


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 5 January 2018 - 18 Tevet 5778
Sedra Shemot

FROM MOSES TO MOSES

THIS COMING SUNDAY (20 TEVET) IS THE YAHARZEIT OF THE RAMBAM, who passed away in Egypt nearly eight hundred years ago. His full name was Rabbi Moses ben (the son of) Maimon: the initial letters form the word Rambam. He is widely known as Rabbi Moses Maimonides (1135-1204).

The Rambam was a major Jewish leader. In his lifetime he gave direct spiritual guidance to a large section of the Jewish people, particularly those of the eastern communities; after he passed away the sphere of influence of his teachings broadened, encompassing the entire Jewish world. To some extent his writings also influenced non-Jewish thinkers. On his gravestone in Tiberias are inscribed the words: "From Moses to Moses there arose none like Moses".

The first Moses is of course the hero of our Sedra¹, at the beginning of the Book of Exodus. Indeed, from this point on in the Torah he is the central figure in every Sedra. For Moses is soon seen as the leader of the Jewish people: he is their redeemer from Egyptian slavery, their teacher, and their defender when they have angered G-d. Moses led



In Memory of Menashy ben Yechezkel Ezra ע"ה
24 Tevet - Dedicated by his Family שי'

the Jewish people through the wilderness to the frontier of the Promised Land: then he was succeeded by Joshua, and by all the Jewish leaders who followed through the generations, including Moses Maimonides in the 12th century, and other leaders after him, reaching our own time and the great leaders of the post-Holocaust generations, such as the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

What is a Jewish leader? Why is so much of Jewish history and teaching concerned with our leaders through the ages?

To understand this we need to consider what the Sages tell us about each individual Jewish man and woman. Deep within each person there is a spiritual quality which is a kind of inner 'Moses'. This is a profound level of the soul which seeks to connect our entire being with G-d. It is the essence of our 'Good Desire', the voice of our conscience which warns us when we are about to make a mistake, and can sometimes be felt tugging at us to try to repair any spiritual damage we have caused.

A genuine Jewish leader arouses this quality of 'Moses' within us. He reveals to us our own resource of spiritual vitality.

Of course, this is not a one-off event but an ongoing process. The teachings of all the great Jewish leaders provide us with the many books which constitute the basic library of Jewish thought. Exploring these teachings, generation after generation, helps us to understand the joy, the responsibility and the challenge of being a Jewish man or woman at any epoch.

Through this process, Moses our first Torah Teacher, Rabbi Moses the Rambam and all the other Sages have succeeded in preserving us as the Jewish people. They teach us how to study and internalise the sacred Torah, and how to express its teachings and ideals in our daily lives. Their inspiration will ultimately help us attain the final and complete Redemption.

Moses was our first Redeemer, and in a sense he will also be our final Redeemer - in the form of the Messiah, who will activate the inner 'Moses' in each and every member of the Jewish people, which will lead to a full redemption for them and all humanity, bringing the work of the first Moses to fulfilment².

1. Exodus 1:1 - 6:1. 2. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Tanya ch.42, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.11, p.8 ff.

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SEDRA SHEMOT

JEWISH BUTTERFLIES

“Wow look at that leaf” Daniela said to herself. “I wish I could just fly up there and stare at it, hovering”.

The colours were beautiful and the sun was shining. She spread her wings and fluttered upwards.

“Come” she called out to her friend Sara, “let’s go to the flowers over there”.

There was a group of flowers with blue on the outside and pink on the inside with darker spots of red giving them a soft feel. Not all the flowers had opened and she could hardly wait for them to be in full bloom.

That’s how it was when the weather got really cold and the rain poured and poured. Daniela and Sara would pretend to be butterflies.

“You don’t really want to be a butterfly, do you?” Sara commented, after they had flown to the flowers in the living room on the shelf next to the couch.

“I would” Daniela said “it would be so much fun, I would be so free. I would be able to fly around whenever it gets boring”.

“But you wouldn’t be able to do anything” Sara said

“you wouldn’t be able to go to school, you wouldn’t be able to have Shabbat, you wouldn’t have a home as you have now. You wouldn’t be able to help old that old lady with her shopping on Friday anymore.”

“But I would be free” Daniela answered, sounding less convinced.

“You remind me of what we were learning in school today” Sara said. “The Sedra talks about how Pharaoh had a wicked plan to throw all the baby boys in to the river Nile”.

“I know, he was really mean” said Daniela.

“Yes” said Sara, “and in a way what was even worse, was that he wanted the Jewish girls to be kept alive, with the idea that they would be brought up like Egyptian girls rather than as Jewish girls”.

“You know, that is like trying to make a person become a butterfly” Daniela said after a few moments thought. “I mean, there is so much in life for a Jewish girl to do, that to take her and try to force her to live any other way would be very painful indeed”.

“The sad thing is” said Sara “the little girl wouldn’t realize. Just imagine growing up thinking you are a butterfly and never even knowing the opportunity she is missing, to live as person”.

“So thank G-d we are not butterflies,” said Daniela.
“And that we know we are Jewish!”

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