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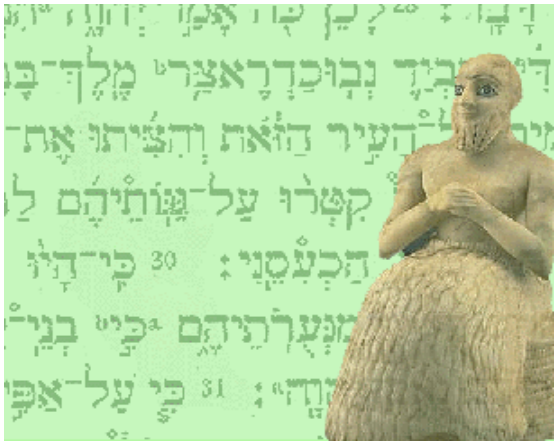

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## THOMAS RÖMER,
## MOSES OUTSIDE THE TORAH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DIASPORA IDENTITY

# MOSES OUTSIDE THE TORAH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DIASPORA IDENTITY

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## 1. THE SHARED FIGURE OF MOSES AND THE PENTAEUCH

In his seminal essay "The 'Conquest of Canaan' in the Book of Joshua and in History," Nadav Na'aman has reminded us that the "written transcription of presumed oral tales may be more informative in regard to the period in which these tales were transcribed than to the time in which they were presumed to have been composed."[1] In this paper, I will apply this methodological reflection to some stories about Moses inside and outside the Torah, in order to show that these stories do not help us in reconstructing the 'historical Moses' but in understanding the diversity of nascent Judaism in the Persian period.

The present debate about the composition of the Torah is at times confusing.[2] Since the majority of scholars abandoned the traditional documentary hypothesis, no new consensus about the formation of the Bible's first five books has emerged. This said, there is a widespread agreement that the first publication of the Pentateuch—or of a Proto-Pentateuch—took place in the middle of the Persian period.[3]

There is also a considerable degree of agreement on an understanding of the Torah as a 'compromise document,' in which different narratives and legal collections were gathered together in an attempt to accommodate the different ideological points of view of the Priestly school on one hand and a lay group, which one may call the Deuteronomists, on the other hand. In

[1] This essay has been recently republished. See N. Na'aman, *Ancient Israel's History and Historiography. Volume Two: Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E.* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 317–92; citation from p. 326.

[2] For an overview see T. B. Dozeman and K. Schmid (eds.), *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (SBL SymS, 34; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); G. N. Knoppers and B. M. Levinson (eds.), *The Pentateuch as Torah. New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007).

[3] This agreement echoes a traditional Jewish view, which makes Ezra the author or the editor of the Torah.

this regard it is interesting that, in Ezra 7:11, Ezra is called הַכֹּהֵן הַסֹּפֵר ("the priest-scribe"), and in Aramaic (Ezra 7:12) כָּהֲנָא סָפַר דָּתָא דִּי־אֱלָהּ שְׁמַיָּא ("the priest, scribe of the law of the God of the Heavens"). In these texts, Ezra clearly appears as a priestly and literate figure that symbolizes and embodies the alliance between the Priests and the Deuteronomists.

Within the Pentateuch, Moses plays the same role. He is definitely the central figure of the Torah, which according to Knierim,[4] can be read as a Mosaic biography. After the prologue in the book of Genesis, Exodus opens with Moses' birth and the last chapter of the Pentateuch relates his death. Moses is the mediator of both the Priestly and the Deuteronomic law. In the priestly texts, Moses is also described as the brother of Aaron, the founder of the priestly dynasty and the prime contractor for the mobile sanctuary built according to the divinely transmitted model. For the Deuteronomists, Moses is above all lawgiver, teacher and interpreter of the Law.[5] Both Priests and Deuteronomists agree on the idea that Moses is the founder of the sanctuary, the cult and the Law, which are the institutions at the centre of rising Judaism in the provinces of Yehud and Samaria.

Moses was not only the figure of identification for the two major ideological and economical groups inside the Land, but also for Diaspora Judaism. Some texts and hints reveal the importance of Moses for this Judaism outside the Land. They refer to Moses in order to legitimate theological options different than those that were about to become standard in Jerusalem. Some of these attempts were finally integrated into the Torah and some were not. The 'non orthodox' traditions about Moses can nevertheless be detected through some allusions in the Biblical text and through traditions about Moses that can be found in the work of Jewish and Greek authors of the Hellenistic period. I would like to briefly present the most interesting of these traditions. Before doing so, it is important to draw attention to the end of the Torah, which tries to present Moses as a possible model for Diaspora Judaism.

## 2. THE DEATH OF MOSES OUTSIDE THE LAND

The last chapter of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 34, highlights Moses' incomparable status. Although Moses has to die at the age of 120 years,[6] when he passes away he is healthy and full of vigour (the statement in 34:6 corrects 31:2). His death at the top of a mountain (cf. also Aaron's death in

[4] R. P. Knierim, "The Composition of the Pentateuch" in K. H. Richards (ed.) *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 24* (SBLSP, 24; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985) 393–415.

[5] J.-P. Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book. Writing in Deuteronomy* (BIS, 14; Leiden/ New York/Köln: Brill, 1997); E. Otto, "The Pentateuch in Synchronical and Diachronical Perspectives: Protorabbinical Scribal Erudition Mediating Between Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code" in E. Otto and R. Achenbach (eds.) *Das Deuteronomium zwischen Pentateuch und Deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT, 206; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004) 14–35.

[6] The limitation refers to the beginning of the Torah (Gen 6:3) which narrates how God limits the age of the human beings to 120 years.

Numbers 20) and his burial by Yhwh himself underline Moses' exceptional and heroic character. The remark in verse 5, stating that nobody knows his burial place to this day, can be understood as a polemical statement against the veneration of Moses' grave. But one should also consider, following a suggestion of Loewenstamm, that the biblical account presents a "cautious rejection of a myth predicating Moses' assumption."[7] Such a tradition was perhaps already in existence when the last redactors of the Torah revised the account of Moses' death. In fact, the almost divine status of Moses appears in the last verses of Deuteronomy 34 (vv 10–12), in which Moses is clearly distinguished from all other prophets and in which he becomes the author of the "signs and wonders" that in the Torah are exclusively accomplished by Yhwh himself.

This epitaph also reflects a struggle between the advocates of a Hexateuch and those of a Pentateuch.[8] In opposition to those who wanted to add the book of Joshua to the nascent Torah, the concluding verses of Deuteronomy 34 were added by the advocates of a Pentateuch. These verses clearly communicate that the conquest of the land in Joshua does not belong to the Torah. The conclusion of the Torah with a narrative about Moses' death outside the land opens the possibility for the Jews of the Diaspora to identify with Moses.

One of their major fears was to be buried in a foreign land.[9] During the Second Temple period, many ossuaries in and around Jerusalem contained the mortal remains of wealthy Jews from the Diaspora.[10] Deuteronomy 34 may also be understood as a discrete critique of this practice: the most important thing is not to be buried in the land, but to observe the Torah transmitted by Moses.

### 3. *MOSES, THE MAGICIAN*

In the non-priestly call story of Moses in Exodus 3–4, late redactors inserted a long discussion between Moses and Yhwh that focuses on the people's lack of belief.[11] In response to Moses' objections, Yhwh provides

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[7] S. Loewenstamm, "The Death of Moses," in G. W. E. Nickelsburg (ed.) *Studies on the Testament of Abraham* (SBLSCS, 6; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976) 185–211.

[8] For more details cf. T. C. Römer and M. Z. Brettler, "Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch," *JBL* (2000) 401–419.

[9] To be buried in a foreign land was considered a curse. See Isa 22:15–18; Am 7:1–7; Jer 20.6.

[10] H. Lichtenberger, "«Im Lande Israel zu wohnen wiegt alle Gebote der Tora auf.» Die Heiligkeit des Landes und die Heiligung des Lebens" in R. Feldmeier and U. Heckel (eds.), *Die Heiden. Juden, Christen und das Problem des Fremden* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994) 92–107.

[11] Cf. J. C. Gertz, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung. Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch* (FRLANT, 186; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) ; T. C. Römer, "Exodus 3–4 und die aktuelle Pentateuchdiskussion" in R. Roukema (ed.), *The Interpretation of Exodus. Studies in Honour of Cornelis Houtman* (CBET, 44; Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006) 65–79.

him with magic power. His rod becomes a serpent (4:1–5). This episode, as has often been observed, foreshadows the so-called plague narrative, in which Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh's magicians. But within the Priestly account of these confrontations, the term 'plague stories' is misleading. The accounts incorporated in the Priestly document are about *Demonstrationswunder*, that is miracles that seek to demonstrate Yhwh's power.

The Priestly version of the miracles in Egypt has five episodes. The first of them is in 7:1–13, which is often understood as a prologue to the series from a synchronic perspective.[12] Moses and Aaron compete with the magicians of Egypt in each of these five episodes.[13] For instance, after Aaron's staff is transformed into a "dragon" (interestingly P uses the term תַּנִּין in 7:9–10, 12, which is also found in Gen 1:21), Pharaoh sends for wise men (חֲכָמִים) and sorcerers (מְכַשְּׁפִים, cf. Deut 18:10). These two categories of specialists are also called חַרְטֻמִּם (often translated as "magicians") in Exod 7:11. This term occurs in the five episodes (see 7:22; 8:3, 14–15; 9:11) and is probably a word borrowed from Egyptian, designating a priest of high rank, in charge of reading ritual instructions (Redford: "chief lector priest").[14] Aaron and the חַרְטֻמִּם have thus a double identity: Both are priests and "magicians." The difference between the two lies in the origin of their knowledge. Egyptian magicians base their performance on occult sciences (cf. 7:11, 22; 8:3, 14[15]), whereas Aaron goes by Yhwh's word as transmitted by Moses (7:9, 15; 8:1, 12). But just like Moses and Aaron, the magicians succeed in transforming water into blood (7:22) and are able to summon the frogs (8:2). This indicates that the author takes the magical abilities of the Egyptians seriously and that for him, magic as such is not a problem.[16] Rather, he wants to prove that Yhwh's words of magic are more efficient than the Egyptians' magic. Thus, in the fourth plague, Egyptian magicians are unable to imitate Aaron's magical gesture, namely the transformation of dust into mosquitoes (Exod 8:13–14). They acknowledge Moses' and Aaron's (and their God's) superiority, when declaring to

[12] Belonging to P then, *grosso modo*, 7:19–22*; 8:1–3,11*; 8:12–15; 9:8–12. There is an astonishing unanimity on this matter among exegetes.

[13] J. Van Seters, "A Contest of Magicians? The Plague Stories in P" in D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman and A. Hurvitz (eds.) *Pomegranates and Golden Bells. Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995) 569–580; T. Römer, "Competing Magicians in Exodus 7–9: Interpreting Magic in Priestly Theology" in T. Klutz (ed.) *Magic in the Biblical World. From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon* (JSNTS, 245; London/New York: T & T Clark International - Continuum, 2003) 12–22.

[14] Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)* (SVT, 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 203.

[15] These are the only Biblical plural occurrences of the word.

[16] Cf. Werner H. Schmidt, "Magie und Gotteswort. Einsichten und Ausdrucksweisen des Deuteronomiums in der Priesterschrift" in I. Kottsieper et al. (eds.) *«Wer ist wie du, HERR, unter den Göttern?»: Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte Israels; für Otto Kaiser zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) 169–179 (178).

Pharaoh: "this is the finger of God (אֱלֹהִים)" (8:15). This expression, which is attested in Egyptian magical formulas, probably refers to Aaron's staff,[17] whose superiority they acknowledge. The Egyptian magicians do not use the Tetragrammaton, but rather the more universal term "God" (אֱלֹהִים), which is consistently used by P for narratives set in pre-Mosaic times, and for the deities of peoples other than Israel. For P, אֱלֹהִים is a concept that can be shared by Hebrews and Egyptians. Contrary to Pharaoh (whose heart Yhwh has hardened), the magicians begin to understand their adversaries' superiority. The Egyptian magicians' defeat is finally confirmed in the fifth episode, in which they themselves are affected by the ashes of the furnace that Moses and Aaron transform into skin disease carrier (9:10–11). In this episode, one may observe an interesting shift. In contrast to the four previous episodes, the narrative does not open with "Yhwh told Moses: tell Aaron..." (cf. 7:8, 19; 8:1, 12), but with "Yhwh told Moses and Aaron" (9:8). Notice that Moses does not transmit the divine order to his brother so he may execute it later, but rather the two play a direct role in the magical operation. Moses even plays the most important part. It is as if the author wanted to show that it is through the direct involvement of Moses that the Egyptian magicians are finally defeated. Moses, who was more or less kept in the background of the first four episodes, is eventually characterised as the one who brings an end to Egyptian magic.

According to Reindl, P likely took up a narrative that originated in the Egyptian Diaspora.[18] This is an attractive idea. It is certainly not pure coincidence that all the other occurrences of the term חַרְטֻמִּם are all in the story of Joseph (Gen 41:8, 24) and in the narrative part of Daniel (Dan. 1:20; 2:2), that is to say in two Diaspora's novels. Be that as it may, Exodus 7–9 may be understood as a dialogue with Egyptian culture. P accepts and maybe admires the magic knowledge of the Egyptian priests, but it wants to convince his readers that belief in Yhwh, the only God, may integrate and exceed such knowledge in might. F. Graf reminds us that traditions about Moses as a magician existed in Jewish circles located in Alexandria and in Syro-Palestine, as well as in the Graeco-Roman world. Exodus 7–9 may also reflect these traditions.[19] The latter cannot but be grounded on a positive evaluation of the magical powers of God's messengers. It is worth noting that the Talmud takes this fact into account when it declares that magical practices, when performed for the benefit of teaching are not included among the prohibitions (b. Sanh. 68a).[20]

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[17] B. Couroyer, "Le «doigt de Dieu» (Exode, VIII, 15)," *RB* 63 (1956) 481–495.

[18] J. Reindl, "Der Finger Gottes und die Macht der Götter. Ein Problem des ägyptischen Diasporajudentums und sein literarischer Niederschlag" in W. Ernst, K. Feiereis, F. Hoffmann (eds.) *Dienst der Vermittlung. Festschrift Priesterseminar Erfurt* (ETS, 37; Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 1977) 49–60.

[19] F. Graf, *La magie dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine* (Pluriel 8822; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994) 14–16.

[20] On attitudes about magical practices, cf. R. Schmitt, "The Problem of Magic and Monotheism in the Book of Leviticus," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8/11 (2008), available at http://www.jhsonline.org.

## 4. *MOSES, THE LEPROUS*

We can briefly turn back to the account of Exodus 4. A second sign—which is quite obscure—follows the transformation of Moses' staff into a serpent (4:6-7). God asks Moses to put his hand into his bosom, the hand then becomes "leprous like snow" and is in turn restored. These two verses interrupt the link that exists between the first sign (Moses' staff becomes a serpent) and the third sign (God's announcement that the water of the Nile will become blood), both of which foreshadow the first two miracles of the plague narrative. The 'sign' of Moses' leprous hand has no satisfactory explanation in the context of the biblical traditions about Moses.

To understand these verses we need to turn to another Moses tradition, which is not attested in the Pentateuch but in the anti-Jewish treatises about the Jews. The work of the Egyptian priest Manetho—who wrote a History of Egypt at the end of the fourth century BCE, or beginning of the third—is of special interest here. Josephus quotes some fragments of it in his *Contra Apionem*. 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, east of the Nile. He later transferred them to the city of Avaris, the former capital of the Hyksos ("the Shepherds"). A leprous Priest named Osarsephos/ Osarsiph/ Osarseph headed the colony there. Osarsephos gave them new laws[21] (*Ag. Ap.* 1.239: "they should not worship the gods or show reverence for any of the animals regarded as sacred by the Egyptians … They should sacrifice and use all of them, and they should have nothing to do with any person except those who shared the oath"). Osarsephos allied himself with the Shepherds from Jerusalem and together they fought against the Egyptian king who had to flee to Ethiopia where he stayed for thirteen years. Meanwhile, the lepers and the Shepherds burned cities and sanctuaries and destroyed statues of the gods. Finally, they were defeated by Amenophis and his army, who "killed many and pursued the rest as far as the borders of Syria." At the end of the story, we are told: "It is said that the man who gave them their constitution and laws was a priest of the people of Heliopolis, named Osarseph[22] from Osiris the god of Heliopolis. When he changed his allegiance, he changed his name and was called Moses" (*Ag. Ap.* 1.250). There is some debate whether Manetho reports this identification, or whether it was added later.[23] The identification of

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[21] Translation according to Verbrugghe and Wickersham. See G. P. Verbrugge and J. M. Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho Introduced and Translated. Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000). Cf. J. M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion. Translation and Commentary* (S. Mason, ed., Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary, vol. 10; Leiden/Boston: E. J. Brill, 2007) 135-41.

[22] According to Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: University Press, 1992), 415–6, Osarseph is a polemical name for Akhenaton; others think of a combination of Joseph and Osiris, or Osiris and Sepa (Barclay, *Against Apion*, 137 n. 832).

[23] See John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (SBLMS, 16;

Osarsephos and Moses is however supported by the biblical account in Exod 4:6–7. The biblical text could be understood as a "counter history" that reacts against an apparently important tradition describing Moses as a man affected with leprosy.[24] To this tradition, the biblical text opposes the affirmation that Moses' leprosy was only momentary; it happened in the context of a transfer of divine powers to him.

## 5. *MOSES AND THE FOREIGN WOMEN*

The question of intermarriage presents a major issue for nascent Judaism. The Deuteronomists and the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah are fighting such marriages, as can be seen in texts like Deuteronomy 7 or 9, Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 10. Nevertheless, the Moses story reports that Moses had two foreign wives: Zipporah, the Midianite (Exodus 2) and a Cushite woman mentioned in Num 12:1. The tradition about a relation between Moses and the Midianites is probably quite old.[25] When the Pentateuch was edited, a redactor tried to make this tradition compatible with the Priestly view of the connubium by adding a genealogy (Gen 25: 1–4) stemming from the union between Abraham and a third wife, Keturah, according to which Midian is a descendant of Abraham.[26]

The case of Num 12:1 is substantially different: Miriam and Aaron criticize Moses because of his marriage with a Cushite woman. Some commentators have tried to identify this woman as Zipporah, on the grounds that the tents of Cushan are mentioned in parallel with the land of Midian in Hab 3:7.[27] But Num 12:1 suggests a new marriage and the mention of a Cushite/Ethiopian woman makes perfect sense in a Diaspora context.[28] Josephus relates the story of a marriage between Moses and an Ethiopian princess. It is difficult to assume that Josephus would have invented the whole story in order to explain Num 12:1. The opposite is

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Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1972) 113–118; Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 58–62; J. M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion*, 140-41, n. 871.

[24] Apparently Hecataeus—who is often considered to be one of Manetho's sources—knows a similar tradition, since he relates that a disease struck Egypt and that the Egyptians decided to expel the foreigners living in the country and among whom was Moses. Hecataeus does not mention explicitly Moses' leprosy, but he combines the theme of the expulsion of Moses and his followers and the theme of disease. A text such as Deut 7:15: "all the dread diseases from Egypt that you experienced he (Yhwh) will not inflict on you" (see also Deut 28:60) might reflect such a tradition.

[25] E. A. Knauf, *Midian. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordarabiens am Ende des 2. Jahrtausends v.Chr.* (ADPV; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988).

[26] This post-priestly (see Knauf, *op. cit.*, 168) constructed genealogy integrates the population of the incense road into Abraham's descendants (*qeturah* means "incense").

[27] See for instance J. de Vaulx, *Les Nombres* (Sources Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1972)159, who refers to traditional and critical commentators.

[28] A. Shinan, "Moses and the Ethiopian Woman. Sources of a Story in *The Chronicles of Moses*," *ScrHier* (1978) 66–78 (71–72).

more plausible. Num 12:1 likely reflects a tradition about an Ethiopian wife of Moses that the last redactors of the Torah could not ignore completely.

(Artapanus, like Josephus, reports that Moses led an Ethiopian campaign, but he does not mention Moses' marriage. Some scholars think that Artapanus omitted this tradition, because he did not like it.[29] But this position is not very convincing given Artapanus' liberal attitude, which is reminiscent of some of the Biblical Diaspora novellas.[30] It is more plausible to imagine that Alexander Polyhistor, who apparently shortened the Artapanus' narrative when he transmitted it, censored this theme.[31])

The tradition about Moses' Ethiopian wife probably originated in a Diaspora context. Its aim was to legitimate intermarriages against the Jerusalemite orthodoxy. Within this context, one may mention, for instance, the situation in the Jewish colony in Elephantine, as already suggested by Diebner.[32] In fact, this colony, which faced the land of Cush and which comprised many mercenaries, offers a fitting background to explain the origin of the tradition of Moses' Ethiopian wife.[33] Num 12:1 is therefore not the starting point of this tradition, but a discrete reflection.[34] The redactor who incorporated this tradition in the book of Numbers tried to legitimate such marriages inside the Torah, as can be seen in the sanction against Miriam who criticized Moses. The popularity of this tradition in later Jewish legends[35] confirms that it provided a path for identification within Diaspora Judaism.

## 6. *MOSES, THE WARRIOR*

In the HB Moses is more or less demilitarized. He does not lead the people into the land and the military conquest is the work of Joshua, who is clearly depicted in the Hexateuch (in Exodus 17 and in the book of Joshua) as a warlord. This narrative structure shows that the redactors of the Torah were not interested in claiming political autonomy through military traditions. Nevertheless, there are some military traditions about Moses at the end of the book of Numbers and in the first chapters of Deuteronomy. He conquers the Transjordan territory and Num 20:14 even mentions a "book

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[29] M. Braun, *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature (1938)* (reprint; New York/London: Garland, 1987) 99–102.

[30] J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem. Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora. Second edition* (The Biblical Resource Series; Livonia: Dove Booksellers, 2000) 45.

[31] E. Koskenniemi, "Greek, Egyptians and Jews in the Fragments of Artapanus," *JSP* (2002) 17–31, 29.

[32] B. J. Diebner, "»...for he had married a Cushite woman« (Num 12,1)," *Nubica* I/II (1990) 499–504.

[33] This tradition incorporated possibly the fact that several Pharaohs took Ethiopian wives in order to symbolize their domination over the land of Cush, see D. Runnalls, "Moses' Ethiopian Campaign," *JSJ* (1993) 135–156 (150).

[34] Targum Pseudo-Jonathan explicitly mentions a queen of Ethiopia.

[35] Shinan, *op. cit.*, 72–77; see also S. Brock, "Some Syriac Legends Concerning Moses," *JJS* (1982) 237–254.

of the wars of Yhwh"[36] which would have contained Moses' military exploits. In these cases, Moses acts like Joshua in the conquest of Canaan. One may ask whether these stories at the end of Numbers reflect a tradition of Moses as a conqueror, which may be found in a fragment from Hecateus and more extensively in the work of Artapanus in which Moses is characterized as an excellent commander leading an Ethiopian campaign. It is highly unlikely that Artapanus invented this tradition, since Josephus (*Ant.* 2.238–256) offers a similar account. Given that there is no direct literary dependency between the relevant works, one has to conclude that both authors took over an oral tradition from the Jewish Diaspora.[37]

Can we retrace the formation of this tradition? The Egyptian Jews certainly knew about the antagonism between Egypt and Cush. Wars between Egypt and Cush were common since the second millennium B.C.E. and, in fact, around 728 B.C.E. the Cushite king Piankhy invaded Egypt. He conquered Memphis and Heliopolis and was proclaimed king over Egypt. This Ethiopian occupation of Egypt, which only came to an end around 672 B.C.E with the installation of Neco I after the Assyrian invasion,[38] offers a fitting background to Artapanus' account (*Praep.* IX, 27, 3).

The topic of Ethiopian campaigns led by Egyptian or other kings (Semiramis, Cambyses) became a literary motif during the Persian era.[39] Egyptian Jews were likely aware of this motif. The legend that shows the largest number of parallels with the tradition reflected in Artapanus and Josephus is the story of Sesostris (Sesoosis).[40] The legendary figure of Sesostris apparently combines recollections about Sesostris III—who defeated the Ethiopians—and Ramses II and was popular during the Persian period.[41] Herodotus (II, 102–110), Diodorus Siculus (I, LIII–LVIII), Hecateus and Strabo all told of Sesostris' achievements.

According to this legend,[42] Sesostris is both a brilliant legislator and an excellent head of state who organizes the land of Egypt in different

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[36] There is however a text-critical problem since the LXX reads "the war of Yhwh" not as the title of the book but as a "quotation" from it.

[37] See for more details and the following T. Römer, "Les guerres de Moïse." in *La construction de la figure de Moïse - The Construction of the Figure of Moses* (ed.T. Römer; Transeuphratène Suppl. 13; Paris: Gabalda, 2007) 169–193.

[38] Cf. D. B. Redford, *From Slave to Pharaoh. The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt* (Baltimore - London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[39] J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora. From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 129 and n. 9; Shinan, *op. cit.*, 68; Collins, *op. cit.*, 41.

[40] D. L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (SBLDS, 1; Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), 153–67; T. Rajak, "Moses in Ethiopia: Legend and Literature," *JJS* (1978) 111–122, 115.

[41] C. Obsomer, *Les campagnes de Sésostris dans Hérodote : essai d'interprétation du texte grec à la lumière des réalités égyptiennes* (Connaissance de l'Egypte ancienne, 1; Bruxelles: Connaissance de l'Egypte ancienne, 1989).

[42] For a summary of this legend cf. Braun, *History and Romance*, 13–18, who situates its origin in the Egyptian resistance against the Persian invaders.

departments (Herodotus II, 109; Diodorus I, LIV, 3). Artapanus tells the same thing about Moses (*Praep*. IX, 27, 3).[43] He also claims that Moses introduced circumcision in Ethiopia, whereas Herodotus (II, 104) and Diodorus (I, LV, 5) mention circumcision in relation with Sesostris. But Sesostris is above all a fine strategist and wages war against Ethiopia (Strabo XVI, 4.4.). Moses is described in the same manner in the accounts of Artapanus and Josephus, and also goes to war against Ethiopia.[44] Both authors also report that Moses has to face the hostility of the Egyptian court (*Praep*. IX, 27, 11–18; *Ant*. II, 254–256); the same holds true for Sesostris when, accompanied by his wife, he returns from his campaign (Herodotus II, 107; Diodorus I, LVII, 7–8).[45] It is therefore a plausible assumption that the tradition used by Artapanus and Josephus was inspired by this legend.[46] If this is the case then, within this tradition, Moses was constructed as a kind of Jewish Sesostris.[47]

One may speculate that this development of the image of Moses might have taken place among Jewish mercenaries, in Elephantine or elsewhere. These mercenaries were likely eager to refer to Moses as the inventor of military art and excellence.[48] In any event, this story was excluded for obvious reasons from the official 'biography' of Moses in the Torah, even if some aspects of a military Moses were taken over into the book of Numbers.

## 7. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Besides the image of the "official" Moses (prophet, mediator and legislator), other traditions existed during the Persian and Hellenistic era. Some of these traditions were integrated into the Torah while others can be detected only with difficulties. In fact, some allusions in the Pentateuch, like those in Exod 4:6–7 or Num 12:1, remain obscure unless the extra biblical traditions about Moses from the Second Temple period are consulted to shed new light on them.

Another example of how extra-biblical texts from the late Persian or Early Hellenistic period were alluded to in the Torah may be found in the Enochic writings,[49] and in particular in the Watchers Story. The closest

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[43] Both authors mention 36 nomes.

[44] Tiede, *op. cit.*, 161.

[45] According Herodutus and Diodorus, his brother wants to kill him through fire. Diodorus reports that the Gods decided to save him. Herodotus tells a cruel plan of his wife: Sesostris' two sons perish in the fire, since Sesostris uses them as a bridge to cross the fire

[46] See also Tiede *op. cit.*, 16. He is, however, convinced that it was Artapanus who invented the Mosaic version of this legend: "it appears likely that Artapanus had adapted a version of this legend and applied it to Moses."

[47] Cf. Exodus 2 in which attributes of Sargon are associated with the figure of Moses. Cf. H. Zlotnick-Sivan, "Moses the Persian? Exodus 2, the 'other' and biblical 'mnemohistory'," ZAW 116 (2004) 189–205.

[48] D. Runnalls, "Moses' Ethiopian Campaign," *JSJ* (1993) 135–156 (147, 150).

[49] I thank Professor Ehud Ben Zvi for that suggestion.

contact between the two texts is to be found in Gen 6:1–4 and the beginning of the Watchers Story in Enoch 6:1–2 and 7:1–2. Traditionally it has been argued that that the Watchers Story is a rewriting of the account in Genesis, but it seems more plausible to consider Gen 6:1–4 as a 'quotation' from the Enoch story.[50]

If we accept this view, it means that we should question the often accepted assumption that all the traditions about Moses (or Enoch) found in the work of Jewish and Greek authors of that period are midrashic developments of the biblical text. We have to rethink the formation of the biblical account of Moses in the light of the stories transmitted by Hecateus, Manetho, Artapanus, Josephus and others. It appears then that the Moses stories in the Torah represent a selection of the stories that circulated at the time, either in Yehud, Samaria or in the Jewish Diaspora.

[50] See on this P. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History* (JSPS, 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 82–83; P. R. Davies, "And Enoch Was not, for Genesis Took him," in C. Hempel and J. M. Lieu (eds.), *Biblical Traditions in Transmission. Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb* (JSJS, 111; Leiden/New York/ Köln: Brill, 2006), 97–107.