

From Moses to Moses There was No One Like Moses

Paul Adler -- February 4, 2017

Today, instead of commenting on the Torah reading – Bo- which we know is the story of Moses, Pharaoh and the plagues, I am going to share an historical view of five special men named Moshe. I will mention several names and dates as well as display their pictures. There will be a quiz at the end, so listen carefully to all of the facts regarding this amazing group of Moshes.

Moshe #1: **Moses of Egypt**

According to the Chabad Site:

Moses was born in Egypt on the 7th of Adar in 1393 BCE, at a time when the Israelites were slaves to the rulers of the land and subject to many harsh decrees. He was the third of Jocheved and Amram's three children -- his brother, Aaron, was three years older, and his sister Miriam was six.

At 20, Moses fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian he saw beating a Jew and made his way to Midian, where he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, and fathered two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

When he was 80, Moses was shepherding his father-in-law's sheep when G-d revealed himself to him in a burning bush at Mount Horeb (Sinai) and instructed him to liberate the Children of Israel. Moses took the Israelites out of Egypt, performed numerous miracles for them (including the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, extracting water from a rock, bringing down the manna, and numerous others), He received the Torah from G-d and taught it to the people, built the Mishkan (Divine dwelling) in the desert, and led the Children of Israel for 40 years as they journeyed through the wilderness; but was not allowed to bring them into the Holy Land. Moses passed away on his 120th birthday on Mount Nebo, within sight of the land he yearned to enter. (In the movie the Ten Commandments, Seti and Ramses II ruled during those years.)

According to the TimeChart History of the World, Moses lived from 1571-1451 BC. The names of the Pharaoh's who ruled during his lifetime were Thothmas III, Amenhotep II and III.

.Moshe #2: Maimonides – Rav Moshe Ben Maimon

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, 1135-1204 ("Rambam")

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Talmudist, physician, philosopher and communal leader, known in the Jewish world by the acronym "Rambam" and to the world at large as "Maimonides," is one of the most important figures in the history of Torah scholarship; on his gravestone were inscribed the words, "From Moses to Moses, none arose as Moses."

From the days of our greatest Prophet, Moses of Egypt and Sinai, there has been no greater Jewish philosopher and interpreter of our faith than Maimonides. No other Jewish sage wrote two books of such outstanding value: the Mishne Torah, a summary of the entire Jewish Law, and the Moreh Nevuchim, a classic of Jewish philosophy. Maimonides was not only an outstanding scholar, he was, the undisputed leader of Egyptian Jewry during his lifetime and probably the final authority on all questions of Jewish life in the Jewish world of his day.

Maimonides was born into a distinguished family in Córdoba (Cordova), Spain. The young Moses studied with his learned father, Maimon, and other masters and at an early age astonished his teachers by his remarkable depth and versatility. Before Moses reached his 13th birthday, his peaceful world was suddenly disturbed by the ravages of war and persecution.

They moved to Egypt, settling in Fostat, near Cairo. There Jews were free to practice their faith openly, though any Jew who had once submitted to Islam courted death if he relapsed to Judaism. Moses himself was once accused of being a renegade Muslim, but he was able to prove that he had never really adopted the faith of Islam and so was exonerated.

Though Egypt was a haven from harassment and persecution, Moses was soon assailed by personal problems. His father died shortly after the family's arrival in Egypt. His younger brother, David, a prosperous jewelry merchant on whom Moses leaned for support, died in a shipwreck, taking the entire family fortune with him, and Moses was left as the sole support of his family. He could not turn to the rabbinate because in those days the rabbinate was conceived of as a public service that did not offer its practitioners any remuneration. Pressed by economic necessity, Moses took advantage of his medical studies and became a practicing physician. His fame as a physician spread rapidly, and he soon became the court physician to the

sultan Saladin, the famous Muslim military leader, and to his son. He also continued a private practice and lectured before his fellow physicians at the state hospital. At the same time he became the leading member of the Jewish community, teaching in public and helping his people with various personal and communal problems.

The writings of Maimonides were numerous and varied. His earliest work, composed in Arabic at the age of 16, was the *Millot ha-Higgayon* ("Treatise on Logical Terminology"), a study of various technical terms that were employed in logic and metaphysics. Another of his early works, also in Arabic, was the "Essay on the Calendar" (Hebrew title: *Ma'amar ha'ibur*).

The first of Maimonides' major works, begun at the age of 23, was his commentary on the Mishna, *Kitāb al-Sirāj*, also written in Arabic. The Mishna is a compendium of decisions in Jewish law that dates from earliest times to the 3rd century. Maimonides' commentary clarified individual words and phrases, frequently citing relevant information in archaeology, theology, or science. One of these essays summarizes the teachings of Judaism in a creed of Thirteen Articles of Faith.

Rambam compiled what he refers to as the *Shloshah Asar Ikkarim*, the "Thirteen Fundamental Principles" of the Jewish faith, as derived from the Torah. Maimonides refers to these thirteen principles of faith as "the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations."

The Thirteen Principles of Jewish faith are as follows:

1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in God's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in God's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship God exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy.

7. The belief in the primacy of the prophecy of Moses our teacher.

8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah.
9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.
10. The belief in God's omniscience and providence.
11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.
12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.
13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

He completed the commentary on the Mishna at the age of 33, after which he began his magnum opus, the code of Jewish law, on which he also laboured for 10 years. Bearing the name of Mishne Torah ("The Torah Reviewed") and written in a lucid Hebrew style, the code offers a brilliant systematization of all Jewish law and doctrine.

Maimonides was concerned with the preservation of Talmudic law and Rabbinic Judaism. It was generally felt that the Talmud was too bulky and too complex to serve as an everyday guide for the Jewish masses. Maimonides believed that the entire text of the Talmud was for scholars only, while the law contained in it was for all Jews. He thus systematized the law of the Talmud, wrote introductions to it and decided the law in case the Talmud did not come to a decisive conclusion.

Maimonides made his own classification of Jewish law and divided it into fourteen groups. They are: the fundamental principles of Jewish faith; prohibition against idolatry; improvements of family, social life and morality; social justice and charity; criminal law; courts of justice; contracts; Jewish holidays; prayer and worship; law of the Temple sanctuary; animal sacrifices; ritual cleanliness; dietary laws and laws of marriage and sex.

His next major work, on which he laboured for 15 years, was his classic in religious philosophy, the *Dalālat al-ḥā`irīn* (The Guide for the Perplexed), later known under its Hebrew title as the *Moreh nevukhim*. A plea for what he called a more rational philosophy of Judaism, it constituted a major contribution to the accommodation between science, philosophy, and religion.

Rambam wrote this book for the selected few “who are versed in Torah and philosophy, who are strong in belief but perplexed at certain statements in Bible and Torah.” He endeavored to make Judaism philosophically sound. He insisted that the God-revealed Torah must agree with the intellectual findings of Aristotle, since both are the manifestations of the divine powers, reason and revelation. He insisted that both Moses and Aristotle, although ten centuries apart, were seeking the one and only truth. Maimonides taught that there must be no conflict between pure reason and Judaism.

Maimonides’ advanced views aroused opposition during his lifetime and after his death. But the controversy abated after some time, and Maimonides came to be recognized as a pillar of the traditional faith—his creed became part of the orthodox liturgy—as well as the greatest of the Jewish philosophers. His medical writings constitute a significant chapter in the history of medical science.

Maimonides often complained that the pressures of his many duties robbed him of peace and undermined his health. He died in 1204 and was buried in Tiberias, in the Holy Land, where his grave continues to be a shrine drawing a constant stream of pious pilgrims.

Moshe #3: Marc (Moshe ben Yaakov) Heymann

My great-great grandfather, 1794-1862 Dernau, Germany

Moshe ben Yaakov Heymann was married when he was 19. His first wife, Sarah Meyer, was 18. He was later married to Rosette Hirsch and Elisabeth Wolff-Abraham and had a total of 15 children. He was a leader of the Jewish community and hosted services in his large house. He must have been relatively wealthy, since his portrait was painted and passed on from

generation to generation. I recall seeing the original painting in my father's aunt Bertha's home in New York in the 60s. His 11th child was my great-grandfather, Joseph Heymann.

Moshe #4: Moses (Moshe ben Yosef) Heymann

My Grand-Uncle (1884-1930, Ahrweiler, Germany)

Moses Heymann was born in 1884 in Ahrweiler, Germany, and died there in 1930. Moses was an officer in the German army during WW I. He was recognized by the Jewish community as the man who saved the library of the Chafeitz Chayim from destruction during that war. He wrote letters to his family in Hebrew characters so that the German authorities would not understand them. He inspired my father to study Hebrew and continue his education to the highest levels possible.

Moshe #5: Morris (Moshe Yisrael ben Tzvi Ha'Levi v'Miriam) Schnitzer

Morris was born in Bochum, Germany, in 1922 (95 years ago), the oldest of 3 sons of Hermann Schnitzer and Rosa Heller. His brother Eddi was born a year later, and Benno in 1925. Eddi escaped the Nazis on a kinder-transport and lived in Montreal until his death, but Benno, tragically, perished in Auschwitz along with their parents.

Moishe, as many of you know from talking to him or reading his book, "My Three Selves", survived the war by amazing ruses and guises and finally joined Eddi in Canada in 1947, where he managed to begin studying at McGill, MacDonald College and go straight on to his PhD in organic chemistry. He worked for many years at Agriculture Canada, publishing hundreds of papers, becoming known all over the world for his research, speaking at major conferences, and guiding students who came to his lab. Some are still in touch, and talk about what a wonderful teacher he was. He is also the only scientist from Agriculture Canada who is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He was awarded the Israel Prize for his work in soil chemistry.

Moishe is now a great-grandfather. His daughter Eve, who is currently away on sabbatical and thus could not be here today, has a son, Jan, and daughter-in-law, Nadine. Their daughter,

Aliyana Leah, was born in December, 2014. Her second name was given in remembrance of Leah Paltiel, who would have been her great-grandmother. Leah used to organize wonderful trips for the family, often around the international conferences they attended, and she was a true 'culture vulture', who took advantage of any chance to see the best plays, dance, or opera, in Ottawa and on their travels. As many of you know, she was also very involved in the shul from its inception, along with Moishe, and she had a wonderful singing voice.

Moishe can look back and feel he has done a lot of good in his life, personally and professionally, and had a wide variety of fascinating experiences. He has been very lucky, but has also worked extremely hard and been generous with those around him. He is much loved and appreciated by three generations of descendants, and admired by friends and colleagues.

Morris and my father lived in Germany at the same time and had many similar life and near-death experiences. They were born two years apart in 1920 and 1922. They were studying in Berlin in 1938. Morris attended technical high school (gymnasium) and dad was in rabbinical school. They both witnessed Kristallnacht and escaped from the Gestapo multiple times. They lost their parents and other relatives during the Holocaust, but survived to continue their education in Canada. Morris's brother, Eddi, was held in internment camps in Quebec and New Brunswick during the war and spent about two years in the same camps as my dad. Morris and Leah and my parents lived in Montreal and attended Shaarei Shamayim congregation around the same time in the late 1940s. Morris and Leah became friends with my parents soon after they met each other here at Adath Shalom over 25 years ago. Morris and Dad had great respect and friendship for each other.

You all know that Morris and I have a special friendship, too!

We want to honour our friend Moshe on his 95th birthday today.

Yom Huledet Sameach!