



Moses to FokusIsrael.ch: “In times of existential threat, fighting is a collective duty.”

Summary:

- Moses lived in the 13th and 14th century BC and was the greatest leader of the Jewish people.
- Growing up at Pharaoh’s court, “Moshe Rabbeinu – Moses, our teacher”, as Moses is reverently called in Judaism, led the Jews from slavery to freedom.
- With the Torah (the “five books of Moses”), Moses wrote the central foundation of the Old Testament.
- As a prophet, Moses is also an important figure in Christianity and Islam.
- FokusIsrael.ch used AI to ask Moses about the Jewish people, his leadership experiences, his negotiations with Pharaoh, the divide between secular and devout Jews in Israel today, the importance of the Torah in modern times and about those people who do not believe in God.

Moses, how was the experience of leading the Jewish people, about whom you yourself said that they are “a stiff-necked people”?

Moses: It was the biggest challenge of my life, but also the most fulfilling. These people were passionate, stubborn and full of fire – exactly what “stiff-necked” means. They grumbled, doubted and sometimes even rebelled against me. But I have learned that this stubbornness is also their strength. It makes them a people who stand up for their ideals.

What can you teach us about leadership based on your experience?

Moses: Leadership begins with humility and ends with service. I wasn’t the type who wanted power – I even tried to turn down the job! The most important thing I learned: Don’t look at yourself, look at the mission and the people. Listen, even if



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they grumble.

You say that leaders must be humble. The Torah describes you as “the most humble person on earth”. How did you become that?

Moses: It didn't happen overnight. The closer I got to God, the more I realized how infinitely great He is and how small I am. I lived as a prince in Pharaoh's palace in Egypt, then as a simple shepherd in Midian. These contrasts have taught me that everything comes from God. Humility is not self-abasement, but the honest realization: I am only a tool. The more I saw God's greatness, the less room there was for my own ego. This is the way - not through self-help books, but through real closeness to God.

You negotiated hard with Pharaoh to release the people. What were your negotiating tactics?

Moses: Negotiating is not a poker game in which you pull the wool over the other person's eyes. I came with a clear demand: “Let my people go!”. Because that was God's mission. I was persistent, did not compromise on the core issues, but at the same time showed compassion.

But that didn't work. Pharaoh only let you go after God had struck the Egyptians with ten severe plagues.

Moses: Yes, Pharaoh only let us go after the ten plagues came. But I went to Pharaoh ten times and each time I said: “Thus says the Lord: Let my people go!” I even told him what was going to happen before each plague came. This was not a surprise attack, this was a clear, repeated warning with a chance to rethink. Pharaoh had every opportunity to say “yes” of his own free will. He decided against it every time - out of pride, out of greed for power, out of hard-heartedness.

What do we learn from this for today? Sometimes just talking is not enough when the other side refuses to do basic justice. Then strength and consequences are needed. But violence or pressure must never be the first resort and never come from revenge or ego. They must be the last resort and morally justified when all else has failed and it is a matter of liberation from injustice.

The state of Israel has existed since 1948. If you were to lead it as Prime Minister: What would be your three most important principles?



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Moses: Firstly, justice! That would be my highest principle. Not just for Jews, but for everyone who lives in the country. Without real justice, everything falls apart. Secondly: Unity! At Sinai we all stood together – secular, religious, young, old, from all tribes. That was our strongest moment. I would do anything for us to see ourselves as a people who share responsibility. Thirdly, security based on moral strength. Protecting the country is sacred. But defense must never degenerate into cruelty or arrogance.

You speak of unity. In Israel, however, there is a great divide between secular and devout Jews. What would you do about it?

Moses: I would bring both sides to the table – not just to talk, but to learn and act together. The Torah was not only given to the pious, but to the whole people. Every Jew, no matter how he lives, is part of the covenant. My prescription would be to learn mutual respect. The secular should discover the depth of the Torah. The pious should recognize the beauty and sacrifices of secular Jews, who have often lost their lives in wars. This requires joint projects and education in schools and in the army. Division never ends well. Everyone must ask themselves: “How can I build bridges?”

The biggest point of contention between secular and devout Jews is military service: the ultra-religious do not want to do military service. Is that all right?

Moses: The Torah is clear: when the people are in danger, everyone must do their part. The Levites served in the temple, but they did not say “We pray, you fight”. In times of existential threat, fighting was always a collective duty. Today, with enemies who want to destroy Israel, the same applies: “Pikuach nefesh – to save lives” outweighs almost everything. Those who are physically and mentally healthy should serve. Torah learning is holy, but it is no substitute for concrete defense when the house is on fire.

You talk a lot about the Torah. What significance does it still have for us today in 2026?

Moses: Good question! You’re probably thinking: That’s an ancient book from the desert, what good will it do in 2026? Today we have artificial intelligence, spaceships, social media and the climate crisis. Here are a few concrete things that show you that the Torah is still relevant today:

- You are not God. In a world where everyone makes their own “I”



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into a god – on Instagram, in their career, in their own opinion – the Torah reminds you: humility is the beginning of everything.

Without it, you will either become a tyrant or an eternal victim of your own whims.

- Freedom needs boundaries. We got out of slavery in Egypt – but real freedom only came when we were given the Ten Commandments. Today we think: no rules = freedom. The Torah says the opposite: without moral boundaries, you become a slave again – to algorithms, to addictions, to your own ego.
- Every person is infinitely valuable because everyone is created in the image of God. This applies to the refugee, the old person in the nursing home, the dissenter on Twitter and even your annoying colleague at work. In a time when people are quickly “canceled” or seen as collateral damage, this way of thinking is revolutionary.
- Work and rest belong together. Six days you shall work, on the seventh you shall rest. The Torah did not invent the Shabbat commandment because God was tired, but because we need it. Today, when everything runs 24/7, Shabbat is the most radical answer to burnout and constant availability.
- Justice and mercy must go together. Pursue justice, but also love your neighbor as yourself. The Torah teaches us to be neither naive nor cynical. Neither “everything is permitted” nor “everyone is my enemy”.
- Technology is great, but don’t serve it. We didn’t have



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smartphones in the desert, but we did have the golden calf. People worshipped their own technology (the golden calf) and thought it would save them. This is exactly what is happening today with AI, algorithms and gadgets. The Torah says: use technology, but never confuse it with what really matters: the relationship with God and with other people.

The Torah is therefore something like a navigation device for the human soul. The world changes, the apps change, the problems look different – but the basic questions remain the same: Who am I? What do I live for? How do I treat others? How do I stay free?

Many people today no longer believe in God. They say: There is no proof of his existence. What do you say to them?

Moshe Rabbeinu: I understand these people very well, I was once skeptical myself. And there really is no mathematical proof for God that you can present like $2+2=4$. But what I can say to these people from my own experience: Look at the world! The universe is incredibly finely tuned. The laws of physics, the origin of life, the incredible complexity of even a single cell. None of this looks like a huge coincidence to me.

Or take the story of the people of Israel. A small, enslaved tribe is liberated from the most powerful nation of the time, experiences 3300 years of persecution, expulsion and the Holocaust – and is still there. Statistically, that is extremely unlikely. For me, this is living proof that there is a force at work that is greater than pure human willpower.

Or think about our conscience. Why do almost all people have a sense of what is right and what is wrong – even if they don't always act accordingly? The Torah says: “Because you are created in the image of God.” This inner something is not an evolutionary coincidence, it is a spark from Him.

In the end, it's not about proving God, like proving a physical law. It's about whether you are willing to admit the possibility that he exists – and then seek a relationship. That's why I say to the doubters today: “Be honest in your doubts, but



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also be honestly curious: try it out.” And if someone tells me “I can’t believe”, then I reply: “Okay, but at least be a good person.”

Note: This interview was conducted with the help of the AI assistant Grok. It is based on the Torah (Five Books of Moses) and other classical Jewish sources. In the coming weeks, we will be conducting AI-assisted interviews with other personalities from different areas of life – politics, religion, science, culture – who were important for Judaism and Israel, in order to bring them and their ideas closer to today’s audience. The [The first such interview took place with Theodor Herzl](#) the founder of modern Zionism, [the second with Chaim Weizmann](#) Israel’s first president, the third with [David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel](#) the fourth with Israel’s only female prime minister to date [Prime Minister, Golda Meir](#) and the fifth with [Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president](#) who traveled to Jerusalem in 1977 to make peace with Israel.