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The Many Lives of Moses, 1971.

The Many Lives of Moses
Daniel Jeremy Silver
April 4, 1971

If I were to ask you what history tells us I think that you would answer simply, history tells us about the past. The point that I would like to make this morning is that history in fact tells us far more about ourselves than it does about the past. I had occasion these past few days to ^{re}read the Haggadah - I hope some of you did too in preparation for the Seder. Now all of us know the basic outline of the Exodus story, how the children of Israel went down ⁱⁿ to Egypt, ^{as} free men, driven there by a famine in Canaan, eager to buy grain, how they were allowed to encamp in Goshen, how they remained there for some generations, how ~~the ruler, the~~ ^{there was a} Pharaoh, who knew not Joseph, there was some political change of dynasty, ^{in the} ~~their~~ policy, and against all the laws of hospitality these ~~three~~ ^{free} men were suddenly overwhelmed and enslaved, how they were made to work on the storehouses of the great fortress, cities of ancient Egypt, ^{how} ~~and~~ persecution grew until finally a law was passed that all the ^{first} born among the Hebrews must be put to death; how one Hebrew child was saved, as I read to you from the Bible this morning; how he was raised in the very palace of Pharaoh; how he walked out one day and saw an Egyptian taskmaster whipping one of the forced Hebrew laborers; how he killed that man, and then was forced to go into exile, to flee to Sinai, ^{how} ~~though~~ he met there with Jethro and married his daughter, tended his flock, till one day he saw a bush that burned but was not consumed. He heard the voice of God speaking from the bush within him, telling him, go back, lead my people to their freedom; how armed with the power of God, with Aaron as his spokesman, he went back to Egypt and he appeared before Pharaoh and he said, let

my people go. The Pharoah was adamant and one by one harsh ever more cruel plagues were inflicted upon the Egyptians until Pharoah, ^{the} ~~decided~~ ^{beset at} the loss of his first born son, or the first born of all the ^{homes} of Egypt, finally allowed the Israelites to leave, how they left speedily and hastily at midnight ^{fearing that} ~~during~~ what in fact did happen would happen and Pharoah would change his mind; ^{how} ~~of~~ hosts of Pharoah pursued the Israelites to the village shores of the Red Sea; the waters opened and allowed the Israelites to pass on to dry land, returned in the heads of the pursuing Egyptians and destroyed that army. And so they stood on the far bank of the Red Sea and they sang the first song of freedom. The story is so familiar to us that we are likely to assume that the book we have before us Seder night tells that story exactly as we know it. But I hope you will look again because the Haggadah achieves quite a literary triumph. It manages to tell the history of the Exodus without once mentioning the hero of the Exodus. Not once in that entire story is the name Moses mentioned. God brings about the freedom; God brings the miracle of the Red Sea; God brings the plagues upon the heads of the Egyptians. Now why? Did those who write the Haggadah not know the Biblical story of Moses? Of course, they did. But the Seder is designed not to be a ^{an} historical commemoration, simply a rehearsal of events which happened three thousand eight hundred years ago in time - rather they are to be a statement of faith, ^{its} to be an existential moment in which we ~~would~~ rehearse the power of the god who thirsts for freedom, who demands freedom for himself and for mankind by ^{rehearsing} all the events in the past ⁱⁿ which the god of freedom established freedom and reminding ourselves of that power still present for us today. The Biblical lore ^{you} shall tell your son in that day saying - saying what? Not that Moses brought the children out of Egypt, but that God brought the children out of Egypt, that God is the god who delivers, that he is with those, partner with those

who seek the deliverance of all the oppressed and the persecuted of mankind and that as he was with our fathers in those days so will he be with us, the ~~deliberators~~, of this day. It reminds us that history is dead, the past is buried, so our children never cease to tell us, but it reminds us ^{that} from the past we learn the lessons of the present and from those activities, that hope, that presence, the power, the divinity which is in the past we can learn something about the promise and the possibility of life in our own times.

No sooner had I put down the Haggadah then I picked up another book dealing with the life of Moses written by a first century Hebrew philosopher^{and} teacher, who lived in Alexandria in Egypt, a man by the name of Philo, sometimes called Philojudeas. I was reading this particular book of the life of Moses for a chapter I was writing, but what struck me was the contrast between the Haggadah written by Pharaoh^{is} originally at about the same time as Philo and this life of Moses, written by a Greek-speaking Jew in a Greek-speaking congregation in the greatest Jewish metropolis of ancient times, ^{in which} ~~it was~~ Moses becomes a ^{gon} ~~paragon~~, a man without ^{peer} ~~peer~~, a man who ^{most} closely approximates perfection. Philo was born about 15 B. C. E. He died around the year 30 in the Common Era. Philo was one of the greatest of the philosophers ^{of} ~~in~~ the Hellenistic world. He was a product of a great Jewish metropolis. The city of Alexandria, of course, had been founded by Alexander the Great and named by him for himself. Jews had been among the first settlers brought there because of their sturdiness ^{as} ~~and their~~ ^{and} ~~their~~ craftsman skills as artisans. They thrived in that city. There were then in the first century probably a quarter of a million Jews in Alexandria. The great synagogue in Alexandria was supposed to have been so large that lacking the modern means of electronic ^{amplifi-} ~~appli-~~ cation they had to put a man, a ^g ~~fla~~man on the pulpit so that when

the liturgist read the liturgy, when it came time for a congregational Amen or some kind of congregational response he would wigwag the Amen so that those far distant in the corners of the synagogue would know ~~that~~ ^{this} was the time to respond.

Philo was the son of the wealth of Alexandria. He had been taught by tutors, he had been born into a rich family, he was trained in the best academies of the day, he sought to ^{ch}press his tradition in the language of the Hellenistic-Jewish world. He ~~committed~~ ^{turns} Moses into a Philosopher-King. The great philosopher, Plato, you will recall, had assumed that the finest form of government was ~~the~~ ^a government which would be organized by men, who knew all, who were self-disciplined, who were wise above all else and who were empowered with ultimate authority. He describes the philosopher-king. He ~~was~~ not simply a man who knows, who studies and who writes. He is a man who is comely in form, perfect physically, whose mind and whose body are in perfect harmony. He is a man whose mind has understood the basic requirements of life, the basic dimensions of wisdom, ^{whose} ~~his~~ mind controls his will, ^{whose} ~~his~~ mind controls his passion so that he is deliberate and grave and ethical and disciplined in all that he does. And Philo ~~recaps~~ ^{sets} the story of Moses so that Moses is transformed from an ancient Hebrew hero into a Greek philosopher-king. He does no harm to the text, ^{He} ~~but~~ simply takes the text and interprets it to fit his particular understanding. Obviously, a philosopher-king among the Greeks was well born. The Bible as I read to you this morning says only that there was a man from the house of Levi who took a woman from the house of Levi and they had a son. Philo ^{says} ~~said~~ that Moses was born to one of the fine noble families of the ancient Israelites. The Bible tells us nothing of the nature of this young child. Philo tells us that he was beautiful, that he was perfectly formed, that he never played with toys ^{as did} ~~and with~~ other children and make a nuisance of himself or make noise. Rather

he was always a man; rather he was always controlled, he never whined, complained, ~~was~~ filled with self-pity. He ~~had~~ ^{tutor} and he quickly learned his lessons, but more than that his mind was so agile he was always two steps beyond the lesson that the tutors were trying to inform him of. ~~On~~ ^{From} his own he was able to reach out beyond the wisdom of any man of his day. He was worthy of being raised in a royal family. All things then are attributed, all qualities are attributed, to Moses. But more than that - a great philosopher-king cannot be a passionate impulsive person. I read to you how one day walking from the palace Moses had suddenly come upon ~~the~~ ^{this} ugly scene of the taskmaster whipping the Hebrew and he was so moved that he had been moved to murder the man who was beating the slave. Now a philosopher does not react in that way. And the way ~~that~~ ^{that} Philo tells the story is this. The children of Israel had come down to Egypt, they had come down as free men, they had been criminally enslaved. As a philosopher Moses went around trying to reason with people. He went to all the governors, he went to all the taskmasters, he tried to reason with them about the injustice of what they were doing and there were some who were reasonable, who began to listen, but there was one more vicious and more cruel, a sadist among them who would not listen, whose whole being was determined upon destruction, who enjoyed killing and, after all, is it not a virtue to destroy those whose sole purpose is to destroy mankind?

Remember the great scene when Moses goes up to Mt. Sinai and receives there the law? He ~~had~~ ^{is} gone for forty days and for forty nights and when he descends he finds that the children of Israel have proved faithless, that they have taken all of

their ornaments, their gold, and they have built themselves ^{for} the Golden Calf and they were dancing in a bachanalian fashion in front of the calf, offering to this idol their loyalty. You remember how Moses takes the tablets, the law, and raises them high and shatters them in his anger. [?] A philosopher-king doesn't respond in that way.

When Philo tells the story Moses is up in the mountains for forty days and ~~while~~ ^{way} he was up in the mountain the thin air ~~breeds~~ ^{ins} to him the voice of the bachanalian chant, he hears and he knows what is happening back in the camp, and what does he do? He does nothing until his heart is calmed within him because a philosopher never acts impulsively. And then he begins to utter a prayer to God to forgive his people. He calms himself and then he goes down determined not to be angry, but to pray for the people; not to be vindictive, but to save all those who are not so given over to idol worship, who are not simply carried away by the moment, to save as many of his people as he can and so he does and Philo manages to tell this whole episode without once describing the actual shattering of the commandments.

Now what has Philo done? He has explained the story of Moses as he felt he knew it, as he understood it. He has not deliberately set out to pervert it; he has not simply set out to put it in different terms so that it may be more appealing; rather ^{leadership} in his day was represented by the philosopher-king, Moses was the greatest of leaders, ^{that} everything Moses did could be explained in terms of the virtues of a great philosopher, so it was done by Philo. ^{And my point} ~~What~~ is this?, That we can see the most in the eye of a Greek philosopher who lived 1950 years ago, that's easy. But can we see the ^{out} ~~most~~ in our own eye? Can we see how what we call history is, in fact, what we have wanted to find in the past, how looking for it we have found it. [?] We live in a generation which has seen the creation of history. We have seen it particularly among the blacks in America. There were black people

since the history of man began. They lived, they ruled, they had their wars, they had their wise men, they had their medicine, they had their science, they moved into the Arab world, they moved into the European world, they moved into the American world and many of them had success, more moderate ^{or} more success. But there was no black history until the black community of America came to the point ^{when} ~~that~~ it needed to find ^{in the past} its roots and its dignity and what did they find when they looked back?

They found what they looked for, the middle class, the moderate among them found

Aticus and Booker T. Washington, the moderate men, the loyalists, the patriots, those who contributed to the nation, and the more radical among them found a different history, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, the history of those who were given to the black militant revolution. In each case the history which they found was not the totality of the past. Their understanding was not what the past was, but what they needed the past to be. And so it has always been, but with all historians and with all peoples we use the past to help us forge the myths by which we organize the present. And we are never quite conscious of it. I give you the ultimate in paradox. The man who taught us most about the strange deep byways of the human mind was Sigmund Freud, the man who taught us most about projection, who taught us how much of what we think to be true is in fact self-illusion. Freud dealt in a very interesting way with Moses. For some reason, and this is the interesting fact, he abandoned his psychoanalytical work to write one historical book. He called it "Moses and Monotheism." And the Moses of Sigmund Freud is one of the most unique of the recreations of Moses that has ever been penned. I must give you a little history.

About fifty years before the Exodus is supposed to have taken place there was a young Pharoah in Egypt by the name of Ichnahatan and Ichnahatan came to power on the back of an anti-priestly, anti-ecclesiastic revolution. The priests had won great power, the great temples where the treasuries of ancient Europe, they held most of the land of ancient Egypt, they held most of the land of Egypt and there was a monarchist attack upon this ecclesiastic upper-class opposition to all this power. And Ichnahatan was the figurehead and what they tried to do was to claim that there were not many gods, each of whom had its own priestly cult, but there was only one god, ^{Atton} the solar disk. All gods are in a sense part of this one god, that those who have been telling you that Toth or Istar or ^{Ro} are the supreme gods have been lying to you, their power must be broken and only the priests of Atton are to be believed and, of course, all the priests of Atton were members of Ichnahatan's ^{party}. Ichnahatan ruled for just a dozen years or so. His power was quickly broken and the power ^{of} ~~the~~ the priests was reasserted and according to Freud, Moses was an Egyptian nobleman, not a Jew at all. While he was part of Ichnahatan's group, probably a governor, perhaps a prince, who had fled the ^{re} ~~oppression~~ oppression which had followed inevitably upon the crushing of Ichnahatan's revolution. He had fled into the wilderness and he found there a ragtag of wandering ex-slaves, of semitic peoples who had somehow escaped from Egypt, and he took them over by force of his personality and he forged them into a people worshipping the solar disk Atton, which for some reason he gave the name Yava or Adonai. And Moses was an Egyptian who imposed his discipline upon this wandering motley of Israelites or Hebrews and then ⁿ ~~by~~ by force

of his personality led them to the promised land which was itself a myth which he gave to them.

Now what have we here? Why does this founder of psychoanalysis give us a myth about Moses, the Egyptian? ^{Remember} ~~Here's the~~ Freud's biography. He was born ~~in~~ and raised in Vienna in the midst of the most anti-semitic city in Europe. During the early days of his career Vienna was ruled by a mayor who had been elected on the anti-semitic party and with its name. He was refused again and again admission into hospitals because people said the Jews are too smart by far. What was he saying in this recreation? Was it perhaps that the Jews are not too smart by far? That the uniqueness of the Jew was imposed upon them ^{from} ~~by~~ the outside, that the idea of the Promised Land was imposed upon them from the outside? ^{Give us} Another leader, give the Jew their freedom, give them new ideas and they will become something else. They will integrate, assimilate into the society. They are not different, racially, intellectually or any other ^{way} ~~way~~, only the chance of history gave them the history which is theirs. Perhaps I misread Freud but the reasons why a psychoanalyst should stroll in the byways of history into a world in which he simply ^{is} not that competent would indicate that something drove him to recreate Moses in the image of his own needs and I suspect he would not have been surprised to know that he was capable of doing what all other ordinary mortals, according to him, did ordinarily. Moses has been used in wondrous and fascinating ways in our past, but, of course, the question really is how are we using Moses? When I speak of Moses to you what immediately comes to your mind? I asked a youngster the other day in my class at the university what came to her mind when I spoke of Moses and the scene that came to her mind instinctively was the scene of Moses striking down the taskmaster, the instinctive reaction to evil, to ugliness. What came into your mind? I suspect

that we make a great deal of Moses the Liberator; treat him very much as a part of the thrust of our society. I suspect we make a great deal of Moses who leads the children of Israel to the Promised Land; Israel is again central as a theme in our lives. *Occasionally* we remind ourselves that Moses went up to Sinai and received the Ten Commandments. When I talk of Moses with the Ten Commandments over my shoulder how can we not think of that? But only occasionally. And how many of us think of the Moses who sat day by day for forty years before the tent of meeting, dispensing the torat, the very specific requirements of the faith, the laws of the regiment, the discipline, the requirements, the specifics? The Ten Commandments are fine, they're broad, they're humane, they're universal, but the torots are specific. *We you* shall observe the *Passover*, we shall observe Shuvor, you shall observe these dietary laws, you shall observe the laws of purity, this shall be the law for marriage for you. These we tend to forget, this part of the life of Moses we tend to push aside. We don't like to think of religion as being an encompassing *discipline with harsh*, hard-hearted specifics, do we? We like to think of it as being broad, universal, full of love and compassion and sympathy and the thirst for righteousness, but not *different*. That's not our way. So when we recreate Moses *this* is rarely the Moses that we describe to our children. *Who* ~~What~~ do you think of when you think of Moses?

is miraculous! never once did the Talmudic legal system
means - as miraculous figures at the same time -

My self - wisdom figures as not dangerous as a
historical communities - 20 years not by recommending
historical any law then - but recommending in legislation

in your law - 20 years not recommending
20 - law code changes - figures in
peace to decrease transfers

in recommending law's recommending are just as recommending figures
law peace law figures as law as recommending - figures
recommending figures recommending figures recommending figures

law as recommending - law figures
as recommending figures recommending figures recommending figures



// Recommending figures
law recommending figures law recommending figures
law recommending figures law recommending figures
law recommending figures law recommending figures

One Tuesday I found figures recommending figures
one Wednesday figures recommending figures
recommending - figures recommending figures
recommending - figures recommending figures

The summer began with Philo

A friend of mine Nathan Alon is Professor of Jewish History & Social
Economics at Berkeley and an influential publisher of Yiddishkeit. He lent me
a green covered Yiddish book ~~on the history of the Jewish people~~
which contained several useful facts - I saw it had been some years
since I had read any of the Yiddish literature, 2 but it was, I should
imagine, very valuable information on the history of the Jewish people.
~~When in the course of reading I found Philo's Life of Moses to~~
~~begin to look like the one of the same - The book was a~~
~~completely new - no side light on the subject of the Jewish people~~
~~it was a new & good one - [See also SP 272] - but~~
~~my real purpose in the book was to collect history - which it is~~



which it is
valuable at times
which it does not look

~~First I read the Yiddish book & the Life of Moses -~~
~~Philo's Life of Moses - which is a very good one~~
~~(1880 - 1900) Philo's Life of Moses is a very good one~~
~~most things are good and right & interesting - most things are good~~
~~life is good.~~

Perhaps 1/4 of a million years ago - Philo is valuable
in the history of the Jewish people
which is very valuable in the history of the Jewish people
which is very valuable in the history of the Jewish people
which is very valuable in the history of the Jewish people

6-11-64

a Western front to deal with...
picked up ...
World of Political movements ...
conclusion of work ...
 ... Received ... French Cause ...

Cause & effect - caused by various factors
Plan - Good. Did much work here
 but first cause was "miles apart" at times?
 problem of containing areas can be
 a continuous process or a periodical

a just cause is to win a contested cause
 alleged to be, but do not go on judging it justified
repeatedly. If you can see me to them I am not
 a harmless.

and a under up parted.

Place not water changed in a former method
at same place for 19' container - with sponge removed

Kaddish

Friday April 2
Sunday 4

Those who passed away this week

FANNIE JOSEPH

Vahrzeits

EARL BEHRENS
JACOB WOLENSKI
LEWIS SANDS
MARY KLAUSNER
BLANCHE COHEN
HELEN G. STERNS
EMMA BAKER MYERS
~~SUMNER C. WIENER~~
SUMNER C. WIENER
JACOB ROSEN
MATILDA FLESHER
ABRAHAM J. SUGERMAN
HARRY BRATBURD
LESTER L. KAHN
DAVID A. BERGER
HATTIE BAER TEPLANSKY
SOL FETTERMAN
LEVI SHONFIELD
ISRAEL J. LEHMAN
ALBERT BERGMAN
IDA DEBORAH GLANZ
JOSEPH MILLER

JOSEPH WEISS
ALVIN LOUIS KOBLITZ
ETHEL GREENWALD
RUTH D. HABER
ROSA KOBLITZ KOHN
ALEXANDER E. KATZ

a man on which would be large amount of credit
of reputation -

So much is to be said. The top of man is not at all
and to be pleasing but to be a benefactor of the poorest people of
the world. The figure and image of a man is not to be
modern and to cast a shadow over the future of the
world of a man more than any other man
this must be not only to be but "any to not
a perfect person of our time"

man was not an ordinary old : "he displayed
a new kind of character and values from his own person & was

"of a very high order of intelligence"
man was very different from any other man who was born in his time
"but he was not a disgraced character at all" - he
was not only good and kind but "he was interested in all
his country by the highest degree of his own power"

The Black and white man is a stupid man as shown in his speech
and his build and his character and his intelligence, Phil
man was as much as a stupid man as shown in his speech
of any kind known

Of course, Phil was not the same man as shown in his speech
physical perfect and a man of high intelligence - he was not a stupid
but was as much as a stupid man as shown in his speech

you 2 have found your way to the right, 6 for, ~~the~~ 60
2 for you, as we would - for we are a staffed people &
found in writing & we are -

Now we are all united
to work together & improve in the best method we can see to
see these

There is no change -

The idea of self interest - by mutual advantage has moved -
from us as a self interest - which is not individual -
we see the mutual interest high - as good for - to
prevent the idea of self interest - which would cut off -

mutual interest of the community

WRHS



History is the age of the community - More than - we need
now the idea of self interest - which is not individual - mutual
which is not individual - mutual interest high - as good for - to
prevent the idea of self interest - which would cut off -
the community out of the community of the community -

Let us put it into the community - College community the
divided into the community - the idea being - the community
idea - the idea being into the community - the community
to divided into the community - the community
not as the community - the community the community
which is not individual - mutual interest high - as good for - to

[illegible]

