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The Originality of Moses, 1960.

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DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THE ORIGINALITY OF MOSES

Moses brought to mankind a new concept of God, and a new way of worshipping Him. He was the founder of the first spiritual and ethical religion of mankind. Without his original Torah, the , there would be no Judaism today and no Christianity and no Islam. Later prophets and sages developed his teachings. But he is the source, the Fountain-head. Later ages encased his in a complex of rituals and ceremonials. But his "Words", his fundamental teachings retain their identity and are unmistakable. Not all that is found in the Five Books of Moses --

-- originated with him. His own Torah limited itself to a number of basic and universal concepts and laws, to the "Debarim", the "Words" of revelation such as are found, singly or in groups, in the three codes of the Pentateuch, in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The group of laws known as the -- the Ten Words or the Ten Commandments -- in their original form belong to these fundamental instructions of Moses. So do most of the laws which are found grouped together in the 19th chapter of Leviticus. There are other "Debarim" -- "Words" -- which are found elsewhere in these three codes, though not necessarily arranged in groups. The Torah of Moses inaugurated a new age in the religious progress of man.

Who then was this man Moses? And in what, previously, did his originality consist? Moses was born in Egypt. His name/was Egyptian.

Moses' youth and early manhood, according to the Biblical account, were spent in the palace of the Pharaoh. He was raised and educated as an Egyptian prince in an Egyptian environment. Egypt had attained to a very high level of civilization in Moses' day -- in fact, it was a very old civilization of considerable cultural sophistication

into which he was born. He grew up in the shadows of pyramids which were already very old in his day, and the basket of bulrushes in which he was hidden as an infant, tossed among the reeds of a river which was already very rich in history. The Egyptian culture and religion to which he was exposed were undoubtedly an essential part of his upbringing. He was able to observe at close range the Egyptian way of life in all of its lights and shadows. There was much in it from which he recoiled.

There were also Egyptians in his day, non-Hebrews, who reacted similarly. His age abounded in religious ferment and fell in the backwash of one of the greatest religious upheavals in Egyptian history. It is difficult to determine the exact age of Moses and of the Exodus. The most recent scholarship sets them in the early part of the thirteenth century. Not long before that time, The Pharaoh of Egypt, Amonhotep IV had carried out as thorough-going a revolution against the traditional religion of Egypt, the cult of Amon, the national god, as Egypt had ever known. The temples of Amon were either shut down or destroyed. The worship of the old gods was prohibited. Their very names were erased from all the public monuments. Amonhotep IV changed his own name, which means "Amon is satisfied) to Akhenaten ("He who is beneficial to Aten"). New temples to Aten were built in many of the cities of Egypt, and in the new capital, Akhetaten which he built, and to which he transferred the seat of his government from Thebes, the ancient city of Amon.

The religious reformation of Akhenaten called for the worship of one god, one solar god, and was represented by the sun-disk with rays terminating in hands holding the symbol of life. His reformation was directed against the worship of the numerous gods of Egypt, their welter of incongruous mythologies and against the vast and powerful priestly hierarchy of his day.

While it is true that his reformation did not last long, and never became the accepted religion of the masses of Egypt, it was nevertheless a religious revolt of vast proportions which was not soon forgotten.

Moses moved in the higher intellectual circles of Egypt. He must certainly have been aware of what had so profoundly disturbed the religious orthodoxy of Egypt, in days not far removed from his own, and the reasons for it.

Moses was first drawn away from the glittering palace of the Pharaoh, where he was reared, to his brothers who were suffering in the slave-pens of Egypt, by a great human compassion and pity. "One day when Moses had grown up, he went down to his people and looked on their burdens. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. The anger of Moses was aroused. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand". When his deed became known, he fled to Midian -- a land east of the Gulf of Aquala.

There he remained a fugitive for many years. He dwelt with Jethro, a priest of Midian, tending his flock. In the course of time he married his daughter, and sons were born to them.

As to what went on in his soul during those long years in the solitude of the wilderness and how often his mind turned back to his suffering kinsmen in far-away Egypt, the records are silent. But the revelation of God finally came to him at Horeb, near where he was tending his flock, in a flame of fire -- we are told -- out of the midst of a bush which burned without being consumed. Here he received the call to return to Egypt and here he was given the mission to bring forth his enslaved people to freedom. We shall not dwell at this time on how he carried out his mission which was to prove to be the first successful emancipation of an enslaved people in history.

In carrying out his mission to lead the people out of Egypt, where they had lived for many years, and had, to a large degree, become Egyptianized and steeped in its idolatries, Moses was determined to purge their religion of all the detestable things which their eyes had feasted on and the idols with which they had defiled themselves.

The religion which he was determined to give to his people upon their liberation, would be free of all the superstitions of polytheism and idolatry. It would have no room

for animal cults, which was so characteristic of the religion of Egypt, and for images, the likeness of things in the heavens above, the earth beneath and the waters under the earth. The Torah [that is, the instruction] which he would give them would forbid all the gross practices which he found in the Egyptian religion and the Egyptian way of life, the wide-spread practice of magic and the gross and extravagant absorption with death. He would rule out the whole spirit world and so exclude all magic and oracles of death which were so dominant a note in the religion of Egypt. His teaching would go far beyond the reformation of Akhenaten which never really abandoned the symbolized god, and never rejected the belief in the divinity of the Pharaohs. Akhenaten was himself regarded as divine.

Again, Akhenaten's revolution was not a social revolution in any sense. His revolution was theological, and his religious rationalism found expression in the field of theology and ritual. It was not motivated by any desire to elevate conditions of the dreadfully exploited Egyptian masses. Sex standards remained unchanged and un-challenged. Akhenaten, himself, married his own daughter.

The Torah which Moses was resolved to give to his people would outlaw incest, which was a common feature of Egyptian society, sacred prostitution which was so prominently attached to the cult of Amon, Min, Ptah and other gods, and human sacrifices such as Amon delighted in. Moses' Torah would ease the burdens of the laboring man, put an end to life-long slavery and make provisions for the care of the stranger. From their own bitter experiences, the Israelites had come to know the soul of the stranger and of the slave. In the society which he intended to found there would be no king like unto the Pharaohs, whose rule was absolute. There would be no ~~king~~ priests such as had imposed themselves so high-handedly upon the oppressed Egyptian people and exacted such tribute from them in the name of the gods. Justice, compassion, sex-purity and human dignity would be the guiding principles of the new society which Moses intended to found.

Monotheism, as such, Moses did not have to borrow from Akhenaten or from the Midianites or the Kenites, the only other people among whom Moses dwelt after he fled from Egypt. There is no evidence whatsoever that Moses borrowed the name YHVH or any of his basic religious ideas from Jethro, his father-in-law, who was an idolatrous Midianite priest. The Hebrews, even when they were slaves in the labor-camps of Egypt, had not completely forgotten the faith of their ancestors, the patriarchs -- even though it had been considerably adulterated. The religion of the patriarchs was neither primitive, animistic or polytheistic. It was far in advance of the religions of the ancient world of the second millenium, and even the religions of the ancient world themselves had already gone considerably beyond the primitive stages of religious culture.

The Hebrews had a religious tradition, which centered in the worship of one God, long before they migrated to Egypt. They traced it back to their racial progenitors, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even before Abraham left his home in Harran, in Northern Mesopotamia, in the eighteenth century before the Common Era to go to Canaan, his faith and that of his household was basically monotheistic. Abraham worshipped a Supreme Deity Who created Heaven and Earth by the name of El Elyon or El Shaddai. There is no indication in all the early Biblical records that this shared His sovereignty with any other god or goddess. The altars which the patriarchs built and the pillars which they erected during their migrations through Canaan were dedicated to God, alone -- the God of Heaven and Earth. It was of this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that Moses spoke to Pharaoh and to the children of Israel. It is to the patriarchs, let it be said in passing, that the Jewish people throughout all subsequent ages traced the origin of their faith -- not to Moses or to the later prophets. The Bible speaks of the "Torah of Moses", never of the "God of Moses" -- only of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ().

In the eyes of Moses, this God of the patriarchs, this El Elyon, was about to intervene in the history of the people of Israel a second time in a most critical and decisive manner. He was about to redeem them from Egypt! He was, therefore, to be known henceforth by the name -- YHVH. It was a common practice among ancient peoples to change the name of their deity or to add a new name to him in order to indicate that their god had now assumed a new or an additional role. To Moses, the El Elyon of the patriarchs was now YHVH -- -- ~~XXXXXXXX~~ He Who causes to be -- not in the sense of Creator -- this was already implied in the name of El Elyon -- but in the sense of He Who accomplishes and fulfills. YHVH is the Accomplisher -- He who performs what He promises! By bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, YHVH had fulfilled His promise which He had made to their forefathers. They must now know that He is a God Who could be trusted. They could rely upon Him. YHVH was now prepared to make a new covenant with them, even as He had made one with their ancestors. But if He is to remain their Guardian and Protector also in the future, they must commit themselves to a new way of life, one which is entirely acceptable to Him. They must pledge themselves to resist the ways of the heathens, their idolatries and their immoralities. They must be a different kind of a people. YHVH, Moses told the people, is a very exacting God, an exclusive and holy God, an El Kadosh, who will not tolerate the worship of any other gods. He is El Kana, a jealous God -- not in the sense of being envious of any other gods -- there are no other gods of whom He need be jealous -- YHVH is the only God -- but in the sense of being intolerant of those who would fatuously worship other gods alongside of Him. YHVH will demand of His people not alone an exclusive worship but an active career of relentless opposition to all heathen gods. "You shall worship no other god! You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim". Here, with Moses, we hear a new note. The patriarchs too were monotheists, but not militantly so. They were not iconoclasts.

Along with this new note of active opposition to polytheism one hears another new note -- the thorough-going opposition to the making of all images, all representation of any object in nature for purposes of worship. The image is a substitute for the idea. It never can fully represent it, and as often as not it distorts it. It stands between man and God. Pure and formless Being is endlessly creative and it possesses no properties which can be isolated for adequate representation. An idea which is represented in a material form may lead to moral aberrations. Thus the attempt to represent God as the Creator in physical imagery and ritual led to phallic symbolism and to cults of sacred prostitution. But to think of God abstractly, inwardly, with the inner mind, in terms of attributes of life and love, of goodness and justice and mercy is to stir man's inner life to move in these very directions.

With Moses, religion entered the non-representational field, the inner world of thought, will, and quest. This was one of the great radical shifts in the religious history of mankind. A new enlightenment came to man which opened up new roads for progress and new horizons for aspiration. Moses, in his radical monotheism and his uncompromising opposition to any form of material embodiment of the idea of God, not only spiritualized the concept of the Divine, but negated all forms of worship which were then known in the world. God must be worshipped not through the correct ritual but through the good life.

Still a third note, heretofore unheard, is now sounded -- "This day you have become a people unto, your God"

Under the leadership of Moses, Israel emerges as a people, no longer a mere group of tribes. Centuries, of course, would elapse and much hard welding and fusion before this motley hoard of emancipated slaves would become a people in the true sense of the word. But even now, the startling events of sudden liberation and escape to a

new life, have transformed them into a community of common interests and hopes. A great leader had arisen to guide them. He had given them a soul. He was binding them together, if not yet as a nation, then as a self-conscious society possessed of a militant and pioneering collective soul dowered with a task and a goal. A deepened and renewed faith had been given them and a mission which was to enjoin them through all the oncoming years. They were now the Bne Israel -- the children of Israel. The covenant which was made at Sinai was no longer made with one ancestor and his household as with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but with a people. This covenant committed not only the generation of Sinai but all future generations as well. A people bound itself eternally to a spiritual and ethical purpose. No other people in ancient history linked its destiny to such a program and few in modern times.

Here it should be noted that while Israel was taught by Moses to look upon itself as a people chosen by YHVH, they were not to think of themselves as a people descended from YHVH. Many people in ancient times claimed direct descent from gods. Israel was taught always to remember that it was a people of very humble origin -- "A wandering Aramean was my father" -- that it was YHVH who chose them, not because "You are more in number than any other people that YHVH set His love upon you and chose you, for you are the fewest of all people".

I said at the outset that Moses was the founder of the first spiritual and ethical religion of mankind. This indeed was his originality. Ethical ideas were, of course, known in the ancient world, even before the days of Moses. The roots of moral beginnings, as of cultural beginnings generally, are forever hidden. ~~The beginnings of moral beginnings~~. The uniqueness of the Mosaic Torah, however, resides in the fact that ethical ideas are now made the very essence of religion and the only true way of worshipping God. Moses set ethical values fast in the religious life of man, and thereafter they remained an inseparable part of religion.

Among the peoples of antiquity, lofty ethical concepts often existed side by side and in amicable arrangement, with gross and obscene religious cult practices such as sacred prostitution, the sacrifice of children, witch-craft, sorcery and obsession with death and the netherworld. The Torah of Moses banished from the religious life of man all grossness and superstition, all that was sordid and depraved. Religion was given ~~an~~ an exclusive ethical content.

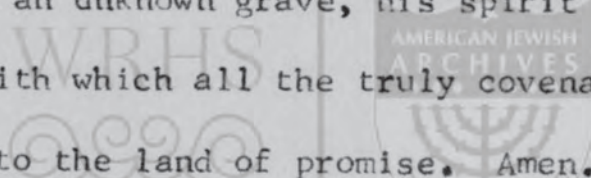
How Moses came to entertain his revolutionary spiritual ideas is no greater mystery than the amazing insights which come to all men of genius. The appearance of any great personality in history is unpredictable and his endowments are inexplicable. He leaps into his age unexpectedly like lightning out of darkness. All that his generation can do is either to grant or to deny him scope and opportunity. To be sure, no spiritual giant operates in a vacuum, but whatever truth he reveals wells up in him with a force of an immediate and over-powering revelation. Whatever he conceives of intellectually or experiences spiritually is a new act of creation and is his very own. It is not the product of evolution or of any cultural environment and it possesses timeless relevance.

By temperament and character Moses was preeminently qualified for the heroic role to which he was summoned. Biblical sources speak of him as a leader of rare courage and resolution.

There are some men who aspire to leadership. Moses instinctively shrank from it -- "O, my Lord, send I pray some other person". But once leadership had been thrust upon him, he bent to its yoke and never retreated. Moses was neither dreamer, mystic or recluse. He was the foremost spiritual pioneer. He blazed new trails for man's ethical advance. He was the first great emancipator for the human race. He endured ingratitude, rebellion, and rivalries for the sake of his mission.

He often felt the gibe and sting to which all leaders of men come to be subjected -- "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?" Upon his tired heart they unloaded all the bitterness and resentment of slaves **not** yet ready to be free. How often they confronted him in murderous fury with stones in their hands! Yet, he was compact of firmness and compassion and his heart was always full of concern for the people which so often failed him. It was the people which were at all times uppermost in his mind -- "Forgive the people's sins, O, YHVH, if not blot me out of Thy Book". Moses was the faithful shepherd of his people and the humblest of men.

Moses was the throneless monarch of a spiritual kingdom; his hand never held scepter or crown, yet peoples of many distant ages and remote regions came to accept his law. "No man knows his sepulchre unto this day", says the Bible, but though he lies entombed in an unknown grave, his spirit remains forever enshrined in the on-moving ark of faith which all the truly covenanted children of man hopefully follow to the new day and to the land of promise. Amen.



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- He was the founder of the first spiritual and ethical religion of mankind.

- Without his original Torah, ^{the Jews & Christians} there would be no Judaism ^{to-day} and no Christianity + no Islam.

- Later prophets and sages developed his teachings. But

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the Ten Commandments ^{in their original form} belong to these fundamental

instructions of Moses. So do the most, the laws which are grouped together in the 19th chapter Lev. laws. There are other "Debarim" - Words - which are found elsewhere in these 3 Codes, though not ^{necessarily} arranged in groups.

- The Torah of Moses ~~is~~ inaugurated a new age in the religious progress of man. # Who ^{then} was this man Moses? and in what, precisely, did his originality consist? His ^{was} born in Egypt. His name, his Egyptian.

- 1 -

Moses' youth and early manhood, according to the Biblical account, were spent in the palace of the Pharaoh. He was raised and educated as an Egyptian prince in an Egyptian environment. Egypt had attained to a very high level of civilization in Moses' day -- in fact, it was a very old civilization of considerable cultural sophistication into which ^{he} ~~Moses~~ was born. He grew up in the shadows of pyramids ^{which were very old} already ~~ancient~~ in his day and the basket of bulrushes in which he was hidden as an infant, tossed among the reeds of a river which was ^{already very} rich in history. The Egyptian culture and religion to which he was exposed were undoubtedly an essential part of his upbringing. He was able to observe at close range the Egyptian way of life, ⁱⁿ all of its lights and shadows. There was much in it from which he recoiled.

There were also Egyptians in his day, non-Hebrews, who reacted similarly. His age abounded in religious ferment ~~and tensions~~ and fell in the backwash of one of the greatest religious upheavals in Egyptian history. It is difficult to determine the exact age of Moses and of the Exodus. The most recent scholarship sets them in the early part of the thirteenth century. Not long before that time, ^{The Pharaoh, Egypt} Amonhotep IV had carried out as thorough-going a revolution against the traditional cult of Amon, ^{religion of Egypt, the} the national god, as Egypt had ever known. The temples of Amon were either ^{shut down} ~~closed~~ or destroyed. The worship of the old gods was prohibited. Their very names were erased from all the public monuments. ^{which means "Amon is satisfied"} ^{the whole brought to Aten} Amonhotep IV changed his own name to Akhenaten. ~~He~~ ^{even chiseled out from all monuments the name of his own father} Amonhotep III and of his ancestor Amonhotep II. New temples to Aten were built in many of the cities of Egypt, and in the new capital, Akhetaten, which he built, and to which he transferred the seat of his government from Thebes, the ancient city of Amon.

The religious reformation of Akhenaten called for the worship of ^{one god, one} ~~the~~ solar god, and was represented by the sun-disk with rays terminating in ~~the~~ hands holding the symbol of life. His reformation was directed against the ~~elaborate~~

worship of the ^{numerous} ~~many~~ gods of Egypt, their welter of incongruous mythologies and ^{against} the vast and powerful priestly hierarchy of his day. [#] While it is true that his reformation did not last long, and never became the accepted religion of the masses of ~~the~~ ^{Egypt} ~~people~~, it was nevertheless a religious revolt of vast proportions which ~~certainly~~ was not soon forgotten.

Moses moved in the higher intellectual circles of Egypt. He must certainly have been aware of what had so profoundly disturbed the religious orthodoxy of Egypt, in days not far removed from his own, and the reason for it.

Moses was first drawn ^{away} from the glittering ^{palace} ~~court~~ of the Pharaoh ~~of his~~ ^{where he was reared} ~~day~~ to his brothers, who were suffering in the slave-pens of Egypt, by ^{a great} human compassion and pity. "One day when Moses had grown up, he went down to his people and looked on their burdens. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. The anger of Moses was aroused. He looked this way and that and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." When his deed became known, he fled to Midian, ^{a land east of the Gulf of Aqaba}

There he remained a fugitive for many years. He dwelt with Jethro, a priest of Midian, tending his flock. In the course of time he married his daughter, and sons were born to them. [#] As to what went on in his soul during those long years in the ^{solo time of the} wilderness and how often his mind turned back to his ^{suffering} kinsmen in far-away Egypt, the records are silent. But the revelation of God finally came to him at Horeb, near where he was tending his flock, in a flame of fire ^{we are told} out of the midst of a bush which burned without being consumed. ^{Here,} He received the call to return to Egypt and was given the mission to bring forth ^{his} the enslaved people to freedom. We shall not dwell ^{at this time} on how he carried out his mission, ^{which was to prove to be} the first successful emancipation of an enslaved people in history.

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400-213
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~~Faith in him~~ *+* would have no room for animal cults, which was so characteristic of the
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again Akhenaten's *revolution* was not a social revolution in any sense. His revolution
was theological, and his religious rationalism found expression in the field of
theology and ritual. It was not motivated by any desire to elevate the moral tone
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dreadfully exploited Egyptian masses. Sex standards remained unchanged and un-
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The Torah which Moses was resolved to give to his people would outlaw incest, which was a common feature of Egyptian society, sacred prostitution which was so prominently attached to the cult of Amon, Min, Ptah and other gods, and human sacrifices such as Amon delighted in. Moses' Torah would ease the burdens of the laboring man, put an end to life-long slavery and make provisions for the care of the stranger. From their own bitter experiences, the Israelites had come to know the soul of the stranger and of the slave. In the society which he intended to found ~~from~~ there would be no king like unto the Pharaohs, whose rule was absolute. There would be no priests ~~and no priestly hierarchy~~ such as had imposed themselves so high-handedly upon the oppressed Egyptian people and exacted such tribute from them in the name of the gods. Justice, compassion, sex-purity and human dignity would be the guiding principles of the new society which Moses intended to found.

Start Monotheism, as such, Moses did not have to borrow from Akhenaten or from the Midianites or the Kenites, the only other people among whom Moses dwelt after he fled from Egypt. There is no evidence whatsoever that Moses borrowed the name YHWH or any of his basic religious ideas from Jethro, his father-in-law, who was an idolatrous Midianite priest. The Hebrews even when they were slaves in the labor-camps of Egypt had not completely forgotten the faith of their ancestors, the patriarchs. ~~The religion of the patriarchs was neither primitive, animistic or polydaemonistic.~~ ^{- even though it had been considerably adulterated} ^{theistic} It was far in advance of the religions of the ancient world of the second millenium, and the religions of the ancient world ^{even} ~~thinner~~ ^{themselves already} had gone considerably beyond the primitive stages of religious culture. The Hebrews had a religious tradition, which centered in the worship of one God, long before they migrated to Egypt. They traced it back to their racial progenitors, to Abfaham, Isaac and Jacob. Even before Abraham left his home in Harran, in Northern Mesopotamia, in the eighteenth century before the Common Era to go to Canaan, his faith and that of his household was basically monotheistic. ^{Abraham} ~~He~~ worshipped a Supreme Deity Who created Heaven and Earth

by the name of El Elyon or El Shaddai. There is no indication in all the early Biblical records that ^{this / not He} in the patriarchal age the Hebrews worshipped any other gods ~~or that their God~~ shared His sovereignty with any other god or goddess. The altars which the patriarchs built and the pillars which they erected during their migrations through Canaan were dedicated to God, alone -- the God of Heaven and Earth. ~~And~~ It was of this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that Moses spoke to Pharaoh and to the children of Israel. It is to the patriarchs ^{let it be said in passing} that the Jewish people throughout ~~the~~ all the subsequent ages traced the origin of their faith -- not to Moses or to the later prophets. The Bible speaks of the "Torah of Moses", never of the "God of Moses" -- only of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (^{אלהינו יהוה אחד}).

In the eyes of Moses, this God of the patriarchs was about to intervene ^{a second time} in the history of the people of Israel in a most critical and decisive manner. He ^{about} was to redeem them from Egypt. He was to be known ^{therefore} from then on by ~~an additional~~ ^{the} name -- YHVH. It was a common practice among ancient peoples to change the name of their deity or to add a new name to him ^{in order} to indicate that their god had now assumed a new or an additional role. To Moses, the El Elyon of the patriarchs was ^{now} ~~now~~ YHVH - ^{אלהינו} He Who causes to be -- not in the sense of Creator -- this was already ^{implied} ~~revealed~~ in the name of El Elyon -- but in the sense of He Who accomplishes and fulfills.

YHVH is the Accomplisher -- He who performs what He promises! By bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, YHVH had fulfilled His promise which He had made to their forefathers. They ^{must} now know that He is ~~truly~~ a God Who could be trusted. They could ^{now} reply upon Him. ~~But having indicated His love, His prowess and His faithfulness,~~

^{now} He now makes demands upon them, if they wish Him to be their God in the future. ~~He~~ ^{was} ~~will~~ ^{YHVH} make a new covenant with them, even as He had made one with their ancestors.

But if He is to ^{remain} ~~be~~ their Guardian and Protector in the future, they must commit themselves to a way of life ^{now} which ^{one} ~~alone~~ ^{entirely} is acceptable to Him. They ~~must~~ accept a new

~~discipline~~. They must pledge themselves to resist the ways of the heathens, their idolatries and their immoralities. ~~and they must be a different kind of a people.~~ ^{Moses told} YHVH ~~is now revealed to~~ the people ^{is} as a very exacting God, an exclusive

and holy God, an El Kadosh, who will not tolerate the worship of any other gods.

He is El Kana, a jealous God -- not in the sense of being envious of any other gods, --

there are no other gods of whom He need be jealous -- YHVH is the only God -- but

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alongside of Him. YHVH ^{will} demands of His people not alone an exclusive ^{worship} devotion but an active career of relentless opposition to all ^{heathen} ~~other~~ gods. "You shall worship no

other god! ~~Take heed to yourselves lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants~~

~~of the land whither you go, lest it become a snare in the midst of you. You shall~~

tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim". Here,

with Moses, we ^{hear} find a new note. The patriarchs were monotheists, but not militantly so. They were not iconoclasts.

^{And} Along with this new note of active opposition to polytheism ^{meheers} is another new note -- the thorough-going opposition to the making of ~~xxxxx~~ ^{all} images, ~~the~~ ^{all}

representation of any object in nature for purposes of worship. The image is a

substitute for the idea. It ^{never} cannot fully represent it, and as often as not it distorts

it. ^{It stands between man and God} Pure and formless Being ^{and it} which is endlessly creative, possesses no properties

which can be ^{isolated} isolated for adequate representation. An idea which is represented in a

material form may lead to moral aberrations. Thus the attempt to represent God as

the Creator ⁱⁿ ~~through~~ physical imagery and ritual led to phallic symbols ^{inwardly,} and to

cults of sacred prostitution. But to think of God abstractly/with the inner mind, ~~and to~~

in terms of attributes of life and love, of goodness and justice and mercy is to

stir man's inner life in these very directions. ^{To move} The god-idea symbolized is, to a

large degree, ~~drained of content~~. The outer image comes between God and man.

With Moses, religion entered the non-representational ^{field} world, the inner world of thought, will, ^{and} quest, and ~~morally motivated~~ conduct. This ~~is~~ ^{was} one of the great radical shifts in the religious history of mankind. ^{came to us as} A new enlightenment which opened up new roads ^{for progress} and new horizons ^{for aspiration} ~~to man~~. Religion became boundless and dynamic, a ~~progressive revolution in man's quest for meaning and security in God~~. Moses, in his radical monotheism and his uncompromising opposition to any form of material embodiment of the idea of God, not only spiritualized the concept of the Divine ~~for~~ all time, but negated all forms of worship ^{which were then in} known to the world, ~~of his day~~. ^{God must be worshipped not through the conventional ritual but through the God life}

Still a third note, heretofore unheard, is now sounded -- "This day you have become a people unto YHVH, your God". Under the leadership of Moses, Israel emerges as a people, no longer a mere group of tribes. Centuries, of course, ~~will~~ ^{would} elapse and much hard welding and fusion before this motley hoard of emancipated slaves ~~will~~ ^{would} become a people in the true sense of the word. But even now the startling events of sudden liberation and escape to a new life, have transformed them into a community of ^{common} ~~shared~~ interests and hopes. A great leader had arisen to guide them, ~~as~~ ^{one} people, with a single purpose. He had given them a soul. He was binding them together, if not yet as a nation, then as a self-conscious society possessed of a militant and pioneering collective soul dowered with a task and a goal. A deepened and renewed faith had been given them and a mission which was to enjoin them through ^{the coming} ~~the~~ years. They were now the Bne Israel -- the children of Israel. The covenant which was made at Sinai was no longer ^{made} ~~with~~ ^{one} ~~an~~ ancestor and his household as with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but with a people. This covenant committed not only the generation of Sinai but all future generations as well. A people bound itself eternally to a spiritual and ethical purpose. No other people in ancient history linked its destiny to such a program and few in modern times.

Here it should be noted that while Israel was taught by Moses to look upon itself as a people chosen by YHWH, they were not to think of themselves as a people descended from YHWH. Many people in ancient times claimed direct descent from ~~their~~ gods. Israel was taught always to remember that it was a ~~small and lowly~~ people of very humble origin -- "A wandering Aramean was my father" -- that it was YHWH who chose them, and not because "You are more in number than any other people that YHWH set His love upon you and chose you, for you are the fewest of all people".

I said ~~at the outset~~ that Moses was the founder of the first ^{spiritual and} ethical religion of mankind. This was ^{indeed} his originality. Ethical ideas were, of course, known in the ancient world, even before the days of Moses. The roots of moral beginnings, as of cultural beginnings generally, are forever hidden. The uniqueness of the Mosaic Torah resides ^{however} ~~in~~ ^{is} the fact that ~~these~~ ethical ideas are now made peremptory ~~divine mandates~~, the ^{very} ~~essence~~ ^{essentials} of religion and the only true way of worshipping God. Moses set ethical values fast in the religious life of man and thereafter they remained an inseparable part of religion.

Among the peoples of antiquity, lofty ethical concepts ^{often} existed side by side, ^{and} in amicable arrangement with gross and obscene religious cult practices -- such as sacred prostitution, the sacrifice of children, witch-craft, sorcery and ~~obsession~~ with death and the netherworld. The Torah of Moses banished from the religious life of man all grossness and superstition, all that was sordid and depraved. Religion was given an exclusive ethical context.

How Moses came to entertain his revolutionary spiritual ideas is no greater mystery than the amazing insights which come to all men of genius. The appearance of any great personality in history is unpredictable and ^{his} ~~its~~ endowments are inexplicable. He leaps into his age unexpectedly like lightning out of darkness, ~~and~~ ^{all that}

^{perhaps is entitled}
his generation ~~may~~ grant ~~him~~ or deny him scope and opportunity. To ~~be~~ sure, ~~no~~ ^{no} spiritual ^{great}
~~doesn't~~ operate in a vacuum, but whatever truth he reveals wells up in him with a
force of an immediate and over-powering revelation. Whatever he conceives of in-
tellectually or experiences spiritually is a new act of creation and is his very own.
It is not the product of evolution or of any cultural environment and it possesses
timeless relevance.

By temperament and character Moses was preeminently qualified for the ^{heroic}
~~historic~~ role to which he was summoned. Biblical sources speak of him as a leader
of rare courage and resolution. ^{If there are who} Some men aspire to leadership. Moses instinctively
shrank from it -- "O, my Lord, send I pray some other person". But once ^{leadership} ~~it was~~ ^{had been}
thrust upon him, he bent to its yoke and never retreated. ~~For strength he matched~~
the mountain crags which he scaled when fearlessly he approached the darkness where
God dwelt. ^{He was the greatest spiritual pioneer} Moses was neither dreamer, mystic or recluse. He endured ingratitude, ^{ethical}
rebellion, ~~feuds~~ and rivalries ^{for the sake} unflinchingly ^{often} at the behest of his mission. He felt ^{He was the first great messenger for the human race}
the gibe and sting to which all leaders of men come to be subjected -- "Who made you
a ruler and a judge over us?" Upon his tired heart they unloaded all the bitterness
and resentment of slaves not yet ready to be free. How often they confronted him in
murderous fury with stones in their hands! Yet, ^{he was} compact of firmness and compassion, ^{and}
his heart was always full of concern for the people ^{which} who so often failed him. It was
the people which were at all times uppermost in his mind -- "Forgive the people's
sins, O, YHVH, if not blot me out of Thy Book". Moses was ^{it} a faithful shepherd of ^{his}
~~the~~ people and the humblest of men.

^{Moses was the} Throneless monarch of a spiritual kingdom, his hand never held scepter ^{or}
crown, yet people ^{many} of distant ages and remote regions came to accept his law. ~~Many a~~
~~river whose streams make glad the city of God have their source in him,~~ "No man knows
his sepulchre unto this day", ^{says the Bible, by the} but though entombed in an unknown grave, his spirit
remains forever enshrined in the onmoving ark of faith which all ^{the truly} ~~covenanted~~ children
of man hopefully follow to the ^{new} ~~beckoning~~ day and to the land of promise.