness. They lovingly
called him "The Faithful Shepherd".

they vent their was discontent upon him. He pitied their shadow,
He payed their faithlessness. He loved them, but he never yielded to them.
He led. They followed.

~~And lastly, Moses became~~ *uses*

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The Shepherd / Michael runs back
~~article~~ for us ~~the~~ ^{greater} ~~press~~ ^{remains}

WRHS



Moses, it spoke of him ^{for} as the shepherd, the man who, in spite of the backsliding of his people, and of their insults and their mockery, in spite of their sins and their shortcomings, never, never lost his love for them. When the people sinned grievously and built a golden calf after he had given them the Ten Commandments, and God was wrought with the children of Israel and sought to destroy them, Moses kneels before God and says, "Great God, thy children have sinned, but forgive them, and if thou wilt not, then erase my name from before thee, take me as a vicarious atonement for the sins of these, my blind and misguided little lambs, for I am their shepherd."

Moses died on the top of Mount Nebo in a lonely shepherd sepulcher; and no one knows the place of his sepulcher. But the spirit of Moses, the emancipator, the covenanter, the petitioner of the people, the shepherd, does not lie buried in a sepulcher on an unknown mountain top, but has long since found a place in the sanctuary of a people's soul. Israel is the incarnation of the spirit of Moses. His spirit has long since become one of the great beacon lights which lead a storm-tossed and tortured humanity across the tempestuous seas unto the safe, quiet harbors of beatitude.

--o--