

Essays on Moses from Buenos Aires

Essays on Moses from Buenos Aires:

*Moses in Three Traditions
and in Literature*

Edited by

John Tracy Greene

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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For Misha and for Kamryn who says she misses saying
Shabbat Shalom to her telephone friend Mr. Caspi

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ABBREVIATIONS

AS	Arabic for <i>alaika salaam</i> : peace be upon him
AV	<i>Authorized Version</i> (of the <i>Bible</i>)
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era (Sometimes written as B.C.)
CCAR	<i>Journal of the Reformed Jewish Quarterly</i>
C.E.	The Common Era (Sometimes written as A.D.)
CD	<i>Damascus Covenant</i>
HDR	<i>Harvard Dissertations in Religion</i>
JPS	<i>Jewish Publication Society</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
KJV	<i>Kings James Version of the Bible</i>
LAB	<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i> (Also known as <i>Pseudo Philo</i>)
LXX	<i>The Standard Greek-Language version of the Hebrew Bible</i>
M/M	<i>Moses/Musa</i>
MT	<i>Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible</i>
MW	<i>Moslem World</i>
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version Bible</i>
NT	<i>New Testament</i>
OJT	<i>On the Job Training</i>
OT	<i>Old Testament</i>
SP	<i>Samaritan Pentateuch</i>
SSN	<i>Studia Semitica Neerlandica</i>
Tanach	The 24 Books of the <i>Jewish Scriptures</i>
U.C.	University of California
YHWH	<i>The traditional rendering of the name of the deity of Israel</i>
Y.P.	Yitzhak Peleg

PROLEGOMENON

JOHN TRACY GREENE

A Basic Story

Moses-the-figure is all over the *Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament*. He is an enigma. While reading accounts about him, the reader gets the impression, regardless of how brief, that she grasps him and that he is credible. An instant later, he seems to have morphed into either a super human or an incredible, literary character. We, the readers, follow him on his journeys only to fail to understand their purposes. It is not quite clear why he ends up in Midian (he was quite familiar with Nubia, as well) and stays there and raises a family before leaving them to return to Egypt as the spokesperson for a deity he came to know there; a deity he will later tell his followers was the deity of their ancestors. How they forgot this deity we are not told; they just forgot him over 400 years of sojourning in Egypt in various capacities.

Moses, an (originally) Egyptian name, is connected with several Egyptian pharaohs, and means “child or son of the Nile”; we note, for instance, Pharaohs Tutmoses (I-III), Ahmose, and Ramses (I-III). Being named son-of-the-Nile was a most high honor as a throne name. This linguistic link binds Moses’ early life to a royal, Egyptian household and upbringing. In that sense and connection, his name is appropriate as a foundling drawn from the Nile (“Water Baby”) by a royal princess who raised him as her son and accorded him all rights and privileges as the son of royalty.¹ Of course, the reader suspends belief and does not pursue why it is that the pharaoh did not know that his daughter had a son, or was ever pregnant (*Exodus* 2:5 ff.).

Woven throughout the Moses Saga, for we do not take the story as we have it literally, is the idea of chosenness and election by a deity, an ancestral deity who is ready to redeem his long lost people after centuries of noncommunication. Although the story intimates that there is a special relationship with this deity who communicates through Moses to the

special non-Egyptian sojourners, the understanding the reader has is that numerous people called upon deities and understood their relationship as special, also. In fact, many Egyptian citizens considered their pharaoh a deity. Having stated this, one way of reading the biblical account of the sparring between the pharaoh and Moses is as a sparring between two deities, one by proxy.

We do not challenge how Moses the husband, son-in-law, and father spent his sojourn in the Land of Midian, why he remained as long as he did, nor why he abandoned that family relationship temporarily, and returned to Egypt so many years later (*Exodus* 2: 15b [but see also *Exodus* 4: 18-20]). He returned, according to the story, to get his deity's people out of Egypt. This sets the stage for the battle royal between two deities: the god of Moses and the pharaoh! Oppression appears to have been the main weapon of both deities, one by the lash, and the other by the discomfitures of nature. Under the guidance of this deity, the Moses host left Egypt and sojourned for quite some time in the wilderness between Nilotic Egypt and the Land of the Canaanites. Herein, the scholar David Cohen attempts to make sense of this particular, interstitial period of the sojourn of the Exodusees in a work entitled "An Encounter with *midbar* as Liminal Space and the Enigma of Mosaic Leadership." References point to this non-Egyptian land as belonging to the Midianites, with whom Moses is related by marriage, and the Amalekites, with whom he will engage in hostilities.

One fact is certain, Moses as a leader was heavy-handed. Anyone who crossed him usually died! One need only read the accounts of his differences with Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On the son of Peleth to see how deadly Moses could be (Caspi & Greene 2012).

During the account's unfolding, the Moses host spends an inordinate amount of time reminiscing about how good they had it in Egypt and wished that they were there at that very moment (*Exodus* 4:16). It forces the reader to wonder why they departed with Moses to begin with. Their quintessential demonstration of their desire to return to their Egyptian lifestyle was their fashioning of the so-called, Golden Calf, which would not have been a calf at all, but a full-blown representation of the famous, Egyptian cow deity, Hathor (whom they probably worshipped in Egypt). She was very popular as a deity who promoted fertility, and was a protectress (She was often depicted in both cow and human form with horns, a cosmic symbol between them, and a child of suckling age). Some would view this as wise practice rather than anti-Moses activity (since he

was reportedly absent for protracted periods of time either receiving carved tablets from the deity [*Exodus* 20: 2-17], the deity carving tablets of laws [*Exodus* 34:1-28], and/or carving a third set with expanded laws).

One conclusion some readers can draw from the Moses Saga is that it is a story that studies the profound relationship between a deity and a people who are in covenant with that deity. In that sense, it is a serious study of the usefulness of a deity and advantages of such a covenant relationship for human partners. It asks serious questions about law and its limitations. But on a deeper level, it asks just how far the human group can go before the deity partner just gives up on them. The remainder of the *Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament* explores this basic question over and over. Even the hero of the Saga is deterred from achieving the prize of being allowed to cross over into the Land of Promise and Goal. There is a serious morality play afoot here!

Moses, in the midst of all of his vicissitudes, nevertheless manages to provide a bare-bones, written constitution tailored to a small group of people--just to keep them from tearing each other apart. It is meant for just them and no one else. Such laws were wide-spread, and their existence was well-known.² However, the average person had not read and digested them any more than moderns have read and digested the *Magna Carta*, or the Constitution of the United States. Herein, we notice a common flaw concerning laws that probably evaded even Moses. As soon as a law is written down (ancient or modern) it becomes fossilized. It becomes static. However, human life is dynamic; what applied to yesterday must be changed in light of the dynamic activity called human life today. There is always this tension between the written law and the dynamism of human, constantly-evolving life. All written law is useless; all written law is useful but inadequate! Amendments were always necessary. This is certainly one constant challenge a Moses would have faced.

In addition to law (BOOK) giver, Moses is depicted as organizing a religious attitude and veneration of the deity on whose behalf he labored. Probably understanding this aspect of his responsibility to lead a people, he connected them to one of their ancestors and a covenant he had made with some of them. We write "some of them" because the host following Moses out of Egypt was described as an "*assaf suf*": a mixed multitude. How's that for the ultimate ambiguity? If one wants to promote and insist on the words "Israelite" or "Jews" here at this point, *caveat emptor*! Nevertheless, religion belongs here, for its best definition is that provided by the Sociologist Peter Berger: "Religions are world-building and world-

maintaining systems.”³ This still works for me and does no one an injustice, including Moses. With a constitution in place, a leader needs to organize the people around an idea that gives them purpose. At this point, having mentioned a god of the ancestor Abraham with the odd name *I Am, I Exist*, you don’t want to change that now. What is necessary is to stand in relationship and venerate the deity according to a series of activities of veneration that were not necessarily Egyptian. Since they were (sometimes) a mobile people and sometimes a settled people, their deity had to reflect both statuses of the people. The so-called Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle seemed to satisfy both practical needs.⁴ Concurrent with this, leaders (religious, political and military) and followers had to be designated. This is always a bone of contention, and some would most certainly see these three leadership categories differently. Thus, the rebellion of Korah and various associates mentioned above.⁵ This was Moses functioning as high(est) priest designating his subordinates (within his [Hebrew] family).

Moses, by his leadership as covenant mediator, becomes associated (activity-wise) with prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He is, thus, identified as the forerunner of these and other prophets, especially Samuel.

Thus, Moses so far fills the shoes of a lawgiver (*Exodus* 20:17; *Deuteronomy* 5:21; *Exodus* 20: 8-11; *Deuteronomy* 5:12-15; *Exodus* 34:21), a (n) *Ueberpriest* (*Exodus* 24-27), somewhere giving orders to construct an arc in which special objects were to be kept), and a prophet (*Exodus* 34: 29-35). What else may we add to his impressive and growing resume? Military commander and strategist come readily to mind. While the specifics of Moses’ strategy often elude us, it appears that Canaan was his destination to reconnect with ethnic roots. When a direct route Plan A was impossible, command responsibility dictated a Plan B that took his *assaf suf* through the Trans Jordan to a point opposite Jericho. Herein, John T. Greene’s “Moses: A Man for all Seasons” discusses this Moses. It is there that his host, now under the generalship of Joshua, crossed into Canaan proper, and encamped at Gilgal. Moses dropped out of the picture some time before this on Mt. Nebo (*Deuteronomy* 34: 1-8).

A Closer Look

The above overview introduces the reader to the basic Moses Saga. But there is much more to be sought in this story. The critical reader notices that many of the names mentioned in the account are, indeed, Egyptian

names and not Hebrew/Canaanite names.⁶ Moses is also mentioned as having a wife (Zipporah=Birdie) while he sojourned in Midian with a father-in-law named either Jethro, Hobab, or Reuel, with Jethro being called a priest of Midian (*Exodus* 2:15b-3:1). Here, we find one possible source of Moses' knowledge of priestly functions and procedures. Moses is said to have had an Ethiopian female friend or wife, also (*Numbers* 1). The roles of his mother, Jocheb(v)ed, sister, Miriam, and his foster mother, the daughter of the pharaoh, round out females who must have had tremendous influence on the developing Prince Moses as he grew to manhood.

Some of these women, his mother and sister, for instance, he only discovered later as an adult when his true identity and ethnic affiliation were also discovered. Here is the incredible story of a Nile foundling raised as a prince in the pharaonic court who discovers his true identity, is dismissed from that court by the succeeding pharaoh after the death of the previous pharaoh, becomes adversary to that new pharaoh on behalf of his ethnic people, and at the insistence of his god, demands that they be released from Egyptian detention after some 400 years to craft their own destiny. At first, it seems, the new pharaoh consents to the Moses request after inducements from several plagues, but then recants after they had left Egypt. He moved to have them returned by force. They do not return and the pharaoh and his pursuing army experienced deadly setbacks. Thus, the host following Moses sojourn for some time in the wilderness before moving on to an area within the Land of Canaan. Self-identity, acceptance of ethnicity, leader- and generalship, and a seemingly non strategy for sojourn in the wilderness are the foci of this section of the story.

During the first presentation in the 2015 Seminar in Biblical Characters in the Three Traditions at the Pontificio Catolico Universidad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Robert Feather, author of the new book *Where Moses Stood*,⁷ attempted to account for a sojourn in the wilderness and a significant period of stay at a locus in the Sinai region of Timna. Feather's thesis (included in this volume) is that the Moses host (which he calls the Exodusees) had as its destination from the beginning a specific location (Timna) where former, Egyptian copper mines had been in operation. These Egyptians had worshipped the cow goddess Hathor—protector of children and workers—and physical evidence in the form of a defaced figure on a stone column was discovered.

Apparently later, according to Feather, Midianite miners occupied the site the Egyptians had abandoned, continued to exploit the site's copper

reserves, and made it a functioning enterprise. Because of Moses' Midianite, family connections, he knew about the location of this site, and took his followers directly there, not on a mindless, wandering in nowhere land.

While the former Egyptian miners had expressed their religious sensibilities in the form of Hathor worship and veneration, the Midianite miners venerated their deity by constructing a sanctuary near the overhang of a natural, raised structure within which may have been a niche within which may have been contained an icon that represented the Midianite deity venerated by those laborers.

What we notice in both instances is that Egyptians and Midianites understood their deity (ies) as mobile and were not restricted by geographical boundaries and loci. This also makes the god of the Moses host be presented credibly as a mobile deity who accompanied his people/worshippers, also on their trip to this site and settled with them there when they were in residence. What Feather deigns to explore is whether the Moses host engaged in the copper mining business while having joined Midianite miners at Timna. He just does not consider how they made their livelihood during their supposed tenure there. He focuses more on—and this I find important also—the religious structure(s) discovered there.

This question of the number and constitution of the Moses host is raised, however, by contributing Seminar presenter, J. Harold Ellens of the University of Michigan in the U.S. In his essay, "Moses and Monotheism This Morning," Ellens asks what evidence that such a (suspiciously) large number of evacuees under Mosaic leadership would have been able to survive, even at a locus such as Timna. He observes that there is little to no apparent evidence as to where they buried their dead, where they accomplished all of the challenges of a large society living in one specific area for a protracted period of time. Here, Ellens challenges Feather's thesis on the basis of basic logistics.

Feather defends his thesis—on the basis of the results by researches from the work of Beno Rothenberg⁸ and Nelson Glueck⁹—that the religious (permanent) structure at Timna, now abandoned, was taken over by the Moses host, at which new, religious appurtenances were introduced and installed in a phase I. Feather intimates two subsequent developments: Moses host, consecrated priests affected certain alterations to the physical plant and its appurtenances, as well as made significant alterations to it being altered as a mobile shrine when this community decided to become

mobile—presumably in the direction of the lands east of the Jordan River and the Land of Canaan. The failure of the Timna mines could have been a causative agent for moving on. It is, however, a novel thought that the Moses host for a time made its living as copper miners. Here, at least, is an alternative answer to manna and quail being the only food staples, and these from heaven.

When this host realized that the mines had played out and decided to move on, (or had been challenged by another, more powerful group of entrepreneurs from either Egypt or Midian—or even Amalek!--worship at the appropriated, Midianite/Moses host shrine at Timna was transferred to a mobile shrine or tabernacle, mobile but sharing some of the same characteristics as the Timna shrine, that was used until other temporary shrines or locales were appropriated for their purposes. Feather *et al.* provide a realistic schedule for the Moses host having left Egypt and before being poised to cross the Jordan River from the east into the Land of the Canaanites proper. By now we have concluded the story of Moses who was not allowed to have these across-the-Jordan experiences beginning at Gilgal. Obviously, the writer/editor of this portion of our final story was less impressed than earlier contributors to the Saga who viewed and refracted Moses through a more positive prism.

Literature that Works for a Living

One of my former professors drilled into me that “All literature works for a living, Mr. Greene”. “No writer sits down to write because she has nothing better to do, or out of the goodness of their heart.” Accordingly, I ask the question of *Shemot* (*Exodus*) as to what it does for a living. Thus, I discover that *Shemot* is a work with many jobs, and is the result of a master storyteller or tellers, and editor(s). For example:

- Genealogies (*Exodus* 1: 1-7) function to give the impression of authentic, chronological history: they respond to challenges to authenticity and true identity. They prove nothing, but nevertheless have the ability to impress the uncritical reader who accepts the uncritical as fact.¹⁰
- *Genesis* through *Deuteronomy* are presented (much later on) as five related accounts by Moses of a specific period in the history of Israel. This means that Israel’s pedigree is seriously challenged constantly: they are considered social and cultural bastards by their would-be detractors.

- A work that begins with so many names drops the ball when it comes to the name of the pharaoh who is cast as the opponent of Moses: he is presented consistently as having no personal name. Likewise, the Egyptian Moses kills is also nameless. Moreover, Moses' foster mother who rescues him from the River is also nameless, whereas Moses' mother, sister, and the Hebrew midwives have names. I call all of this to the reader's attention to demonstrate how stories may be told. The named characters carry the storyline.¹¹
- Moses' Midianite wife has a name (Zipporah), whereas the obviously significant, Ethiopian "partner" remains nameless (*Numbers* 12:12).
- The *Book of Exodus* in the *Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament* is entitled "*And these are the names* (of the sons of Israel who went into Egypt with Jacob . . ." (*Exodus* 1: 1-7) or *Shemot*. Focusing on names, one learns that Moses, Miriam, Aaron and others are, indeed, Egyptian and not Semitic names. This, indeed, provides a certain realism and authenticity to the story that begins with a list of Israelite names.
- The frequent use of the designation Israel in reference to the Moses host is premature. Granted, by the time of the Mernepthah Stele, that pharaoh (Note that he is named) referred to an Israel having, if not been annihilated, been defeated. However, this Israel has not been identified to the satisfaction of Egyptologists or historians of the ancient Middle East. Anyway, it is best to analyze each occurrence of this word wherever it appears.
- Whatever Israel means, it certainly existed as a political entity associated with ideas of a twelve tribal confederation when the Moses Saga was crafted in one of its iterations. Some scholars refer to this organization as an amphyciony. An amphycyonic society has in common a certain deity or deities who is/are served by a central priesthood at a specific, central shrine. Each group that comprises the amphyciony serves logistically to support the central priesthood with its necessary provisions. The ideal number of tribal or clan members is twelve (because of the months of the year), but this is by no means necessary. The ideal goal was mutual protection and advancement of the society's goals.¹²
- That with which we are dealing here is crafted and revisionist views by later writers/editors presented in a history format. The "bookends" are (1) foundling and (2) grave not found. Sandwiched between the two are a host of issues that exercised and agitated

priestly leaders, writers, and editors at a much later time. This literature attempts to anchor an issue of Who is the legitimate priesthood (therefore leaders of the community)? The Korah rebellion episode addresses in a most adroit way this issue, but during the post-exilic period.

- Every people seek(s) a classical period in its historically-viewed evolution, a period wherein are contained the roots that produced their developmental trajectory up to the time of the latest historian writing about it. Oftentimes, these accounts become rhetorical devices to justify a specific group's claim(s) for hegemony. The critical reader seeks the period in which this argument would have been made. We here address the twin issues of creating "history" and its "revision."
- An important segment of the exodus account deals with "law."¹³ If Moses was able to carry them on two tablets, there were not many that he deemed necessary for his group. One should even consider that there were (practically) even less than ten. The Sabbath was not an observed holiday/practice among the Moses host, and certainly the dictum about having other gods to rival Moses' deity would have been severely challenged. These two, formulated at a much later date, would have contributed nothing to the goal of an 'historical' Moses.
- What we have essentially is a credible, kernel story about a group (rather small I would argue) of former, sojourners (as willing or unwilling laborers, landed immigrants who had overstayed their welcome or usefulness) and a new, Egyptian policy toward immigration (simply read the U.S. press headlines!) that motivated a group under the leadership of a Moses to simply seek to leave Egypt and strike out on their own in a region on which Egypt no longer focused. Robert Feather's work provides one idea of how they spent their time at Timna. In this kernel, we read of a success story of how a basic, social unit attempting (for some) something of ancestral land repatriation went about that. However, even then, their ancestors may not have been the aboriginal occupants of that region. The modern real estate dictum still rules supreme: location, location, location. In the United States, we have a similar kernel story when we celebrate Thanksgiving Day and intone the basic story of the Pilgrims. We now know that Original-American and Immigrant-American relations were not quite that cozy (and we here assign no more blame to one side or/than to the other for the obvious breakdown in relations). The point is that the story has

taken on a life of its own and has been transformed by the process of revisionist history. We take a group of “pilgrims” and make from them a fantastic and stirring story (or saga) that becomes early U.S. history inculcated in all of our children. At the center of this story, too, is a written body of laws.

Thus, while Moses’ name is invoked in much of the *HS/OT* literature following *Deuteronomy*, he generally serves the purpose of having been a memory and touchstone for God having communicated with Israel at some point. No new information concerning his time is offered.

The Repository of Law(s)

We turn our attention to the repository of laws that constitute the *Book of Leviticus*. Obviously, the *midbar*=wilderness (or even for a protracted stay at Timna) did not provide the opportunity to craft the body of laws contained in *Leviticus*. The *Basic Moses Story*, however, did provide the jurist(s) who crafted *Leviticus* an opportunity to legitimize their laws and provide, for them, a credible *locus* for their promulgation. It is actually quite ingenious when you think about it.

Leviticus in essence, as presently crafted, is a technical manual for one who would be a priest at a certain time in the development of Hebrew and Jewish forensics. Again, Harold Ellens, on the one hand, herein compares such laws—developed further and codified by the later rabbis—with an attempt to impose behavior on a society from without; his associating then in the main with what was the mosaic covenant, and with which he associated socio-psychologically with Skinnerian Psychology. On the other hand, Ellens contrasts this with Rogerian Psychology and identifies it with the spirit of the relationship between the Patriarch Abraham and his deity: a relationship based on a forgiving deity who desires his adherent(s) to relate with him from the heart, so to speak. Ellens argues that Moses was a Skinnerian, while Jesus was a Rogerian. The Apostle Paul apparently threw in his lot with Ellens (and *vice-versa*).¹⁴

The Post-Exilic Moses

Contrary to the masterful opus written by Morton Smith (*Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*, (N.Y.: Colombia University Press, 1971)) wherein Smith identifies and follows so many

strands of argument, and attempts to weave them into a credible, literary fabric, “Moses” appeared to him to be a post-exilic construct and fantasy.

Once, one of my professors of German Language and Literature (my major, undergraduate discipline [the same one quoted above]) discussed a controversy concerning whether William Shakespeare wrote the works attributed to him (and also Goethe’s, Schelling’s, and Walther Von Der Vogelweide’s works). He suggested retiring for the day and reassembling on the morrow to discuss this controversy further. We agreed. The next day in class (“Deutsche Literature von 800-1750”) he stood before us, placed his hands in his suit pants pockets and proclaimed (Hear this in a German accent.): “Boys and girls, I have concluded after much consideration, that the person thought to have written all of the controversial works attributed to Shakespeare was not Shakespeare! It was another fellow named Shakespeare!” In like manner, then, it wasn’t Moses who authored the *Five Books of Moses*, but another fellow named Moses. This other Moses took an earlier tradition or series of traditions and wove them together during the post-exilic period to tell a story relevant for that later time.

Nevertheless, the reader notices several objects that appear—either overtly or covertly—in the literature between the period of the judges and Nebuchadrezzar’s sacking of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.E. At some point, some kind of law must have been in force for the Prophet Nathan to have called King David to task concerning the affair with Bathseva. An outline of this ethical/legal document is, however, unrecoverable—as are, archaeologically-speaking, the kingdoms of David and Solomon. Yet, we are informed that David went to great lengths to bring some kind of cultic object associated with the Hebrew ancestors (that had been believed to have been captured by the Philistines [2 *Samuel* 6]). Here, then, we reconnect with the cultic object known as the ark. When it is supposedly retrieved, it reflects marvelous, deadly powers for those who are not consecrated properly to handle and position it (2 *Samuel* 6:6-8).

With the ark, we arrive at a Y=fork in the road of scholarship: one branch takes the biblical descriptions of the ark at face value and relates its morphology and function as Egyptian-inspired. The other, studies the Lemba People of South Africa, and relates the sacred ark with a huge drum, the *Ngoma Lungundu* (*The Drum That Thunders*) (*Online*15), whose “voice” is equated with the voice of deity. The functions of either box/chest or drum are similarly described except that the drum contains no objects, but that both precede a warring army into battle, and each is

designed to set the adversary into disarray through the “voice” emanating from the drum when played by the priests who lead the military procession. One tradition is definitely Egyptian, for such a similar “box” was discovered by the archaeologist Howard Carter when he excavated the tomb of the young Pharaoh Tutankhamun. Furthermore, such chests have been associated with even earlier pharaohs and significant court officials. In essence, we do not know what the appearance of the ark or arks was/were, but we do know that they were not rare among the property of the Egyptian wealthy: and Moses was reputed to have been a prince.¹⁶

The Moses of the *New Testament*

“Moses” appears in the *New Testament* in twelve of its twenty-six works. The most obvious is how Jesus is cast as a (second) Moses in *Matthew’s Gospel*. Additionally, he is referenced in *Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation*. Herein, Gregory Jenks approaches Moses from his having been considered a prophet and that a prophet like him would appear in later Israel, and within the Christian tradition. We shall read herein, however, that John Kaltner takes a totally different approach to the theme of “a prophet like Moses,” for his view is comparative between the biblical Moses and the Musa of the *Qur’an*.

But the Moses character serves specific purposes, as well. Beginning in *Mark*, and adopted by *Matthew*, having ascended a given “mountain,” Jesus encountered Moses and Elijah. Immediately, a red flag goes up, and the reader asks what message is intended to be communicated by this scene? Both Moses and Elijah are depicted as having ascended and descended the “Mountain of the Commandments and Encounter.” Moses was called by Yahweh to ascend this mountain on several occasions. Elijah, being pursued for his life by Queen Jezebel, ascended the mountain seeking Yahweh’s protection. It is apparent, then, that a sacred mountain was necessary for having a supreme encounter with Yahweh, during which that person received the god’s *imprimatur*.

However, the central hero of the *New Testament* did not promote Mosaic Law as the most up to date version of God’s attitude toward his creatures. Stated differently, God’s attitude through Jesus, especially as depicted in the *Fourth Gospel*, was more in tune with His promise to Abraham than what the law vouchsafed to Moses, and those who cultivated his law and followed it assiduously. Again, for this view see Ellens referenced above. Nevertheless, Jenks reminds us of the presence of

a more conciliatory view of the relationship between Moses and Jesus in *Revelation* at 15:3 and 4Q365. *Hebrews*, however, at 3:1-6, is unequivocal in stating the ultimate and superior position of Jesus over Moses.

Moses Beyond the Earliest Christians

Musa (Moses) in Islam

The kernel of Islam is surrounded and guided by two terms: *nebi* and *rasul*. Whatever Islam is fueled by, the *nebiyyah* (prophecy) and *rasuliyyyah* (messengership) are at its core. A *rasul* is understood to deliver a revealed text, whereas a *nabi* delivers a communication verbally; Moses is understood to be at the point of confluence for both. In the *Qur'an*, therefore, Musa is mentioned more times (502) than Muhammad because he was considered both; but he was the arch prophet. This core revolves around the issue of communication from the “other world” and confidence that it is authentic. The Islamic view is that there is no question of its authenticity, for it was received by the unique *rasul*: Muhammad. Yet, *na'ebi Musa* is considered just as important where relevant in Islam.

Islam is born out of a “leap-frog” method of association (religious syncretism) practiced in the ancient Middle East (ancient Israelitism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam) within the trajectory of the “Abrahamic faiths” in the same way that farther eastward, Mahayana, Hinayana, Pure Land, Zen or Chan, and other forms of Buddhism developed. Many may want to compare this, rather, with the various divisions *within* Islam, rather than *without* Islam. Taking either approach, the various Buddhist developments are still identified as Buddhist in the same way that the three Middle Eastern faiths are referred to as the three, Abrahamic faiths. Concerning eventual and emerging Islam, it is said to be the “grand child” of Judaism and the “child” of (especially) Byzantine Christianity.

The Musa/Moses of Islam immediately recalls for the reader what Islam says about the Prophet Muhammad. This is not unexpected. Both maintained, for instance, the total submission to one deity. The *Qur'an* also describes several meetings between the Prophet and Musa in heaven that are traced to the practice of praying five times each day. It is a form of “entering heaven.”

While the stories of Moses and Musa find points of literary and traditional confluence, Musa's story is spread throughout several of the *Qur'an's suras* (chapters) in a way that does not seek to provide a

chronological account, as does the *torah*. Moreover, the *Qur'an* retails a similar, not identical, account of episodes in Moses' life as told in the *HB/OT*. Concerning the "basket baby/foundling" episode, the *Qur'anic* version has Pharaoh's wife/queen, Asiyah, find the child Musa. *Exodus* holds that the pharaoh's *daughter* was responsible for having Moses pulled from the bulrushes, and raising him to manhood as a prince of Egypt. The *Qur'an* holds that Asiyah and the Pharaoh raised him as their son, for they were childless.

In the *Qur'anic* exchanges between Musa and Pharaoh, the former is only concerned with the latter submitting to the will of 'Allah and releasing the Israelite "believers." Issues of challenges to Mosaic leadership, including the golden calf incident, play no role. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and On-the-son-of-Peleth suggests to the Islamic editors that Israel-of-the-*midbar*'s vicissitude's legitimizes being replaced by Islam's fidelity to 'Allah. Furthermore, the spineless attitude of the Moses host to engage the Canaanites (and possibly the Philistines, also!) lead to 'Allah's punishment of a forty year sojourn in the 'wilderness' (Please see *infra* the essay by David Cohen). Moreover, Moses and his brother, Aaron, are separated from their reticent host/followers and are considered blameless concerning offenses to 'Allah.

Finally, according to Islamic tradition, Musa is buried at Maqam el Nebi Musa in Jericho as opposed to somewhere (hidden) on Mount Nebo.

Critical Notes

1. Moses-the-foundling keeps company with King Sargon I of Mesopotamia, as well as keeps company with several (later [This includes the Joseph character]) Jews who rose to high positions in foreign courts/administrations. These include Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Cf. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 26, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).
2. Cf. Note 11 below below.
3. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).
4. Robert Feather, *Where Moses Stood*, (London: Copper Scroll, 2014).
5. Mishael M. Caspi and John T. Greene, *The Interpretation of Korah's Rebellion in Three Religious Traditions--Jewish, Christian Muslim: A Study in Comparative Reception History*, (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012).
6. The *Book of Exodus* in the *Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament* is entitled "*And these are the names* (of the sons of Israel who went into Egypt with Jacob . . .)" (*Exodus* 1: 1-7) or *Shemot*. Focusing on names, one learns that Moses, Miriam,

Aaron and others are, indeed, Egyptian and not Semitic names. This, indeed, provides a certain realism and authenticity to the story that begins with a list of Israelite names.

Helpful here is also Louis A. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews: From Moses to Esther*: Notes for Volumes 3 [Moses in the Wilderness] and 4, (Volume 6), (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Ginzberg's collected legends purport to fill in numerous gaps in the stories about the exodus community's experiences during their sojourn in the wilderness south of developed Canaan. The 'Legends' purport to include what the *Bible* did not record. These add an interesting and fascinating ancillary record and account.

7. Beno Rothenberg and Jonathan Glass, "The Midianite Pottery", John F.A. Sawyer and David J.A. Clines, eds., *Midian, Moab, and Edom: The History and Archaeology of Late Bronze Age Jordan and Northwest Arabia*, (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1983). Rothenberg also published in *Research at Timna and in the Sinai in general in Researches in the Southern Arabah 1959-1990: Summary of Thirty Years of Archaeo-Metallurgical Field Work in the Timna Valley, the Wadi Amram, and the Southern Arabah (Israel)*. Online at: www.laieskin.net/arxjournal/pdf/rothenberg.pdf.

8. Nelson Glueck excavated at over 1,500 archaeological sites in Israel, Jordan, Timna, and the Sinai. Cf. William Foxwell Albright, "Nelson Glueck in Memoriam," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 202 (1971): 2-6.

9. See, for instance, the competing genealogies of Jesus in the *Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, as well as the genealogy in the beginning of *Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah*. They attempt to establish legitimacy of something.

10. This fact is amply demonstrated when one reads the *Book of Ruth* and examines each character's name against the developmental story line. The names, in essence, tell the story. A significant attitude, more prevalent during the post-Exilic period, rears its racist head in the accounts also.

11. That this organization did not function as it was ideally presented is read in the *Book of Judges* (5: 12-15a) in what is known as the *Song of Deborah*. That concerted participation was not always there, see verses 15b-18. On the idea of an amphyctiony, one has to imagine an association of neighboring states (in ancient Greece) to defend against common enemies and support the worship of a common deity or deities. However, the *Oxford Biblical Studies Online* offers the following definition and classification: *A word borrowed from institutions in classical Greece and applied by some historians of Israel to its supposed organization before the monarchy as a confederation of twelve clans. It was suggested that there was a central shrine at which a cultic object was a shared responsibility among the twelve.* But the amphyctiony theory has now been generally abandoned. www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/opr/t94/e92.

12. Michael Coogan, *The Ten Commandments: A Short History of an Ancient Text*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014[and see his You Tube video presentation.]). Additionally, the ancient Middle East pululated with laws (ordinances, statutes, and treaties of varying types). None is without its significance. Here, we refer to the best-known of the genre: *The Hittite Suzerain-*

Vassal Treaties, The Hammurabi Code of Laws, The Eshnunna Code of Laws, the Law Code of King Lipit-Ishtar, and The Sefire (Law) Documents, to name but a few.

13. Consult on this matter John T. Greene, *The Concept of Christ in St. Paul's Thought: The Nature of Communication among Humans and Between God and Humans*, (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013), Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), Carl Rogers, *A Therapist's View of Personal Goals*, (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1972), and B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

14. Online: "Ngoma Lungundu: African Ark of the Covenant: Explained in the EU," http://www.everythingiselectric.com/nogoma_lungundu_African_Ark_of_the_Covenant



The Ngoma Lungundu: The Ark that Thunders

Appropriate here is to discuss a second theory of the ark. This theory involves the Queen of Sheba, King Solomon, their (alleged) son, Menelik I, emperor of Ethiopia, and the ark of the Axumite Empire (1st-7th Centuries C.E.). This ark supposedly helped with kings' claims to the throne. This development claims that one monarch, King Lalibela, who built a New Jerusalem in Ethiopia, with defenses during the 12th Century C.E., contained another ark said to be housed in a church there. It is claimed further that Christians preserved this ark in one of a group of churches known as the 8th Wonder of the World. Further; it is claimed that this ark is housed in the town of Axum at the treasury of The Chapel of the Tablet of The Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. It is guarded by a priest who keeps everyone from entering the sanctuary where the ark now rests. This is the sole and lifetime duty of this priest until his death. Ethiopian claims of possessing the/an ark are now some 3000 years old.

15. "Prince Moses" belongs to a literary genre considered the Jewish novel/novella/short story. The *Book of Ruth*, The *Book of Esther*, The *Book of Daniel*, The *Joseph Narratives*, and the stories concerning "Prince Moses" reflect conditions during the exilic and post-exilic periods. One should not miss in this regard the excellent work of Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). As such, whatever "message" they deliver to the contemporaneous reader/hearer is noteworthy. With the exception of "Ruth", what the others have in common is that they are depicted as having risen to high levels within foreign regimes/governments and affected those regimes/governments positively. Ruth is the exception: she is merely a convert who strives and succeeds to survive among her adopted people. Her story serves as a prequel to the birth and successes of King David. This is all the more significant since she was an emigrant from whom emerged Israel's (supposed) greatest monarch. A better case for embracing the *ger=landed immigrant* cannot be made. Considered post-exilic are also *Psalms* 77:16-21, 78: 12-16, 105: 23-38, and 114 that reference the exodus. Among the prophetic books are also references to the Exodus: *Hosea* 13:4-6, *Isa.* 43:16-17, 50:2, and *Mic.* 6:4

Focusing on the post-exilic period for the origin and/or editing of the foregoing literature is a work by Amy Scheinerman entitled "Exodus, Esther and the Maccabees in Conversation: They Tried to Kill Us; We Survived; Let's Eat!" (www.ccarnet.org/media/filer_private/2013/06/04/exodus_esther_and_the_macabees_in_conversation, *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*). Certain signposts during the exilic and post-exilic periods are "new beginnings" or restatements and addenda to accounts that may have existed prior to the Exile. As an example, whenever a new kingdom or empire was founded, it was justified and defended by a creation narrative: the government grounded itself in a myth (propaganda) that claimed legitimacy from the moment of creation until that contemporaneous period. Thus, we read in the *Hebrew Scriptures* in *Sefer Bereshit* two different accounts of Creation: one pre-exilic (*Genesis* 1:1-2:4a) and one that is post-exilic (*Genesis* 2:4b ff.) when a new, national government was founded. Along with Scheinerman, we maintain that there is much to observe when we apply the technique of intertextuality; texts (depending on when they were produced, do, indeed, engage each other in "conversation." We the students learn much from such conversations. This applies also when we consider the number of "10 Commandments" there are. There are the "10 Commandments" of *Exodus* 20: 1-17, the "10 Commandments" of *Deuteronomy* 5: 4-21. Then there is what is termed the "Small Covenant Code" contained in *Exodus* 34: 28ff.

Cf. the reference to Ginzberg in Note 5 above.

Discussions of the *Decalogue* and references to portions of it are also contained in the *New Testament* at *John* 7: 19ff., *Mark* 7: 10, and *Ephesians* 6: 2.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: WHERE MOSES STOOD

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Biblical, archaeological, and historical scholars have long been trying to establish the authenticity and route of the Exodus. I do not claim to be able to define the exact route of the ‘mixed company’ that left Egypt, but I maintain that the one described here and fleshed out in my book, *Where Moses Stood*, is the most accurate suggested to date. This study also pinpoints the mountain where Moses is said to have received the *Ten Commandments* and provides corroborative evidence in the form of a newly identified Sinaitic Hebrew inscription; the remains of the Tabernacle built at the base of the mountain; an extant copper snake, said to have been used by Moses to ward off poisonous serpents; and the possible remains of an artefact that was once carried in the Ark of the Covenant.

Which mountain is being referred to in the *Bible* as ‘Mount Sinai’, ‘Mount Horeb’, or ‘Mount Seir’ is a hotly contested question. Neither Rabbinic-era, Jewish tradition, nor 3rd Century Christian texts recognise a particular mountain as Mount Sinai. One Israeli scholar, Menashe Har-El (oddly his surname translated from the Hebrew means ‘The Mountain of God’), has noted thirteen different scholarly proposals for the location(s) of Mt. Sinai.¹ Only those with a reasonable plausibility will now be considered, in order of popularity.

1. St. Katherine’s Mount

The most widely accepted candidate as the site for the Holy Mountain is known as St. Katherine’s Mount, close to an ancient Christian settlement, located in southern Sinai. It is part of a chain of high mountains near to St. Katherine’s Monastery and attracts thousands of pilgrims and tourists each year to climb its 7,497ft. peak, one of the highest in Sinai.

The first chapel on the site, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, was built in 330 C.E. on the instructions of Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother. She believed it to be the place of the Burning Bush mentioned in *Exodus* 3:2. It also incorporates what is claimed as Moses' (or Jethro's) Well (*Exodus* 2:16-22), where Moses is said to have first met his future Midianite wife, Zipporah. Helena, later sanctified as St. Helena, also rather arbitrarily designated the place where Jesus was buried, his ascension to heaven, his birthplace, and identified pieces of the cross, and nails from the crucifixion. The original chapel was enlarged between 548 and 656 C.E. with the construction of a large monastery dedicated to the memory of St. Katherine, who was martyred in 305 C.E.

Justification for all these claims is extremely tenuous. Legend has it that there was a Christian hermetic and anchorite presence of worshippers in the area as early as the 3rd Century C.E. They were apparently drawn to the region because they believed that the mountain was the site of Jesus' transfiguration, not because they thought it was the site of the giving of the *Ten Commandments*. The first three *Gospels* all portray Jesus going up to a mountain where, like Moses and Elijah,² he communed with God. Like Moses, during this experience, Jesus' face is said to have glowed and he was 'transfigured' as he met with God.

As the legends spread, the site became a place of veneration, attracting devout pilgrims and tourists, as it still does today; these come to climb the mountain and witness the spectacular sight of a morning sunrise or an evening sunset. A century later, Etheria, a Spanish noblewoman³, journeyed to the church and recorded that it was set in a pleasant garden, with abundant water, and that the 'burning bush' was alive and sending out shoots.

Inspired by his wife, Theodora, the Roman Emperor, Justinian (482-585 C.E.), followed the pattern set by Helena and Constantine, and built a much-enlarged church and fortress named after St. Katherine of Alexandria and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, Islamic forces swept across the Middle East conquering Egypt, including the area of the Church, but the monks obtained special protection for their Christian activities. Each year they were able to continue their rituals through the indulgence of the sultans in Constantinople. Muslim interests were reinforced when a small mosque was built in the eleventh century within the confines of the Christian monastery, which remains to this day. With the arrival of

Christian Crusaders from the west in the 12th Century, a renewed flow of pilgrims took place and the monastery enjoyed the protection of Christian forces.

The Codex Sinaiticus

In 1844, a 29 year old German scholar, Constantin von Tischendorf, arrived at St. Katherine's. In one of the halls of the monastery he perceived a basket full of old parchments that were awaiting incineration. From this container he retrieved some one hundred thirty sheets that he immediately recognised as copies of the *Bible* written in Greek. He was allowed to copy details of some of them, and to take away forty three sheets of parchment on his return to Cairo. Back in Leipzig, Tischendorf published an edition of the forty three sheets entitled *Codex Frederico-Augustanus*⁴. In 1859, with the backing of the Tsar of Russia, Alexander II, Tischendorf amassed a total of three hundred forty-six parchments that contained parts of the *Hebrew Bible*, as well as the entire *New Testament*, written in the same neat hand, in Greek uncials (capital letters).

Political Events

Events of the 1967 war, when Israel was attacked simultaneously by Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, left Israel in complete control of the Sinai, including possession of lands that included St. Katherine's Monastery. Israel retained this land until the signing of a Peace Treaty with President Sadat of Egypt, and the relinquishing of the land in 1982.

This period of ownership of the mountain, said to be that of the biblical Mount Sinai, demonstrates one of the strange anomalies of uncertainties over the location. During the entire period of its occupation, Israel controlled what one would have thought would be considered a most holy site--the alleged place where Moses received the *Ten Commandments*--however no attempt was made to build any kind of Jewish memorial to the event.

The explanation appears to be that religious factions and biblical scholars were in disagreement as to the validity of the claim, and the balance of opinion was that this particular mountain was not the right one. Therefore, no action was taken. One can postulate another set of reasons. Here was a Christian church and a Muslim mosque, commemorating other Christian events, as well as the presence of Moses. A Jewish commemorative monument might have been construed, in some way, as