Moses

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Moses (MT *Mošê*; LXX Μωυσῆς) is the most important human figure of the HB/OT or, in any case, of the Pentateuch. His birth is related at the beginning of the book of Exodus (Exod 2:1–10) and his death at the end of the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 34), so that the Torah can be characterized as a "biography" of Moses (Knierim). If one considers the book of Genesis as a prologue of sorts, the four other books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) are bound together through the figure of Moses and tell a story that covers 120 years, because Moses dies at that age.

1. The Story of Moses in Exodus–Deuteronomy. ***a. His Birth and the Story of the Exodus.*** The book of Exodus opens with a list of the sons of Jacob who had descended to Egypt where they had multiplied (Exod 1:7). The note about the arrival of a new Pharaoh sets the context of the Egyptian oppression of the Israelites living in Egypt, where they have become "slaves" of the king of Egypt who uses them to build cities. Although the Hebrews (the beginning of the books of Exodus often uses the term *ʿibrîm* for the Israelites) are obliged to fulfill the corvée, Pharaoh considers them a threat and decides to annihilate them by requiring the midwives of the Hebrews to kill all newborn males. This is the setting for the account of Moses' birth in Exod 2:1–10. His mother, a Levite woman (the father, also a Levite, disappears from the story as soon as he has slept with his Levite wife), hides him in a basket which she places among the reeds of the Nile, where he is discovered and adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh. From the beginning, Moses finds himself between two identities. Although an adopted Egyptian, he feels close to the Hebrews, but when he tries to defend a Hebrew worker by killing an Egyptian overseer, he is rejected, even by the Hebrews, and has to flee from Egypt. He finds asylum with a Midianite chief and priest who gives him one of his daughters, Zipporah, as a bride. Exodus 2 ends with the sudden appearance of YHWH who is said to "remember" his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:23–25).

This brief notice, which creates a link between the patriarchal narratives and the exodus story, prepares the ensuing scene – the encounter between

YHWH and Moses at the "burning bush" on the "mountain of God" (Exod 3:1–4:18). Moses, who is now a shepherd (he is tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law), receives the order to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt and, subsequently, serve God at the same mountain where Moses is standing. Moses does not know the name of the god who is commissioning him. YHWH reveals his name first by a wordplay (*'ehyê 'ašer 'ehyê* – "I am who I am"; "I will be who I will be"), and then by telling him his name YHWH (Exod 3:13–15). Moses' hesitation to accept the mission leads to the introduction of Aaron, his brother, who appears somewhat abruptly on Moses' way back to Egypt. Before this encounter, Moses is attacked during the night by YHWH himself and rescued by his wife, who circumcises Moses' son (Exod 4:24–26); this action stops YHWH from killing Moses. The beginning of the Moses narrative is marked by the intervention of women, who in different ways save him from death: the midwives, his mother, the daughter of Pharaoh and his wife Zipporah (Römer 2015). Moses' and Aaron's first plea to Pharaoh fails, resulting in a worsening of the Hebrews' situation (Exod 5). This leads to a second divine revelation in which YHWH again reveals his name to Moses (Exod 6:2–12). A new encounter between Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh and his magician-priests opens a series of "wonders" or plagues that show the superiority of Moses and Aaron over the king of Egypt and his magicians (Exod 7–11). These plagues follow a pattern of growing severity and culminate in the announcement of the death of the Egyptian firstborn (Exod 11); the fulfillment of this plague is recounted in Exod 12, where the celebration of the Passover allows the Israelites to escape from the angel of destruction. Pharaoh is now ready to allow Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt; soon after their departure, the king of Egypt changes his mind and pursues the Israelites until the Sea of Reeds. Moses, following YHWH's command, performs a miracle: he divides the sea so that the Israelites can cross in the middle of the waters, which close again when the Egyptian army enters, so that Pharaoh and his warriors are swallowed by the waters. This wonder is celebrated at the end of Exod 14 with the statement that the people "believed in YHWH and in Moses, his servant" (14:31). The story of the way out of Egypt is concluded by a psalm attributed to Moses (Exod 15:1–18).

b. His Guidance of the Israelites in the Wilderness. The wandering of the Hebrews through the wilderness under the guidance of Moses starts at the end of Exod 15. From the very beginning, Moses' leadership is contested by the people, who complain because of the lack of drinkable water (Exod 15:22–27; 17:1–7) and the lack of food (Exod 16), and are attacked by enemies (Exod 17:8–16). Thanks to Moses' intercessory prayers and his magical gestures the people are rescued (during the battle with the Amalekites he raises his hands and the aggressors are defeated). Moses and the Israelites arrive at the mountain of God (Exod 18:5), where Moses had his first encounter with YHWH (Exod 3:1). Here he meets his father-in-law who offers a sacrifice to YHWH. Astonishingly, this story tells us that Moses' wife did not accompany him back to Egypt. Moses' wife then disappears from the narrative; later in Num 12, the text states that Moses married a Cushite woman. Moses and the people arrive in Exod 19 at Mount Sinai (another mountain other than the mountain of God?) where YHWH reveals himself in a theophany with thunder, darkness, and earthquake. Before he manifests himself to the people, Moses ascends to the top of the mountain where YHWH announces to him that he will make the Israelites his people through the execution of a covenant (*berît*) (Exod 19:3–8). During his theophany, YHWH communicates the Ten Commandments to the people. The Israelites are afraid to be so close to the divine and ask Moses to become the mediator between YHWH and themselves. As a result, the following divine laws (Exod 20:22–23:19) are disclosed to Moses exclusively, who writes these commandments on a scroll, which he reads to the people during the ceremony celebrating the covenant between YHWH and Israel (Exod 24:1–8). After that ceremony, Moses climbs again up the divine mountain, accompanied by his servant Joshua. On the seventh day he receives divine instructions for the construction of a portable sanctuary for YHWH, which the Israelites are to carry with them during their way through the wilderness (Exod 25–31). The construction of the sanctuary is related in chs. 35–40. In between, Moses is confronted with the "golden calf." While he is still on the summit of Mount Sinai, the Israelites ask Aaron to make for them a visible god; he fabricates a golden calf representing YHWH. After descending from the mountain, Moses, angry about the golden calf, smashes the tablets containing the divine law, burns the calf and, with the help of the Levites, puts the culprits to death (Exod 32). However, he convinces YHWH not to annihilate the people entirely, and, as a result of his successful plea, YHWH requires Moses to ascend to the top of the mountain again where he is asked to cut two new stone tablets for which YHWH dictates new commandments (Exod 34:1–28).

c. The Horns of Moses. When Moses meets the people again he needs to veil his face because his skin, according to the Hebrew, *qāran* (Exod 34:30). This Hebrew word is rendered in most modern translations as "was shining," but Jerome translated it into Latin as "cornuta" (horned). This translation is the origin of representing Moses with horns, a very common practice in the history of art. The Hebrew root has both meanings; horns were a symbol of gods and kings, and it could be that the author of this short passage (Exod 34:29–35) wanted to un-

derline that Moses, who has destroyed the calf had become the only legitimate mediator between the Israelites and YHWH (Römer 2013).

d. Moses Facing Rebellion. After the completion of the mobile sanctuary (Exod 40), Moses consecrates Aaron and his sons as priests (Lev 8–9). He receives, in the books of Leviticus, all kinds of instructions about sacrifices and other priestly concerns, which he has to communicate to the priests, along with other ethical and cultic laws (Lev 17–Num 9) meant for the Israelites. The departure from Sinai takes place in Num 10. Immediately after the departure, Moses is confronted with a series of revolts. These provoke the anger of YHWH, which is often attenuated by Moses' interventions. But the Israelites are not the only ones to complain; Num 11 combines the riffraff's and the Israelites' complaint about the vegetarian manna with the complaint of Moses, who accuses YHWH of burdening him with the task of leading the Israelites. Moses' authority is then questioned by his sister Miriam (who appears very rarely in the narrative: she is mentioned in Exod 15 and an unnamed sister appears in Moses' birth narrative) and his brother Aaron. Miriam criticizes Moses because of a Cushite woman. YHWH rejects the critiques of Moses and states that Moses stands much closer to him than any prophet. Consequently, Miriam is punished with a skin disease and Moses has to intercede on her behalf (Num 12). Moses sends spies to explore the promised land, but, when the spies report that there are giants living in the land, the Israelites decide to return to Egypt. YHWH decides to annihilate the entire people. Again, however, it is only because of Moses' intercessory prayer that YHWH modifies his punishment. The first generation has to remain forty years in the wilderness and only those of the second generation may enter and conquer the land (Num 13–14).

e. Moses' Death outside the Promised Land. Despite this punishment, rebellions continue (see Num 16, which tells of the rebellions of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and others). But Moses and Aaron also do not entirely respect YHWH's will. When the people complain again about the lack of water, YHWH tells Moses (accompanied by Aaron) to take his staff and to speak to a rock in order to obtain water. Moses, however, hits the rock with his staff and speaks to the people, accusing them of complaining constantly. YHWH gets angry with Moses and Aaron because they did not execute the divine order exactly (Num 20). This disobedience is used by the text to explain the fact that Moses (and Aaron) could not enter the promised land; this is contrary to the discourse of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy where he explains that he cannot enter the land because as the leader of the Israelites he is punished together with the rebellious generation (Deut 1:37). Immediately after the incident at the rock, Aaron dies (Num 20:22–29). A final rebellion, in which the Israelites challenge YHWH and Moses' leadership, provokes the plague of venomous snakes. Moses intercedes again and YHWH tells him to make a serpent of bronze and to put it on a pole in order to heal the bitten Israelites (Num 21:4–9). Moses then leads the people, not without internal and external problems, through the Transjordanian territories. In Numbers 27, YHWH tells Moses to appoint Joshua as his successor because he will die soon. Moses, however, still leads the conquest of territories in Transjordan (Num 32–35) until the people arrive in the plains of Moab, where Moses gives his long farewell speech (Deut 1–30). In this speech, he recapitulates the events in the wilderness and warns the people to be loyal to YHWH once they have crossed the Jordan to conquer the land. Finally, Moses reconfirms Joshua as his successor (Deut 31) and dies on the summit of Mount Nebo, where YHWH himself buries him (Deut 34). His story ends with the following epitaph:

> Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. He was unequaled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt ... and for all the mighty deeds ... that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (Deut 34:10–12).

This conclusion attributes to Moses an exceptional status that places him above all other prophets and probably also all other figures of the HB/OT.

2. The Different Roles of Moses in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The story of Moses' life from Exodus to Deuteronomy combines different features of Moses through which he becomes the mediator par excellence for nascent Judaism.

a. Moses as Lawgiver and a Royal Figure. In the ancient Near East, the king is the supreme lawgiver. He receives the laws from the gods and then communicates them to the people by inscriptions or other written means (cf. the stele of Hammurabi). In the HB/OT, kings never receive laws from YHWH. In the books of Kings, the rulers are evaluated with respect to their obedience or disobedience to the law that YHWH has given to Moses. That means that Moses has taken over a royal prerogative. The attribution of all laws of the HB/OT to Moses should be understood in the context of the transfer of royal privileges to Moses. This transfer can be explained as resulting from the loss of political autonomy after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

b. Moses, Founder of the Cult. According to the Pentateuch, Moses is not only the mediator of the law, but also the founder of Israel's cult. He is, like the king, the architect, who YHWH charges to build the tabernacle, the mobile sanctuary. Aaron, the first priest, is subordinate to Moses in most texts. In Leviticus 8, where Moses himself is offering the sacrifices, since Aaron and his son are not yet priests, he clearly appears to be the founder of the sacrificial, priestly cult. In the first part of Leviticus, where

YHWH reveals all the rules of sacrifices and all priestly lore, most of these instructions are first communicated to Moses, who has to transmit them to the Israelites and to Aaron.

c. Moses, the First of Israel's Prophets, but also the Greatest. The narrative of Moses' call in Exod 3 has many parallels with prophetic call stories, especially Jer 1. According to Deut 18:15–20, Moses inaugurates the office of prophets through whom YHWH will communicate with his people. There are, however, other texts that insist on the idea that Moses is more than a "normal" prophet. Numbers 12:6–8 and Deut 34:10–12, for example, highlight the fact that no human compares to Moses. He alone sees the *temunâ* (the form) of YHWH, and he stands above all other prophets. Moses is, in fact, a prophetic figure, but he is more than a prophet – thus, no other prophet (in the books of Samuel–Kings and the prophetic books) compares to him.

d. Moses as Intercessor. In all the stories about the Israelites' rebellions against YHWH, the Israelites are saved from divine anger only because of Moses' intercession, which always succeeds in convincing YHWH to refrain from exterminating his people. These prayers, which make YHWH change his mind, show that only Moses is able to save "Israel." But he cannot prevent the divine punishment which alludes to the destruction of Samaria in 722 and Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

e. Moses, Figure of the Diaspora. The fact that Moses dies outside the land, and is even buried in the land of Moab, makes him a figure of identification for all the Jews living outside the land, in Diaspora. According to Deut 34, he is buried by YHWH himself, but outside the land. Contrary to a common idea that already existed in early Judaism, the author of this narrative claims through the figure of Moses that it is not important to be buried in the promised land, but to live according to the laws transmitted by Moses, even if in Diaspora.

3. The Formation of the Moses Narrative. There is no scholarly agreement about the origins and formation of the Moses story. Some scholars still adopt the so-called Documentary Hypothesis and reconstruct from the Moses narrative the four sources of the Pentateuch. This approach, however, does not account for the differences between the book of Genesis and the following narrative of Moses and the exodus (K. Schmid). There is no doubt that the origins of the exodus tradition come from the kingdom of Israel (the "Northern kingdom") where this tradition was first transmitted in an oral form. The Northern origin of the Exodus story is clearly attested in 1 Kgs 12. According to this narrative, King Jeroboam I builds sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan where he places bull statues, representing YHWH, who is characterized as the god of the Exodus (12:28–29). The story of the golden calf in Exod 32 is clearly based on this narrative and projects the event into the time of Moses.

One may ask, however, whether Moses was from the very beginning the one who led the Hebrews out of Egypt. Many texts state that it was YHWH who brought the Israelites out of Egypt without any mention of Moses (Deut 26:5–9; Ezek 20; Amos 2:10–11; Pss 78; 106; etc.).

Contrary to the Exodus, the figure of Moses was probably linked to the kingdom of Judah. A possible Judahite origin of Moses is indicated by the notice in 2 Kgs 18:4. According to this note, King Hezekiah "broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan." This statement is certainly not an invention, since the deuteronomistic editors and authors of the books of Kings are hostile to the worship of any iconic symbols (cf. also the representation of Moses as an iconoclast in Exod 32). A later author composed the story in Num 21:4–9 in order to give a legitimation for such a statue in the First Temple of Jerusalem (Gertz). After the fall of the kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, many Northern traditions came to the South. The link between Moses and the exodus is, therefore, probably a Judahite invention from the 7th century.

a. The First Moses Narrative in the 7th Century BCE. The first Moses narrative that one is able to reconstruct on a literary level, at least partially, may indeed be labeled a "vita Mosis" (Blum) from the 7th century which constructs Moses as a royal figure. The story of his birth and exposure in Exod 2:1–10 reflects literary dependence on the birth legend of Sargon, the legendary founder of the Assyrian Empire (Gerhards: 149–239):

> Sargon, strong king, king of Agade, am I. My mother was a high priestess, my father I do not know ... My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me. She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch. She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape. The river carried me along: to Aqqi, the water drawer, it brought me. Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up. Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son. Aqqi, the water drawer, set me to his garden work. During my garden work, Ishtar loved me (so that) 55 years I ruled as king (Lewis: 27–29).

In its original form, in which Moses' sister was absent, the text of Exod 2:1–10 was very close to this legend. Sargon and Moses are exposed by their mothers, who both are in some way related to priesthood – Sargon's mother is a priestess and Moses' mother is the daughter of Levi, the ancestor of Israel's priestly tribe. In both cases, the father does not intervene. The babies are set out in a basket on a river, found, and adopted. The adoption of Moses and Sargon refers to a royal context. Even if the Sargon story is supposed to refer to the 3rd-millennium king, it was written, in several copies, under

Sargon II, at the end of the 8th century. That means that Moses' story cannot be older, and confirms a dating of some point in the 7th century. It is tempting, then, to understand the first written story about Moses as a reaction to Neo-Assyrian royal ideology (Otto), elaborated at the Judean court (probably under Josiah). The author of the story wanted to demonstrate that Moses is just as important a figure as the legendary Assyrian king. The *vita Mosis* then told about Moses' flight to Midian; it did not contain the long account of Moses' call in Exod 3:1–4:18; the original story went from the divine speech to Moses in 2:23a directly to 4:19 (Moses' departure to Egypt). It probably contained the unsuccessful negotiations with Pharaoh (without the figure of Aaron) and a short version of the crossing of the sea (Exod 14*). It may have also ended at the encounter on the mountain of God and the first sacrifice for YHWH in Exod 18*.

b. The Deuteronomistic Revision of the Moses Narrative in the Late 6th Century BCE. This revision transformed Moses into Israel's first prophet (cf. Deut 18:15–20) by inserting the story of Moses' call in Exod 3:1–4:18*. The deuteronomistic redactors also elaborated a plague narrative in which Moses is YHWH's spokesman (Exod 7–11*) and revised the story of the miracle at the Sea (Exod 14:5–7, 10b, 13–14, 21*, 24*, 25, 27*, 30), which appears in this version as a war of YHWH (and his general Moses) against the Egyptians. In this version, Moses also becomes a lawgiver (Exod 19:2*, 16–19*; 20:18–22a followed perhaps by the original version of the covenant code in Exod 21–22*). The redactors presented Moses as the mediator of the covenant between YHWH and Israel in 24:1–11*, and an iconoclast in the story of the golden calf in Exod 32–33*. This story was conceived as a critique of the YHWH worship in the Northern kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 12). The deuteronomistic version of the Moses story ended with the renewal of the tablets of the Law in Exod 34:10–28* (Albertz), emphasizing the importance of Moses as intercessor and mediator of the Law.

The Deuteronomists also revised the scroll of Deuteronomy and transformed it into a farewell speech of Moses. They concluded the speech with a report of his death (Deut 34*). They wanted Deuteronomy, although a separate scroll, to be part of the Moses story.

c. The Priestly Version of the Moses Story. Most scholars still agree that priestly authors composed, at the beginning of the Persian period (around 530–520 BCE), a document (called "P"), which told the origins of the world, the time of the Patriarchs, and the Moses narrative (for discussion see Shectman/Baden). This document, which created a literary link between the patriarchal and Moses traditions, probably ended in Lev 9 or Lev 16 (Nihan). The priestly document (P) presupposed that its addressees knew about Moses, because it omits a story about his origins. The Moses narrative in P starts with the description of the Israelites' oppression in Egypt (Exod 1*) and God's decision to intervene for his people because of the covenant with the patriarchs (Exod 2:2aß–25). This note in P is followed immediately by the priestly version of Moses' call in Exod 6:2–12. In the priestly version of Moses and Aaron's encounter with Pharaoh and his magicians (7:8–13; 7:19–20a, 21b, 22; 8:1–3, 11aγb; 8:12–15; 9:8–12; 11:10), they are depicted as better magicians than the Egyptians (Van Seters 1995); there are no "plagues" in P, but there are miracles through which Moses demonstrates YHWH's superiority over the king of Egypt and his gods. The last miracle that Moses performs is the parting of the Sea (Exod 14:1–4*, 8–10a, 15–18*, 21–23*, 26–29*). In the wilderness he receives the divine order to explain the Sabbath to the people (Exod 16*), and after the theophany on Sinai, he becomes the supervisor over the building of the mobile sanctuary in the wilderness (Exod 25–32* and 35–40*).

After the construction of the tabernacle, YHWH establishes Moses as the founder of the Israelite cult: he consecrates Aaron and his sons as Israel's first priests, and teaches them everything that priests need to know (Lev 1–16).

d. Later Additions to the Moses Narrative. The deuteronomistic account of Moses was combined with the priestly narrative during the Persian period (around 400–350 BCE). Many other texts were added to this narrative, mostly the rebellion narratives in the book of Numbers, which insist on the people's rebellion and Moses' intercessory role (Achenbach). The latest texts were added to indicate that there were other Moses traditions that were almost censored and which were only very sparsely alluded to in the Torah (Borgeaud et al.). For instance, this is the case with the very brief allusion to Moses' leprosy shortly in Exod 4:6–7, where his hand becomes leprous and is then immediately healed. This passage seems to react to a broader tradition attested by an Egyptian priest Manetho, whom Josephus quotes. According to Josephus, Manetho knew a story of an Egyptian king, Amenophis, who wanted to purify Egypt from all lepers and sick people. He put them to work in stone quarries, and later transferred them to the city of Avaris, the former capital of the Hyksos (the "Shepherds"). A leprous priest named Osarseph headed the colony there and gave it new laws. Osarseph may in fact allude to the "monotheistic" pharaoh Akhenaton (Redford: 415–16). The story ends: "It is said that the man who gave them their constitution and laws was a priest of the people of Heliopolis, named Osarseph from Osiris the god of Heliopolis. When he changed his allegiance, he changed his name and was called Moses" (translation according to Verbrugghe/Wickersham). Exodus 4:6–7, the latest insertion into the story of Moses' commission, could

function as a "counter-history," reacting against an apparently important tradition that describes Moses as a man affected with leprosy. The Jewish historians Artapanus and Josephus also depict Moses as a conqueror in the service of Pharaoh who wages several campaigns to Ethiopia. The topic of the Ethiopian campaigns of the pharaohs or other kings (Semiramis, Cambyses) became a literary motif during the Persian era (Barclay: 129) and the redactors of the book of Numbers applied it to Moses. The tradition about a marriage between Moses and an Ethiopian princess, which appears in Josephus' *Antiquities*, must have some relation in one way or another to the strange note in Num 12:1, according to which Moses had married a Cushite woman (see "Moses' Cushite Wife"). The tradition of Moses' military success in Ethiopia was especially fitting for Jewish mercenaries living in the island of Elephantine, some of whom probably had Ethiopian wives (Diebner). One may conclude that, in the Persian period, traditions about Moses' military feats as well as other stories that were not fully integrated into the Pentateuch were quite popular in certain milieux.

4. The Question of the "Historical Moses." There is no clear evidence in the Egyptian sources for a historical person who would correspond to the biblical Moses (Assmann). Egyptian sources, especially from the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, mention a number of important ministers (chamberlains, chancellors) with a Semitic background (they often have an Egyptian and a Semitic name; cf. Görg for the presentation of different figures). However, efforts to identify one of these figures with the biblical Moses are inconclusive. For a while, an attractive candidate has been a Semitic Chamberlain Bey or Beya (Knauf; de Moor). He also had an Egyptian name with an element corresponding to "Moses" and was involved in a civil war. He also seems to have planned to escape from Egypt with a group of *hapiru* (a term that may allude to Hebrews). However, there is a papyrus that shows that Beya was executed in Egypt before he could escape (Grandet). In Papyrus Harris, the name "Irsu" appears, and many Egyptologists have understood it as a pejorative designation of Beya, meaning "parvenu" (see the discussion in Görg). Others have taken it as a proper name and linked him with the stele of the usurper Pharaoh Setnakhte in which he claims to have driven out of Egypt the rebels that had plundered the Egyptians (Goedicke). None of these figures can be identified as the historical Moses, but a cultural memory of those figures may have contributed to the construction of the biblical Moses.

There is no doubt, however, that the name Moses is Egyptian; it contains the root *m–š–y* ("to give birth"), and appears in names like Ramses ("son of Ra") or Thutmose ("son of Thot"). The biblical story in Exod 2:1–10 knows about the Egyptian origin of the name, since Moses has to wait three months until he receives his name from an Egyptian princess. Contrary to all other biblical birth narratives, Moses' mother does not name her child after his birth. Before his encounter with the Egyptian princess, he is called by the author of the story *yeled* (child), which is the Hebrew equivalent of the Egyptian root *mšy*. The Egyptian name of Moses may indicate that he is not a totally invented figure, since it is not easy to imagine that one would choose an Egyptian name for an invented hero of the Exodus (Ska).

5. Moses and Akhenaton. Since Sigmund Freud it has been very popular to relate Moses to Pharaoh Akhenaton (Amenophis IV, 1353–1337 BCE), who tried to impose exclusive worship of the sun god Aton, a religious change that has been often considered as a monotheistic revolution. Moses was, therefore, understood to be the disciple of this iconoclast pharaoh. It was also claimed that the two were one and the same person (for a history of these ideas cf. Assmann). Many Egyptologists have shown that one should not categorize the religious changes of Akhenaton as monotheism, but better as "atonism"; and there is no link between the sun god Aton and the Hebrew god YHWH (Cannuyer). The association of the figures of Moses and Akhenaton probably goes back to Manetho, an Egyptian priest (see above, 3.d), who presented in his history of Egypt a caricature of Akhenaton whom he (or later redactors of his work) identified with Moses. This identification prepared the way for a theory that counted Sigmund Freud among its best-known adherents.

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