

September 20, 2004 - Subject: Reality

DEAR FRIENDS: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from THE BIBLE AS OUR LIFE - BOOK 1 by Peggy M. Brook. For a brief biography on our featured authors, click [here](#).

Moses - Preparation for His Mission (Exodus 1:1 - 4:31)

AT THE OPENING of the Book of Exodus we find the Israelites in bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. A Pharaoh **had** arisen "who knew not Joseph." Joseph stands for the quality of spiritual idealism which is able to dwell in the "Egypt" of mortal existence and turn every phase of it into a blessing. But when that quality is apparently no longer "alive," mortal existence can become an enslavement with more and more burdens imposed by the "Pharaohs" of material theories.

But there is always a way out. Spiritual truth, which is the saviour to every situation, may lie hidden, but it is *never* absent. Being the fundamental reality of the universe, how could it be? And so, in this instance, Moses is born, that colossal character who was destined to deal trenchantly with Egypt and lead the children of Israel out of bondage.

The Missions of Joseph and Moses

Joseph and Moses are both compelled to tackle Egypt, but through different circumstances and in different ways. Joseph the dreamer was sold into Egypt by his brethren. He represents the state of thought that has always loved the spiritual and when face to face with mortal existence quite naturally avails itself of spiritual understanding to overcome every adverse situation.

Moses, on the other hand, was born in Egypt of Israelite parents, but through untempered zeal in springing to the defence of a fellow Israelite he was forced to flee from Egyptian rule into Midian. There he received God's command to return to Egypt and deliver his brethren, the children of Israel, from bondage. Moses, therefore, represents the state of thought that, though accustomed to Egypt, suddenly awakens to its dangers and the urgent necessity of dealing with them. But it has to learn to tackle the whole problem from its very foundations on the basis of the onliness of the spiritual, its self-existence and self-completeness.

Joseph allowed himself to be sold into Egypt and was forced to deal with the problem from *inside*, whereas Moses fled from it and was compelled by God, when *outside* the land, to return and tackle the false gods of Egypt with authority.

Joseph brought all his brethren down into Egypt. Moses led them all out. Yet both activities have a place in the pattern of life. Joseph illustrates how the leaven of Truth is at work in world thought individually and universally, leavening the world's sense of

medicine, theology, science. Moses, on the other hand, illustrates how fundamental spiritual fact must be seen as completely separate from mortal existence, and how men need the great moral courage which accompanies spiritual vision. They need it in order to tackle the mesmerism which subordinates the spiritual to the material until all vision fades and men attempt to use the spiritual merely to build up treasure cities in matter, even as Pharaoh did.

This is a familiar pattern. A pure “Joseph” vision is born, develops, and eventually rules over materiality. Jesus was the supreme example of this. But let years pass and the vision fades; then the truths associated with that vision just become slaves to the outward fruits. At that point a “Moses” is needed, the quality of awareness of spiritual law, unswerving obedience to that law and the courage to face its implications. Moses is known as the lawgiver and is associated with the rigidity of Mosaic law, the smoke and fire and thunderings of Mount Sinai. Well may we appreciate the gentler message of the Gospels (though Jesus never hesitated to rebuke all types of evil) and yet, when human consciousness is bogged down in materiality and the spiritual appears to be more and more subordinated to mortal theories, it needs trenchant, uncompromising Truth to arrest the situation.

Motherhood and Womanhood Care for the Spiritual Idea

Whenever the human heart calls out for its need to be met, there is always the answer born from the great motherhood of the Principle of the universe. Moreover, qualities of motherhood and womanhood never cease to care for the idea that is born until it is firmly established.

How clearly one can trace this in the familiar story of Moses' birth. His mother saw that he was a “goodly child.” In order to save him from being thrown into the river, which Pharaoh decreed must be the fate of every male Hebrew baby, she made him an ark of bulrushes and laid it on the river's brink, charging his sister to watch what should become of him. Pharaoh's daughter found the babe, had compassion on him, and brought him up in her palace as her own son. Through Moses' sister, his own mother was called as a nurse to him, And so he was preserved.

The operation of true spiritual discernment and love, faith, watchfulness, and care for the spiritual idea never cease from the earth, even in the darkest hours. These wonderful womanhood qualities may temporarily lie hidden, but they continue to exist and are bound to bring forth and preserve ever new presentations of the eternal spiritual ideal which saves and delivers mankind.

There Must Be Cultured Spiritual Understanding

When Moses had grown to young manhood, he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew and he slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. This became known and Pharaoh sought to kill Moses. So he fled to Midian. At this early stage it would seem that the lesson is learned that no mortal belief can just be cut off and hidden away in the shifting sand of unreasoned prejudice. It is like trying to destroy a vice through sheer human will-power. It is never properly dealt with in this way, and if we make an ally of mortal will in one instance it can come back at us and destroy us in another.

Only intelligent understanding of the divine power that is wholly good and altogether satisfying can give us the discernment and the natural strength to deal with all the claims of Egypt.

And so Moses is forced into the land of Midian and again we see womanhood taking its place in this unfoldment. The priest of Midian, Jethro, had seven daughters, and the text says that “Moses was content to dwell with the man.” He married one of his daughters and became a shepherd to his father-in-law’s flock.

We are constantly meeting this symbol of “seven” representing the complete nature of God as illustrated in the seven days of creation. May not its entry into the story at this point signify that the “Moses” thought must understand the sevenfold nature of God and temper its obvious hot-headedness and impatience with something of the womanhood of God? And also become a shepherd, - learn to watch over and guard thought? All this equipment is necessary to tackle Egypt successfully, for it is not only a man-sized job but needs womanhood as well.

The Burning Bush

Then the call came. Moses was performing his job as a shepherd at “the backside of the desert” when it came. He saw a bush that burned with fire but was not consumed. God spoke to him out of the bush and told him that he was to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt.

The significance of the burning bush is great. In its immediate context it surely must have conveyed the fact that even though the children of Israel were in captivity and passing through the furnace of affliction, the wonderful developing spiritual idea they represented was still not consumed. There is always a remnant that never can be quashed.

In a wider context how stupendous is this fact! This bush that burned with *fire* but was not consumed, Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego unharmed in the fiery furnace, and the supreme demonstration of Jesus untouched by death and the grave, all indicate that spiritual identity is not *in* matter. It cannot be impaired by the heat and fury of mortal experience in its varied manifestations, no matter how the senses testify. To understand this fact in a degree is to experience the healing of sin and disease. To understand it more fully, as Jesus did, is to experience the overcoming of death.

Moses had to see that the spiritual identity of all creation is one with its divine Principle and therefore can never be interfered with by any mortal condition. This vision is necessary in order to face Pharaoh and his claim to power and so free the children of Israel.

The Revelation of the I AM

The great revelation that came from the midst of the burning bush was that of God as the I AM. When Moses begged to know the name of God, the nature of God, the answer was “I AM THAT I AM.” Some Bible commentaries translate this as meaning

"I am - always - that which I am- now, and always have been" which again gives the sense of the unfailing continuity and intact nature of spiritual being.

This name also implies that whatever and whoever can utter the phrase "I am" can only utter it as God's witness, for there is only the *one* I AM, the *one* Life or Being. In the presence of the consciousness of this one Being, anything contrary to it can only declare "I am not." All true being is the "I am" of the one I AM, even as in a subject such as mathematics all facts are the presence of mathematics itself. Could mistakes be personified, they could only declare of themselves, "I am *not* - in the science of mathematics." Only from the basis of having no place nor part with the eternal spiritual idea, with God or good and His image and likeness, can mortality with its beliefs of sin, disease, and limitation of every kind be dealt with.

The Three Signs

After this revelation of the I AM Moses raises two objections to his mission, namely, the disbelief of the people and his own lack of eloquence.

First he is *given* three signs whereby to meet the people's disbelief of his divine authority. In essence they are the same three signs that Jesus gave. The Master dealt with sin, he dealt with disease, and he dealt with death. At this point, though, there is no record that Moses used any more than the first sign, - dealing with sin.

At the burning bush this was portrayed by God commanding Moses to throw down his rod, and as he did so it immediately became a serpent. Moses fled from before it, but was given the divine command to take it by the tail. As he tackled the serpent, it once more became a rod in his hand. The rod is a symbol of divine power. When we loose our hold on divine power and let it fall to the ground in our thought, we are terrified by what we see of evil. But does not this symbol indicate that evil has no entity of its own? It is just a vacuum and the exact counterfeit of divine power. Tackle this counterfeit, handle it firmly by reversing it, and the serpent disappears, leaving us only conscious of wielding the rod of God.

This is, of course, a very typical illustration of Moses' mission. He had to tackle the mortal picture as represented by Egypt, but he had to tackle it as the exact counterfeit of the one and only power, as we shall see. The whole basis of his work was that of the onliness of the spiritual, its self-existence and self-completeness, the one I AM.

The second sign given to Moses at the burning bush was of the healing of disease. He was told by God to put his hand into his bosom, and when he drew it out, it was leprous. He was bidden to repeat the action and his hand came out healed. The heart was often referred to as the bosom and was thought of as the centre of all real motives and deep affections. May not this sign indicate that disease has no power nor entity of itself? It is only an outward phenomenon of an inward conviction, a conviction from the depths of the heart. Jesus' words come so aptly to mind here: "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."

The third and last sign given to Moses was to take of the water of the river and pour it upon the dry land, where it would become blood. Presumably the river referred to was the Nile, which, to the Egyptians, represented the great creative source. But it was the river of Egypt and therefore had a fleshly import to the Bible writers. Its waters implied a strong belief in material life. Nothing grows on land where water has turned to blood. Moses was to uncover the fact that gross materialism can only mean finiteness and eventual death.

This third sign, in its true and positive meaning, was supremely demonstrated by Jesus. He took of the water of life in Spirit, not in matter, and this stream of pure, living water coursed so abundantly in his consciousness that it overflowed to give life all around him. He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Also, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

And so these three signs were convincing proofs of the reality of the spiritual and its power to overcome sin, disease, and death.

Spiritual Teaching

But Moses' other objection had still to be met - his lack of eloquence. God says that he will be with him and teach him what to say, but nevertheless he is given Aaron as a spokesman. These two work together, Moses standing for the spiritual initiative and Aaron for the letter through which that spirit is temporarily conveyed. The name "Aaron" means teaching and he figures in the story as expressing the necessity of having some form of teaching in order to awaken man intelligently to his spiritual birthright. Aaron, therefore, is quite prominent at the beginning of Moses' mission, but passes out of the picture as the children of Israel journey through the wilderness and are ready to take up the strain themselves. The letter passes away, and the spirit takes form in individual inspiration.

Moses' Preparation Universal

Moses is now equipped to tackle Egypt. His preparation is type and symbol of the preparation that is always necessary for dealing with the basic beliefs of mortal existence.

First, the spiritual idea must be preserved through the active qualities of true motherhood and womanhood. As it grows and sees the necessity of tackling Egypt and all it stands for, it will have to put Egypt aside for a while whilst culturing a spiritual understanding of God and learning to watch and guard thought. Then it is ready to see the counterfeit nature of evil and how all the fires of hell can never destroy the fundamental identity of all creation. It is ready to accept and understand the one I AM and the power of that I AM to disprove scientifically the claims of sin, disease, and death, and intelligently meet the demand for spiritual education.

To decode this story as the handling of the problem of evil throughout all time will bring to anyone a tremendous sense of the certainty and power of spiritual fact.