



## **THE VISION OF MOSES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY: THE CASE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS**

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**Abstract :** In the Hebrew Bible and in its ancient Greek and Aramaic versions, the figure of Moses is presented in a multitude of perspectives. Our focus is on the supernatural visions that, according to biblical texts, he experienced. In the Book of Exodus a series of extraordinary visions is granted by God to Moses (Ex 3:1-6; 19:16-25; 24:9-11; 24:15-17; 33:9-11; 33:17-23; 34:

27-33). These visionary experiences have the function of consecrating him as the guide of the people, as the liberator from Egyptian slavery, and as the mediator / transmitter of the law established by God. In Judaism of Roman-Hellenistic period, inside and outside the Land of Israel, different Jewish groups give various representations of the figure of Moses oriented to express different cultural functions of him and also various ways of relation between the Jews and the surrounding peoples.

As an example of a transformation of the image of Moses through times we take into account the episode of the “transfiguration” narrated in the Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew (Mk 9:2-9; Lk 90:28-36; Matt 17:1-9) and also reported in other texts of Jesus' followers of the first two centuries.<sup>1</sup> In this episode, the figure of Moses plays a prominent role and his visionary experiences take on particular meanings.

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## THE MANY IMAGES OF MOSES IN ROMAN-HELLENISTIC JUDAISM

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27-33). These visionary experiences have the function of consecrating him as the guide of the people, as the liberator from Egyptian slavery, and as the mediator / transmitter of the law established by God. In Judaism of Roman-Hellenistic period, inside and outside the Land of Israel, different Jewish groups give various representations of the figure of Moses oriented to express different cultural functions of him and also various ways of relation between the Jews and the surrounding peoples.

As an example of a transformation of the image of Moses through times we take into account the episode of the “transfiguration” narrated in the Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew (Mk 9:2-9; Lk 9:28-36; Matt 17:1-9) and also reported in other texts of Jesus’ followers of the first two centuries.<sup>1</sup> In this episode, the figure of Moses plays a prominent role and his visionary experiences take on particular meanings.

## THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS IN MARK’S GOSPEL AND MOSES’ VISION ON THE MOUNT OREB

Mark<sup>2</sup> says that Jesus ascended a “high” mountain and took Peter, James and John with him (9:2). The texts highlight that a vision takes place on the mountain. Jesus’ followers first see (a) that Jesus is physically transformed (9:3). His appearance changes. Then (b), they see Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus (9:4). Finally (c), a cloud surrounds them in the shadow (9:8a), and they hear a voice coming from the cloud saying,

“This is my beloved son, listen to him (9:8b).” The voice that legitimates Jesus and proclaims him as son of God, specifies that he is the one who deserves obedience. At that point the vision ends. This means that it is through a visual occurrence that the authority of Jesus is proclaimed and guaranteed to the disciples. Mark’s Gospel does not describe an epiphany of God, but a vision experienced by the three disciples. That is the text speaks of a particular kind of human relationship with the supernatural world.

On the basis of his Jewish culture, Mark makes use of visual elements that derive from the descriptions of Moses’ visions in the biblical book of Exodus. It is remarkable that Mark uses the vision and not another Jewish form of contact with the supernatural (prayer, heavenly journey, revelatory dream, etc.). Here history of religions and cultural anthropology are indispensable for understanding the visionary phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> From our point of view, what is important in the transfiguration narrative is the change of the figure of Moses in comparison to that of Exodus.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, in Mark, Moses appears as a legislator (1:44; 7:10; 10:3; 12:19) and as the author of the Pentateuch (12:26), but in the account of the transfiguration, what matters is another aspect: his supernatural visions are relevant. Mark’s intention is to compare the vision of the three Jesus’ disciples with the visions of Moses on the Oreb (as they appear in Exodus). One element that suggests that Mark’s account is structured on the visions of Moses is the fact that Jesus appears transformed. Moses in fact transforms his face, as a consequence of his vision of God: “the aspect of the skin of his face shone (*dedoxastai*) because he had been talking with Him” (Ex 34:29).

Even the splendour of Jesus’ clothes seems to recall the splendour of Moses’ face. This similarity is of primary importance. It might indicate that the story supposes that Jesus meets God during his vision on the mountain, as it happened to Moses who retained the splendour

on his face after meeting God.<sup>5</sup> The ascension on the high mountain, the descent of the cloud, God speaking in the cloud are three other elements mentioned by Mark that are typical of Moses' Exodus visions (Ex 3:1-6; 19:16-25; 24:9-11; 24:15-17; 33:9-11; 33:17-23).<sup>6</sup> There is also a further issue that suggests that Mark's account refers to Moses' visions: the temporal collocation. Jesus decides to go up the mountain "six days later". This means that his vision takes place on the seventh day, just as in Ex 24:16: "the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud." (Ex 24:16).<sup>7</sup> The narrative of the transfiguration assumes implicitly that Jesus himself had a vision after which he was transformed and could speak with Elijah and Moses. It may be supposed that even Jesus is wrapped in the cloud and hears the voice of God who confers him authority for the future. Indeed, this is perhaps the central element that brings Jesus' vision closer to those of Exodus.

Finally, there is another structural aspect that relates the story of the transfiguration to the visions of Moses in Exodus. The fact is that witnesses are present in the visionary event (of Moses or of Jesus). They are able, according to a series of signs, to understand that the seer is really experiencing an extraordinary contact with God. In Exodus, the people see that the vision has taken place *because* they actually observe the cloud or the fire of the glory of God, while Moses receives the vision and comes into contact with God. In the transfiguration the disciples are the actual witnesses of Jesus' vision and of his extraordinary experience. All this makes us think that Mark's account attributes to Jesus a function that is understandable only through a comparison with the visions obtained by Moses as narrated in the book of Exodus.

## THE VISIONS OF MOSES IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS

We need to analyse more deeply different aspects of Moses' visionary history narrated in Exodus. We want to underline the relevance of the following texts:

1. the vision of the burning bush on Mount Oreb (Ex 3:1-6);
2. the vision of the descent of God on the top of the mountain and the vision of God within the cloud (Ex 19:16-25);
3. the vision on the mountain with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy Elders of Israel (Ex 24: 9-18);
4. the vision on the Mountain of God in which Moses remains for forty days and forty nights (Ex 24: 15-17);
5. the visions in the tent of meeting (Ex 33: 9-11);<sup>8</sup>
6. the vision of the Glory (Ex 33: 17-23).
7. the shining of Moses' face talking with God (Ex 34:29-35).<sup>9</sup>

From these seven visions we understand the structure of Moses' visionary experience: (a) the vision often must take place in a location whose access is delimited by borders that cannot be transgressed by unauthorized people or by persons that do not undergo special conditions that safeguard the sacredness of the place; (b) the vision consists of a reciprocal seeing of the seer and the divinity. This reciprocity necessarily creates an asymmetrical situation since God cannot be seen without causing the destruction of those who see him. It is in this way that while God sees the seer directly, the latter sees God only through mediated forms. God must be seen, but at the same time is out of sight. This contradiction is resolved through the use of some instrumental devices: cloud, glory, fire, angel, lightnings, thunders, and earthquakes. The seer must be veiled or hidden inside a rock. God in particular shows himself only from behind and by means of a hand that covers and protects the seer: "*and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.*" (Ex 33:22-23). (c) The

vision gives rise to manifestations that must be visible and audible also by those who are not allowed to receive the vision. (d) There must be an audience who can observe from outside the phenomena, which are symptoms or proofs that the seer is meeting God. This presence of witnesses provides evidence that the vision has taken place. These two latter aspects are structurally essential because they both involve the legitimating function of the vision (in the sense that the vision gives the seer power with respect to the group).

The question of Moses to God at the beginning of Chapter 4 of Exodus clarifies without doubt that one can believe in a prophet only if s/he is convinced that the prophet has seen God: "Then Moses answered, but suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, the Lord did not appear to you" (Ex 4:1). Here the first thing to point out is that the authority of Moses is based on God's vision. A vision first provides certainty to the seer about the divine origin of communication. Subsequently, it gives authority to the seer with regard to the addressees of the message (that comes from God). People can believe in Moses and obey him only if they are convinced that God appeared to Moses. The legitimate function of the vision in this culture is therefore fundamental. The cultural mechanism implies that only God has absolute authority to found and strengthen the function of a leader and to create a body of laws. How is it possible to give proof to have received an apparition from God? The answer of Exodus is twofold. In the case of the burning bush, in which the vision has no witnesses, God gives Moses some powers that assure with certainty that God appeared to him:

The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail'—so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in

his hand— *'so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'* Again, the Lord said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous, as white as snow. Then God said, 'Put your hand back into your cloak'—so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body— *If they will not believe you nor listen to the voice of the first sign, they may believe the second sign. If they will not believe even these two signs neither listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the river and pour it on the dry ground; and the water that you shall take from the river will become blood on the dry ground'* (Ex 4: 2-9).

These powers are given to Moses "because they believe that the Lord has appeared to you the God of their fathers" (4,5). In the second case, however (that of the visions described in Ex 3: 1-6; 24: 9-11; 24.15-17; 33:9-11; 33:17-23; 34:29-35), evidence is provided by the testimony of people who were present and looked more or less from far and outside.

In the account of the transfiguration there are also aspects, which do not belong to Exodus's visions.<sup>10</sup> The Gospel of Mark introduces for example near Moses the figure of Elijah, obviously absent in Exodus. Further, in the transfiguration, Moses is not the protagonist who receives the vision. He does not play the main role. He is even named after Elijah (Elijah appeared with Moses). The couple Elijah-Moses is present in the Hebrew Bible in the last two verses of Malachi, in which the two characters appear as eschatological figures, or at least are both named in an eschatological context: "I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse. Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that

I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel” (Mal 3: 22-24).

In addition to the eschatological function, other aspects of biblical history connect Moses and Elijah: (a) following the Jewish culture of Roman-Hellenistic times, both Moses and Elijah do not die but are raised to heaven (in the case of Moses this fact is controversial);<sup>11</sup> (b) both have an important relation with Mount Oreb; (c) both have an extraordinary experience of forty days; (d) the visionary experiences of Elijah and Moses present similar aspects. In brief, Mark seems to depend on images of Moses present in different parts of the Bible or in other Jewish writings.

### MOSES AS REVEALER OF THE FUTURE (ON THE MOUNT NEBO)

In the Jewish writings of Hellenistic and Roman times the image of Moses undergoes a multiplicity of transformations. Among the various images of Moses it is possible to identify a profound difference between the Jewish writings of the Land of Israel and those of the Egyptian area.<sup>12</sup> In the texts produced by Greek-speaking Jews, often of Egyptian origin, Moses is presented above all as a personage endowed with wisdom. He is a prophet and legislator, with divine characteristics. Much less present is his aspect of liberator in antagonism with the environment and with other peoples. In the historical romance, written in Egypt by the Jew Artapanus<sup>13</sup> probably in the third century before C.E., Moses is not primarily the liberator of the Jewish people in antagonism with the Egyptians. On the contrary, he is a kind of “Egyptian patriot”,<sup>14</sup> which legitimates the presence of the Jews in Egypt with a special cultural function. He is presented as the great personage that the Greeks called Musaeus. He was the teacher of Orpheus, and invented philosophy, architecture, military science, and navigation.<sup>15</sup> Following Artapanus, Moses instructed each Egyptian province to worship its special god (27,4), and prescribed the consecration of the Ibis (27,9) and the Apis

(27,12).<sup>16</sup> In this sense, Moses is the founder of all Egyptian culture and religion. A similar representation of Moses is also present in other Jewish Alexandrian texts as Eupolemus, Aristobulus and Aristeeas.<sup>17</sup> Caterina Moro has underlined the image of Moses as the heir to the throne of Egypt in some Jewish-Hellenistic authors as Artapanus, Josephus (Ant. II 239-253), the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, and Philo.<sup>18</sup> In this context, Moses is not seen as a symbol of the political antagonism between the Jewish people and the Gentiles. Following Philo (Vita Mosis I 148s.), “Moses is characterized by a spiritual supremacy precisely because of its renunciation to an earthly throne that would have been his by right.”<sup>19</sup>

In the Book of Wisdom, Moses is not presented as a lawgiver, or a liberator, but as “prophet” (11:1) “animated by the spirit of wisdom (10:16a).” He is not “the living proof of the superiority and excellence of Israel and of its divine Law. Rather, he is an example [...] of how divine wisdom can act in whoever is disposed to receive her”.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, Moses is not the symbol of cultural barriers between Jews and Egyptians. In his *De vita Mosis*,<sup>21</sup> Philo wants to “present an ideal Moses who represents everything that intellectual Greeks and Romans, as well as cultured Jews, could ever wish for, by developing and accumulating roles that the biblical Moses clearly does not have”.<sup>22</sup> For him, “both Jewish wisdom and Greek philosophy” are “exemplified supremely” in Moses.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, Moses becomes the symbol of integration between Jewish and Greek culture.

In the Palestinian environment, on the contrary, the antagonism of Moses and Israel with the “pagans” is amply underlined. In this context Moses also assumes the function of announcer and revealer of the future destiny of humanity, of Israel’s future struggles with the pagans, and of his final victory over them. This function of Moses as revealer of the future and the eschatological destiny of Israel is present for example in the Book of Jubilees, in the

Assumption of Moses, and in various texts of Qumran. The narrative of the transfiguration of Jesus in the Gospels seems to depend primarily on the Palestinian re-elaborations of the figure of Moses and is less connected with the Jewish Egyptian texts of Hellenistic and Roman times.

The theme of Moses who knows the divine revelation of all times is for example present in the book of Jubilees, a book written by Moses and dictated by God through the Angel of the Face: "And Moses was on the Mount forty days and forty nights, and God taught him the earlier and the later history of the division of all the days of the law and of the testimony" (Jub 1:4), "And do you write down for yourself all these words which I declare unto you on this mountain, the first and the last, which shall come to pass in all the divisions of the days in the law and in the testimony and in the weeks and the jubilees unto eternity, until I descend and dwell with them throughout eternity" (Jub 1:26).

In the *Assumptio Mosis*,<sup>24</sup> at the end of the forty years in the desert, Moses goes up the Mount Nebo, from which he can see the Promised Land, and predict the future history of the Jewish people and its eschatological triumph:

When he called unto him Joshua, the son of Nun, a man deemed worthy by the Lord to be the (sc. Moses') successor for the people and for the tabernacle of the testimony with all its holy objects, and to lead the people into the land that was given to their fathers, so that it would be given to them on account of the covenant, and on account of the oath, the things he (sc. Moses) said in the tabernacle, namely that he (sc. God) would give it (sc. the land) through Joshua; saying to Joshua: "Keep this word, and promise to do impeccably everything that is commanded, according to your zeal. Therefore, thus says the Lord of the world. For he created the world on behalf of his people, but he did not also reveal this purpose of the creation from the beginning

of the world, so that the nations would be put to disgrace on their account, and, through their deliberations among themselves, to their own humiliation disgrace themselves. Therefore, he has devised and invented me, I who have been prepared from the beginning of the world to be the mediator of his covenant. But now, I will reveal it (sc. the purpose of God's creation) to you, because the time of the years of my life is fulfilled, and I will go to the resting-place of my fathers, and before the entire people... You, however, receive this writing, which serves to acknowledge the trustworthiness of the books which I will hand to you, and you must order them, embalm them, and put them in earthenware jars in a place which he made from the beginning of the creation of the world, so that his name be invoked; until the day of repentance, in the visitation with which the Lord will visit them in the fulfillment of the end of days (Ass. Mos. 1: 6-18).<sup>25</sup>

In Qumran we have texts depicting Moses as an eschatological and messianic figure. In the *Words of Moses* (1Q22), for example, Moses, arrived on Mount Nebo after the forty-year peregrination in the desert, predicts the future history of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and the divine punishments caused by the fact that Israel will abandon the Law.<sup>26</sup> This idea of Moses as a revealer of the eschatological future of Israel was widespread at Qumran<sup>27</sup> as e.g. in 4Q387a; 4Q388a 4Q389 4Q390.<sup>28</sup> In addition, in Qumran we find other aspects of the figure of Moses. He is presented as God's "elect" and also as a "God for the powerful" (4Q374 Fr 2 23, 5-6).<sup>29</sup> In this context, there is also a special development of the splendour of Moses' face. His face glorified by the encounter with God, is also attributed a particular strength: it can convey strength to those who see him: "And when he [God] shines his face toward them as a cure [or rather transmission of strength], they reinforced their hearts again" (4Q374 Fr 2 col II line 8). These elements seem to describe the figure of a 'divine king' whose

strength is expressed not only by actions but also by the face. This image could be the background behind Jesus' metamorphosis in the Gospels.<sup>30</sup>

### MOSES AS ESCHATOLOGICAL ANNOUNCER IN THE LUCAN VERSION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The Gospel of Luke<sup>31</sup> offers an interpretation and a modification of Mark's account. In the first part of the Lucan narrative, Jesus is the protagonist, in the second the disciples are. In this way, a vision of Jesus is clearly described in the first part, while in the second part the disciple's vision is central. First of all, Luke understood that Mark was inspired by the visions of Moses in the book of Exodus, and incorporated into his version other elements of the Exodus' visions. In particular, he added the mention of the glory (doxa) of Moses (and of Elijah): (Luke 9: 30-31), The phrase "the glory of Jesus" from Luke 9:32 "eidon tēn doxan autou", "kai ōphthē autois Hēlias syn Mōysi" (Mark 9:4), The Lucan affirmation (Luke 9:32) "eidon tēn doxan autou".

Kai eiden Aarōn kai pantes hoi presbyteroi Israēl ton Mōysēn, kai ēn dedoxasmenē hē ophis tou chrōmatos tou prosōpou autou, kai ephobēthēsan (Ex 34:30).

Kai eiden hoi huioi Israēl to prosōpon Mōysē, hoti dedoxastai (Ex 34:35).

Ho de Petros kai hoi syn autō [...] eiden tēn doxan autou kai tous duo andras tous synestōtas autō (Luke 9:32).

Also important is Luke's concern about the existence of witnesses of the bodily glorification of the face of Jesus, exactly as Exodus 34 underlines that not only Aaron but also the Sons of Israel saw the glory of Moses.

Above all, Luke introduced in the transfiguration narrative the image of Moses as

the announcer of the eschatological future, which had become fundamental in some Jewish writings of the Land of Israel in Hellenistic and Roman times.<sup>33</sup> Moses and Elijah "were speaking of his (Jesus') departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (9: 31b). In essence, Jesus receives information from Moses and Elijah about his death. Moses acts in relation to Jesus as a revealer who predicts what will happen to him in Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> We can therefore think that Moses here appears as a prophet who knows the last times, similar to Moses' representation that we find in the book of Jubilees, in the *Assumptio Mosis*<sup>35</sup> or in certain texts of Qumran.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON MOSES' IMAGE IN JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

1. In the transfiguration's narrative, the visionary experiences of Moses narrated in the book of Exodus constitute the model for understanding the figure of Jesus. In Mark, through a vision, Peter, James and John are aware of the extraordinary legitimacy obtained by Jesus thanks to the glorification of his body (which imitates the body's transformation of Moses). The legitimacy of Jesus is actually obtained through the voice of God who descends into the cloud over the mount and confirms Jesus as In Luke as well, the founding function of Moses' visions in the book of Exodus is essential because the glory of Jesus is revealed through a vision. The image of Moses as eschatological revealer (attested in many Jewish writings of the Land of Israel) is also present.
2. In the Gospels' narratives what matters is primarily the cultural complex of the biblical visions attributed to Moses and not the single figure of Moses. In the ancient Jewish culture, every process of knowledge and public legitimation had to be based on an access to the supernatural power of God. Moses' supernatural visions in Exodus constitute a fundamental and complex cultural imagery in which the appearance of

God within the cloud on the mountain on the one hand and the *bodily metamorphosis* on the other are signs that accompany the manifestation of God.<sup>36</sup> They constitute a proof of his manifestation. In this imaginary, Moses' figure and function are indispensable. In this cultural imaginary, moreover, it is essential that the supernatural visions should be attested by witnesses.

Physical mutation is not a pure decorative element. It is the signal of the transition from the ordinary to the supernatural level. If *metamorphosis* is lacking, also a sufficient proof of the supernatural vision is lacking.

Transformations of the body are therefore essential for the logic of narratives of supernatural visions. The same considerations apply to the voice, which is considered divine thanks to the cultural imaginary of the cloud coming down from the sky on the mountain. In other words, for understanding the experience of Jesus and for legitimating his function, the recourse of the Gospels to the extraordinary visions of Moses is essential. The cultural complex of Moses' visions is applied to Jesus in order to demonstrate his access to the supernatural power of God.

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## NOTES

1. See e.g. The Apocalypse of Peter 15-17; 2 Peter 1:18; Acts of Peter 20-21; Acts of John 90-91; Acts of Thomas 143; Apocryphon of John 9:2-8; Gospel of Philip (NHC II 57:28 – 58:10); Pistis Sophia 91, 14-20; Acts of Philip 5:22-23. See S.S. Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration and the Believers' Transformation: A Study of the Transfiguration and Its Development in Early Christian Writings*, Tübingen, 2009; J.A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, New York, 1986.
2. M. Grilli, L'impotenza che salva. Il mistero della croce in Mc 8,27-10,52. Lettura in chiave comunicativa, Bologna, 2009, pp. 69-82; J. Marcus, Mark 8-16. *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New Haven, 2009; C. Focant, *L'Évangile selon Marc*, Paris, 2004.
3. We can overlook the question whether in the transfiguration there are three visions or one in several phases.
4. On the fact that, in Mark, Moses is more important than Elijah see also M.D. Goulder, 'Elijah with Moses, or, a Rift in the Pre-Markan Lute', in *Christology, Controversy and Community*, Leiden, 2000, pp. 193-208.
5. As is well known, the theme of metamorphosis is widespread in both Jewish (see e.g. 2 Baruch 51, 3.5.10; Asc. Is 6-11) and Roman-Hellenistic culture. Mark, who writes in Greek, but is inspired by the Exodus conceptions, is aware that metamorphosis is a phenomenon understandable to a Roman-Hellenistic audience. In this setting Jesus' transformation could easily allude to his particular relationship with the divine world.
6. The relation between Moses, the cloud, and the glory that is found in Moses' visions in Exodus is remembered in Ez 1:4-14 and 2 Mac 2:8 and can be therefore considered a well-known constellation of elements connected to the image of Moses.
7. We leave aside the indication of purely literary elements such as the use of the verb (episkiazô), used in Mk 9: 6, found in the Greek translation of Exodus (LXX 40:35).
8. R.W.L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God. Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, Sheffield, 1983, 79-90.



9. J.M. Philpot, *Exodus 34:29-35 and Moses' shining face*, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, 23, 2013, 1-11.
10. This fact has been repeatedly underlined by scholars. See e.g. the commentaries of J. Marcus, Mark 8-16. *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New Haven, 2009; Bovon, *L'Évangile selon saint Luc (1-9)*, Genève, 2007; C. Focant, *L'Évangile selon Marc*, Paris, 2004.
11. Deut 34: 5-6 speaks clearly of the tomb of Moses, but leave space for other interpretations. Many Jewish writers maintain that Moses did not die at all: Philo, however, is not absolutely clear on this: see Mos 2.288; Sac 1-10. In Quaest. Gen 1.86 however says clearly: Enoch moved “from a sensible and visible place to an incorporeal and intelligible form. This gift the proto- Prophet [Moses] also obtained, for no one knew his burial place. And still another, Elijah, followed him on high from earth to heaven at the appearance of the divine countenance, or it would be more proper and correct to say, he ‘ascended’ (2 Kings 2:11)”. Flavius Josephus seems to think that Moses was bodily translated unto heaven in Mont Nebo (Ant 4.315-326). See also Sifre to *Deuteronomy* 354 and b. Sotah 13b.
12. On Moses in the Jewish writings of Hellenistic and Roman times see: R.D. Aus, *The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus and the Death, Burial, and Translation of Moses in Judaic Tradition*, Lanham, 2008; R. Bloch, *Moses und der Mythos. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der griechischen Mythologie bei jüdisch-hellenistischen Autoren*, Leiden, 2011; Ph. Borgeaud, T. Römer, Y. Volokhine, *Interprétations de Moïse: Égypte, Judée, Grèce et Rome*, Leiden, 2010; S.N. Bunta, *Moses, Adam, and the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel the Tragedian: on the Roots of a Merkabah Text*, Ph.D. Dissertation Marquette University, Milwaukee, 2005; J. *Moses in Greco- Roman Paganism*, New York, 1972; M. Himmelfarb, *R. Moses the Preacher and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 1984, pp. 55-78 (published also in: *Between Temple and Torah; Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); D.A. Lee, *The significance of Moses in the Gospel of John*, *Australian Biblical Review* 63 (2015) 52-66; G. Stemmerger, *Moses in der rabbinischer Tradition*, Wien, 2016; H.K. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, Philadelphia, 1957; G. Vermes, *Die Gestalt des Moses an der Wende der beiden Testamente*, in: *Moses in Schrift und Überlieferung*, Düsseldorf, Patmos, 1963, pp 78- 86; G.G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library*, Leiden, 2003.
13. See C. Moro, *Lo storico Artapano e il passato multiethnico*, in B. Bellucci, E. Jucci, A. Rizza, M. Tomassini Pieri (a cura di), *Traduzione di tradizioni e tradizioni di traduzione. Atti del quarto incontro «Orientalisti»* (Pavia, 19-21 aprile 2007), Milano, 2008, pp. 295-315; Ead., *Mosè nell'Egitto greco-romano; tradizioni in conflitto*, 2009, pp. 165-170; Ead., *Mosè erede al trono d'Egitto nelle fonti giudeo-ellenistiche*, 2011, pp. 239-252; *Miti di fondazione e priorità etnico-culturale giudaica. L'esempio di Mosè*, *Ricerche Storico Bibliche* 27, 2015, pp. 177- 192; Ead., *La regia del disastro. La tradizione delle piaghe d'Egitto e il terremoto narrato dallo storico Artapano*, in G. Capriotti Vitozzi, *Egyptian Curses 2. A Research on Ancient Catastrophes (AHMES 2)*, Roma, 2015, pp. 113-129; C. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors I: Historians*, Atlanta, 1983, pp. 189-243; P. Borgeaud, Y. Volokhine, T. Römer, *Interprétations de Moïse. Judée, Égypte, Grèce et Rome*, Leiden, 2010.
14. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 b.C. – 135 a.C.)*. A New English Version Revised and Edited by Geza Vermes, Ferguson Millar, Martin Goodman. Volume III. Part I, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 522.
15. *Ibidem*.
16. *Ibidem*.

17. L. Mazzinghi, The Figure of Moses in the Book of Wisdom, in G.G. Xeravitis, J. Zsengellér, X. Szabó, *Canonicity, Setting and Wisdom in the Deuterocanonicals*, Berlin, 2014, pp. 183-206.
18. C. Moro, Mosè erede al trono d'Egitto nelle fonti giudeo-ellenistiche, 2011, pp. 239-252, on Artapanus pp. 185-188; on Josephus and Ezekiel, pp. 188-191; on Philo, pp. 191-192.
19. C. Moro, *Mosè erede al trono d'Egitto*, p. 192.
20. L. Mazzinghi, *The Figure of Moses*, p. 206.
21. Filone, Vita di Mosè, Rimini, 2017. H. Clifford, Moses as Philosopher-Sage in Philo, in: A. Graupner and M. Wolter, *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Traditions*, Berlin, 2007, pp. 151-167; E. R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, Oxford, 1962; S. J. Hafemann, *Moses in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Survey*, 1990, pp. 79-104; S. J.K. Pearce, *Notes on Philo's Portrait of Moses as an Ideal Leader in the Life of Moses*, 2004, pp. 37-74; I. Scott, *Is Philo's Moses a Divine Man?*, 2002, pp. 87-111; L. Mazzinghi, *The Figure of Moses*, pp.199-201.
22. H. Clifford, *Moses as Philosopher-Sage in Philo*, p. 165.
23. *Ibidem*, p. 167.
24. With the title *Assumptio Mosis*, we refer to the manuscript of the latin translation of an ancient Jewish work published by A. Ceriani, *Monumenta sacra et profana*, I, fasc.1, Milano, 1861. The *Assumptio Mosis*, was probably written (see Ass. Mos. 6:5 ss) between 4 before E.C. and 30 E.C. See J. Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition With Commentary*, Leiden, 1997. See also K. Haacker, *Assumptio Mosis, eine samaritanische Schrift?*, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 25, 1969, pp. 385-405; D. J. Halperin, *Origen, Ezekiel's Merkabah and the Ascension of Moses*, *Church History* 50, 1981, pp.261-275; J. W. Van Henten, *Moses as heavenly messenger in Assumptio Mosis 10:2 and Qumran passages*, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 54, 2003, pp.216-227; W. Horbury, *Moses and the covenant in The Assumption of Moses and the Pentateuch*, in A.D.H. Mayes, R.B. Salter, *Covenant as Context. Essays in Honour of E.W. Nicholson*, Oxford, 2003, pp. 191-208; G. Reese, *Die Geschichte Israels in der Auffassung des frühen Judentums. Eine Untersuchung der Tiervision und der Zehnwochenapokalypse des äthiopischen Henochbuches, der Geschichtsdarstellung der Assumptio Mosis und der des 4Esrabuches*, Ph.D. Heidelberg, 1967, pp. 89-124, A. Schalit, *Untersuchungen zur Assumptio Mosis*, Leiden, 1989. Many scholars prefer to identify this work, attested in the old latin translation, as *Testamentum Mosis*: R. Doran, *T. Mos. 4:8 and the Second Temple*, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, 1987, pp. 491-492; K. Haacker, *Assumptio Mosis, eine samaritanische Schrift?*, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 25, 1969, pp. 385-405; E. Israeli, *Taxo and the Origin of the Assumption of Moses*, 2009, pp. 735-757; G. A. Keddie, *Judaean apocalypticism and the unmasking of ideology: foreign and national rulers in the Testament of Moses*, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 44, 2013, pp. 301-338; E.M. Laperrousaz, *Le Testament de Moïse (généralement appelé Assomption de Moïse, Semitica* 19, 1970, pp.3-14; D. Maggiorotti (a cura di), *Il Testamento di Mosè (Assumptio Mosis in P. Sacchi (a cura di), Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento. Volume 4. Brescia, 2000, pp. 181-235; Ead., La datazione del Testamento di Mosè, Henoch* 15, 1993, pp. 235-262. *Some scholars differentiate the Testamentum Mosis from the Assumptio Mosis as a lost, different text, known only thanks to quotations by ancient Christian writers, see e.g. R. Bauckham, Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, London, 1990, pp. 235-280.
25. Translation of Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses*, 8-9.
26. Moses addresses Eleazar and Joshua (Col I, 11). We are therefore close to the initial situation of the *Assumptio Mosis* where the interlocutor is however the only Joshua.
27. J. Bowley, *Moses in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Living in the Shadow of God's Anointed*, in P.W. Plint, *The Bible at Qumran. Text, Shape and Interpretation*, Eerdmans, 2011, 173-174. Bowley quotes 1QM 10: "he taught us from ancient times through all generations". See also J. Strugnell,

- Moses Pseudepigrapha at Qumran: 4Q375, 4Q376, and Similar Works, in L.H. Schiffman, *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin*, Sheffield, 1990, pp.248-54 and J. Strugnell in M. Broshi, et al. *Qumran Cave 4, XIV, Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (DJD 19), Oxford, 1995, pp.129-36.
28. Martone, *I testi di Qumran*, Brescia, 2003, pp.459-460. G.G. Xeravits, King, Priest, Prophet: *Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library*, Leiden, 2003, pp. 174–91 discusses the relation between Moses and Elijah in the context of Qumranic expectations.
  29. See also E. Latour, “Une proposition de reconstruction de l'apocryphe de Moïse (1Q29, 4Q375, 4Q376, 4Q408)”, *Revue de Qumrân* 22 (2006) 575-591.
  30. On the eschatological relation between Moses and Elijah at Qumran see, “The Endtime Return of Elijah and Moses at Qumran”, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10 (2003) 221-242.
  31. We do not take in consideration here Matthew 17:1-9. See S. Pedersen, *Die Proklamation Jesu als des eschatologischen Offenbarungsträgers* (Mt xvii 1-13), *Novum Testamentum*, XVII, (1975) 241-265.
  32. Luke seem to follow also in v. 9:34 (“they were afraid”, e' fobh/qhsan) the text of Ex 34:30 (e' fobh/qhsan). See however M.D. Goulder, *Luke. A New Paradigm*. Vol. 1, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1989, 443-444.
  33. The version of Luke's Gospel re-elaborates the Mark's narrative in many other minor points. (a) It first corrects the time the episode takes place. Mark had said "six days later", Luke says "about eight days later". (b) The place is not "a very high mountain", but "the mountain", as if the reader knows it, “recalling Moses' ascent of Sinai and Elijah's of Horeb Exod. 19.3; 24.15; 1 Kgs 19” (M.D. Goulder, *Luke. A New Paradigm*. Vol. 1, 441). (c) Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, so to perform a ritual that has a function in terms of the visionary experience that will be described. In fact, the transformation of Jesus' face occurs "while praying". Luke here applies to the event the pattern of a prayer ritual in which he frames other important supernatural experiences of Jesus (baptism and the choice of the Twelve). (d) He corrects the order in the list of three disciples: John is named before James. (e) Luke avoids the verb metamorphoô and makes use of a periphrasis: “the form (to eidos) of his [Jesus's] face became different (eteron)” (9: 29). Finally (f), the three followers are oppressed by sleep and are also afraid to enter the cloud. According to Luke, however, the vision of the three followers took place in a state of consciousness despite an initial sleeping state.
  34. It is also probable that, following Luke, Jesus had decided to go up the mountain to invoke a revelation about his destiny.
  35. “Outside of the New Testament, the Testament of Moses presents the closest parallel to the eschatological framework of Luke-Acts” (D. P. Messner, *Suffering Intercession and Eschatological Atonement: an Uncommon Common View in the Testament of Moses and in Luke Acts*, in J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans, *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, Sheffield, 1993, pp. 202-227, here: 226. Messner highlights many aspects of contact of Luke- Acts with the Testament of Moses (ibidem, 224-226).
  36. F. Bovon, *L'Évangile selon saint Luc (1-9)*, Genève, 2007, on 9: 29.