



THE FATHER OF ALL PROPHETS: MOSES AS PROPHET AND THE PROPHECY OF MOSES IN JEWISH, CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

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Abstract : Mose – מֹשֶׁה (Mosheh), Μωϋσῆς or Μωσῆς (Mōysēs or Mōsēs), موسى (Mūsā) – belongs without doubt to those figures of religious history, who have experienced an incomparably broad reception far beyond the original religious-historical and traditional context and who have remained in historically effective memory to this day. From the very beginning, however, he has been portrayed as a shimmering figure. Therefore, years ago already, Robert Martin-Achard rightly called the Moses of the Hebrew Bible a figure polysémique, as can be learned from the numerous attributes and honorary titles bestowed upon him.

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can be learned from the numerous attributes and honorary titles bestowed upon him.¹

Like a child prodigy, born and grown up under the special protection of God (Exodus 2:1-10), Moses is introduced as *Servant of God* (Numbers 12:7-8; Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1), and *Man of God* (Deuteronomy 33:1; Joshua 14:6; Psalm 90:1; Ezra 3:2; I Chronicles 23:14; II Chronicles 30:16), as priest (Psalm 99:6; I Chronicles 23:14) and *prophet* (Deuteronomy 18:18; 34:10), who as *God's Chosen* (Psalm 106:23) acts as both *His Messenger to His people*

and as the Intermediary between His people and Him (Exodus 3:13ff; 5:22ff; 33:13, 19; 14:15; 15:25; 16:1ff; 17:4, 11; Numbers 14:1ff; 21:4ff; Ezekiel 22:30; Psalm 103:7 etc.), *as a charismatic leader as well as miracle-worker and liberator of those in need, as priest* (Exodus 23:14ff; 34:18ff), *legislator* (Exodus 20:18-21; 24:12; 32:15ff; Deuteronomy 5:20-28; 9:9ff; 10:1ff; 31:9, 24ff) and *prophetic judge* (Num 12), even as God's deputy (Exodus 7:1). Moreover, he is a man who has not only his weaknesses, but also his dark sides, who not only tries to avoid fulfilling the task, which he is commissioned to fulfil, with a mere excuse, pretending to have a "heavy tongue" and therefore demanding that another one acts in his place (Exodus 24:10-13), but who, in order to take revenge for a murdered member of his tribe, does not even shrink back from murder and, thus, becomes a murderer himself, who even tries to conceal his crime and, after failing to do so, flees for fear of punishment (Exodus 2:11-15).

MOSES AS PROPHET AND TEACHER

Despite all that, it is and remains an open and ultimately unanswerable question whether behind this *figure polysémique* there is a “historical Moses” or whether Moses should be seen as a merely fictitious figure. However, questions about the “historic Moses,” his possible life story or the like are not the issue here. The only issue here is what this “multiform Moses” has meant to the posterity, or to put it another way: how the collective memory of Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious traditions remembered him in that historically effective way mentioned above. According to that memory, Moses is primarily a *prophet and master or teacher*, as we learn from the two texts, which contain “obituaries of Moses” as it were, and reflect the two ways, in which early Jewish tradition remembered Moses. In the first text, Deuteronomy 34:10-12, we read: “(10) And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses : וְלֹא־יָקָם נָבִיא וְעוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־יָדָעַהוּ עַד־פְּנֵי ה' whom the Eternal One knew face to face, (11) none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Eternal One sent him

to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, (12) and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.”

The second text, Sirach 45:1-6a, adds:

(1) From Jacob's stock He produced a generous man who found favour in the eyes of all humanity, beloved by God and people, Moses, of blessed memory. (2) He made him the equal of the holy ones² in glory (cf. Psalm 8:6) and made him strong, to the terror of his enemies. (3) By the word of Moses, He made prodigies cease and raised him high in the respect of kings; He gave him commandments for his people, and showed him something of his glory. (4) For his loyalty and gentleness He sanctified him, choosing him alone out of all human beings (cf. Psalm 106:23); (5) He allowed him to hear His voice, and led him into the darkness; (6) He gave him the commandments face to face, the law of life and knowledge (*ἐντολάς, νόμον ζωῆς καὶ ἐπιστήμης*), to teach Jacob his ordinances and Israel his decrees (*διδάξαι τὸν Ιακώβ διαθήκην καὶ κρίματα αὐτοῦ τὸν Ισραήλ* = Deuteronomy 33:10 יוֹרוּ מִשְׁפָּטָיו לְעַמָּךְ וְתוֹרָתֶךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל and Psalm 147:19: מִנְּיָד [דְּבָרוֹ כ] מִנְּיָד [דְּבָרוֹ ק] לְעַמָּךְ תַּקְּנוּ וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל). According to Deuteronomy 34:10-12, Moses is remembered as the incomparable prophet, but his incomparability has limits: He is *incomparable* not as such, but incomparable only when compared with the other (biblical) prophets. Compared with them, he “undoubtedly is more than they all”. This incomparability of the Prophet Moses is based on the one hand on the immediacy of his communication with God and on the other hand, on the signs and miracles that he was commissioned to do and has done. What this immediacy of communication between God and Moses alluded to in Deuteronomy 34:10 means, and how it is to be understood, is explained in Numbers 12:6-8 (cf. Surah 7:144) with these words: “(6) And He said, “Hear My words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Eternal One make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a

dream. (7) Not so with My servant Moses. He is faithful in My entire house. (8) With him, I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Eternal One. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”

Moses does not only communicate directly with God, speaking to him “mouth to mouth”, he is even entitled to see the form of the Eternal One (Numbers 12:8: וַיִּתְּמַנְתָּ יְהוָה יְבִיט “and he sees the form of the Eternal One”). This is all the more remarkable, because, at least at first glance, this seems to be in clear contradiction with what can be found in the somewhat mysterious, obscure verses Exodus 33:18-23, which have their parallel in Qur’an 7:143. According to what is said there, for any mortal human being and Moses is but a mortal human being, the vision of God is lethal and causes his or her death. “For a human being cannot see Me [God] and stay alive” (Exodus 33:20, וְחַיִּי הָאָדָם וְחַיִּי⁴). Therefore, the text explicitly limits Moses’ vision of God to the sight of God’s back: “You shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:23, וְרָאִיתָ אֶת-אֲחֶרַי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ; cf Surah 7:143b : قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰنِي وَلٰكِنْ اَنْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ (« He said : You won’t see Me, but look at the mountain, etc. »). Even though Moses was not entitled to see the “face of God, but the “back of God” only, the later Midrash (Sifre Devarim §357) could not discover any contradiction between Numbers 12:8 and Exodus 33:20, 23.

Because of such unique immediacy of communication with God, Moses, unlike all other prophets, is granted a share in the divine glory (Exodus 34:29-30): “(29) When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face was shining because he had been speaking with God. (30) Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face was shining (וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת-פָּנָיו) ⁵, and they were afraid to come near him.” Since the mere shine of the divine glory that Moses’ face reflected is unendurable for the people, he put a veil over his face when he talked to them, but removed it when he spoke with God (Exodus

34:33-35) – a metaphor, by the way, which Paul took up making it a key issue in Christian-Jewish polemics (see below).

MOSES’ PROPHETIC TASKS

As the prophet who communicates directly with God and performs signs and miracles, Moses first fulfilled one great “prophetic” task (cf. Deuteronomy 34:11-12): He was commissioned to bring the Israelites out of the house of slavery (cf. Joshua 24:5; Exodus 20:2; Hosea 12:14; Micah 6:4). While, according to the text of the Bible, the commission was an act of divine choice and free decision, later rabbinical tradition explained that it did not take place without Moses’ preparatory action. Thus, the rabbinical Midrash tells with reference to Exodus 3:1ff: “One day, Moses, the faithful shepherd, was looking for a lost lamb. When he finally found it by a pond, he said to it, ‘I didn’t know that you were running away because of thirst.’ Then he carried the lamb back to the herd on his shoulders. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said: ‘You have mercy with the flock of sheep and goats of flesh and blood. By your life, you shall keep My flock the Israelites.’” (Shemot Rabbah XI:2).

For that reason, God sent him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Nevertheless, the exodus, the bringing out of Egypt is nowhere declared to be the work of Moses. It is always remembered as a liberating act of God (cf. Exodus 15:1-21), who “used” Moses as a tool. Therefore, despite his “prophetic” deed, Moses is nowhere called “liberator,” “saviour” or “rescuer of the Israelites” or the like. And not only that. Neither the so-called “little historical creed” (Deuteronomy 26:5-9), which recalls the exodus from Egypt, nor the so-called “triumphal song at the Red Sea” (Exodus 15:1-21), even mention Moses’ name. Yet, in the eyes of Jesus Sirach (c. 190 BCE) as well as later on in the eyes of the two Talmudic sages Abba Arikha, called *Rav* (d. 247 CE), and Mar Samuel (d. 254 CE), Moses’ direct communication with God and the exodus, his role in bringing out the

Israelites from Egypt, were reason enough to see in Moses the man of whom the Psalm says, “You have made him little less than God” (Psalm 8:6 מְאֵלֵהִים מִצֵּעַת וְתַסְפְּרֵהוּ cf. Sir 45:2, and bNedarim 38a).

The incomparability of the Prophet Moses already doubly explained and justified in Deuteronomy 34:10-12, is further supplemented in Sirach 45:1-6a. Here, Moses no longer is “only” the prophet who does signs and miracles; he is no less the virtuous Greek wise man and teacher of his people commissioned to convey to them the divine instruction, the *Torah*. Here, Moses appears as prophet, teacher, legislator and king in one person. Thus, he takes on the role of a Jewish counterpart to the Greek Solon, so to speak, as he was later portrayed by – among others – Philo of Alexandria (c. 15/10 BCE–c. 40 CE) in his *De vita Mosis*, *Josephus Flavius* (37–c. 105 CE) in his *Antiquitates* (II 9:1-11:1), and Strabon (c. 63 BCE–c. 23 CE) in his *Geographica* (XVI 2:34-36).⁶

Prophet and *teacher*, Moses’ two tasks should be distinguished, but not separated from each other. They are rather to be considered the two sides of the same coin: The prophet transmitting the divine instruction (*Torah*) to the people is *ipso facto* also their teacher. For according to rabbinic tradition, Moses did not only transmit the Written *Torah* (תּוֹרָה שֶׁבִּכְתָב) to the people, i.e., the “instruction of God written on the two tablets of stone,” but with it also its interpretation, the *Oral Torah* (תּוֹרָה שֶׁבֶּעַל־פֶּה). The Ten Words⁷ “engraved on the tablets of stone” (Exodus 32:16), are not only “ten commandments” (in fact, they are fourteen), but contain at the same time between their lines and letters, so to say, the “oral instruction of God”, as R. Levi b. Ḥama taught:

R. Levi b. Ḥama says further in the name of R. Shim’on b. Laqish: ‘What is the meaning of the verse: *And I will give you the tablets of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written that you may teach them?* (Exodus

24:12) ‘*Tablets of stone*’: these are the *Ten Words*; ‘the law’: this is the Pentateuch (“Five Books of Moses”); ‘the commandment’: this is the Mishnah; ‘which I have written’: these are the Prophets and the Hagiographa; ‘that you may teach them’: this is the *Gemara* (*Oral Tradition*). It teaches [us] that all these things were given to Moses on Sinai. (bBerakhot 5a)

That Moses was given not only the Ten Words, but with them “the entire Torah,” can be found in patristic literature⁸ as well as in the Qur’an (Surah 7:142, 144-145, and 6:154; cf. Psalm 19:8-9).⁹

Literally taken, the above-quoted dictum from bBerakhot 5a is of course more than just an anachronism. On Sinai, Moses received the two tablets with the Ten Words only. Not more, but also not less. Nevertheless, rabbinic interpretation and Jewish tradition following it, insisted on that the two tablets did contain more than just the Ten Words. For, as emphasized time and again, with the Ten Words, engraved on the two tablets, Moses received the “entire Torah”, as Targum Yerushalmi I on Exodus 19:24 *expressis verbis* confirms: “Come near, and receive the Torah contained in the Ten Words” (וְאָמַר לְהוֹן קְרִיבוּ וְקַבִּילוּ עֲשֻׂרְתֵּי דְבְרֵינָא) cf. Deuteronomy 4:13f). Philo of Alexandria already considered the Ten Words to be the κεφάλαια νόμων only, the “basic principles” of the divine instruction, and his interpretation of the Ten Words in later Jewish tradition became almost opinio communis, so to speak.¹¹

Thus, Judah (*Abū l-Ḥasan*) b. Shmuel ha-Levi (1075–1141/44), for example, calls the Ten Words אִמְהָאָת אֵל שְׂרָאִיעַ וְאִצְוִלָּהָא (*ummahāt aš-šarāi’ wa-uṣūlūhā*), the “mothers of the individual commandments and their sources.” Mūsā ibn ‘Ubaidallāh (*Abū ‘Imrān*) ibn Maimūn / Maimonides (1138–1204) describes them as אִצְל אֵל תְּשְׂרִיעַ (*aṣl al-tašrī’*), as the “source of legislation”: Between the individual letters of the Ten Words, the Torah as a whole is written. And Sa’id bin Yūsuf al-Fayyūmī, Saadia Gaon

(882/92– 942) and others explained in their liturgical compositions called *Azharot* (“admonitions”), in which way the 613 commandments of the Torah are contained in the Ten Words from Sinai.¹²

The *oral instruction of God* Moses was given on Sinai (הַפִּסְבָּה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה) is an open-ended concept, insofar as it includes the totality of all its interpretation, that is, all interpretation that has been put forward over the centuries. Therefore, R. Yehoshua b. Levi already taught with reference to Deuteronomy 9:10: “The (Ten) Words include Scripture (*Written Torah*), Mishnah, Talmud, and Aggadah, even what on a future day a keen student will explain in the presence of his teacher – all that has been revealed already to Moses on Sinai” (yPeah II:6/17a). Of course, such a statement primarily serves apologetic purposes: By linking not only the giving of the Written Torah (תּוֹרָה שֶׁבִּכְתָּב), but also of its entire later interpretation, to the revelation on Sinai and the mediation of Moses, it is eo ipso excluded that there has been (or can be) another new, different revelation, neither besides nor after Sinai. At the same time, R. Yehoshua’s statement emphasizes also the uniqueness and incomparability of “our master Moses” in an unsurpassable way. For all interpretation, all theological-ethical teaching as well as accepted legal doctrine is – as the rabbinic sages taught – *halakha le-Mosheh mi-Sinai* (הלכה למשה מסיני), a “teaching that was given to Moses on Sinai and handed down by him to subsequent generations” (mAvot I:1ff; cf. bShabbat 30a).

MOSES’ TRANSMISSION OF THE TORAH

Nevertheless, Moses has never been considered, let alone revered or sanctified, as the author of the Torah. Even if the Bible and later rabbinic tradition speak about the *Torat Mosheh* (תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה), the “instruction of Moses,” or *Sefer Torat Mosheh* (סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה), the

“Book of Moses’ instruction” (Deuteronomy 28:61; 29:30; Ezra 3:7; 7:6; Nehemiah 8:1, 6 etc.) or the like, or attribute the authorship of the *Five Books* to Moses (bBava Batra 15a-b), they never meant that Moses was their originator or author, as Philo already discussed.¹³ He always is “only” their transmitter; the prophet and teacher (cf. bBeza 38b). Moses did not proclaim a new faith to the Israelites. Just to serve – their – God, he had to bring, and brought, them out of Egypt (Exodus 3:12, 18). Therefore, the Torah of Moses always is “only” the Torah, which God has given to him in order to transmit it and make know its message to the people (Nehemiah 1:7; I Chronicles 22:13; cf. Sir 24:3, 8:23). And the transmission of this *Torah*, to be sure, is the prophetic task and achievement of Moses, which made him prophet and teacher par excellence: Moses did not transmit just any divine word; it was, and is, God’s Torah, the instruction of God, which he taught the people of Israel (yPeah II:6/17a). *This is exactly what prophet and prophecy mean.*

When God gave His Torah on Mount Sinai, Moses, the prophet, played the role of a mediator and, therefore, is portrayed as the one, who “stood between God and the people,” as explicitly stated in Deuteronomy 5:5. For only he possessed the necessary qualification and, therefore, was able and competent to transmit God’s instruction to the people, as the aforementioned Yehudah ha-Levi wrote in his *Sefer ha-Kuzari* I:87.¹⁴ In addition, both, the people standing at the foot of Mount Sinai no less than God, needed Moses’ mediation. The people needed it for the following two reasons:

– Firstly, because they feared for their life if God would speak to them directly. In the same way that for an “ordinary” human being the sight of God is lethal, so too is the hearing of God’s voice. As no human being can see God and remain alive (Exodus 33:20), so he or she cannot hear the voice of God and remain alive as well. “And they [the people] said to Moses, You speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” (Exodus 20:16

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר-אַתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאַל- [19]:
(יִדְבָּר עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים פֶּן-נָמוּת: Similarly, we read in
Deuteronomy 5:22 (25)-23 (26): “(22) And now
therefore why should we die? For this great fire
will consume us. If we hear the voice of the
Eternal One our God any more, we shall die.
(23) For who is there of all flesh, that has heard
the voice of the living God speaking out of the
midst of fire as we have, and has still lived?”

וַעֲתֵה לָמָּה נָמוּת כִּי תִדְבָּרְנוּ הָאֵשׁ הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת
אִם-יִסְפָּקִים אֲנִי וְאַנְחֵנוּ לְשִׁמְעַת אֶת-קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹד
וְנִתְּנוּ:

כִּי מִי כָל-בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע קוֹל אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים מְדַבֵּר
מִתּוֹךְ-הָאֵשׁ כְּמִנִּי וְנִתִּי:

– And secondly, because the people were
unable to understand the voice of God. For the
people that stood at the foot of the mountain,
heard only that God was speaking with Moses:
“And the Eternal One said to Moses, ‘Behold, I
am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the
people may hear that (or: when) I speak with
you, and may also believe you forever.’”
(Exodus 19:9) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה אֲנִי בָּא אֵלֶיךָ בְּאֶבֶן
בָּעָב הָעָנָן בְּעָבֹר יִשְׁמַע הָעָם בְּדַבְּרִי עִמָּךְ וְגַם-יִבְּרַח יֵאֱמִינוּ
(לְעוֹלָם). They did not hear and could not
understand what God was speaking with him.
For they did not hear words, but only the voice
(or: sound) of words: “*Then the Eternal One spoke
to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound
of words, but saw no form except for the voice*”
(Deuteronomy 4:12, וַיִּדְבָּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ,
קוֹל דְּבָרִים אֲתֵם שֹׁמְעִים וְתִמְנוּגָה אֵינְכֶם רֹאִים וּזְלָתִי
(קוֹל). They heard a voice, “The voice of the
shofar became ever louder while Moses spoke,
and God answered him in a voice” (Exodus
19:19, וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְתִזְמַק מֵאֹד מִשְׁעָה יִדְבָּר,
וְהָאֱלֹהִים יִעֲנֶנּוּ בְּקוֹל: That voice, however, was
not heard, but seen. For the voice of God is not
a human voice, and therefore, it is not heard
(Deut. 4:33; 5:24f), but *seen*, as can be learned
from the ancient Greek translation of the
Hebrew Bible (*Septuagint*) where Exodus 20:18
reads: *καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἑώρα τὴν φωνήν* “And all the
people saw the voice etc.” (cf. Deuteronomy
4:12b). For that reason, the people needed
Moses’ mediation, namely, to translate this
visible, but by the human ear not

understandable voice of God into a language
that the human ear is capable to understand.

However, God too needed a prophet like Moses
and his mediation. For He too only hears that
the people speak to and with Moses, but He too
does not hear *what* they say. God too hears only
the voice of the words, in this case of the
people: “And the Eternal One heard the voice
of your words as you spoke to me, and the
Eternal One said to me, ‘*I have heard the voice of
the words of this people which they have spoken to you*
[...].’” (Deuteronomy 5:25: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת-קוֹל
דְּבָרֵיכֶם בְּדַבְּרֶכֶם אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי מַעֲתִי אֶת-קוֹל
(דְּבָרֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבְּרוּ אֵלַיךְ). Again, it is Moses,
who conveys the content of these words, this
time to Him, i.e., reports to God what the
people have said: “*And Moses reported the words of
the people to the Eternal One*” (Exodus 19:9: וַיַּגֵּד
מֹשֶׁה אֶת-דְּבָרֵי הָעָם אֶל-יְהוָה).

To translate God’s speech into a language that
the human ear can understand, and to translate
the human speech into a language God can
understand – this is the decisive prophetic task
that Moses had to master and mastered. And by
doing this, Moses convincingly proved to be
that prophet, as after him there was no other
prophet like him—at least in Israel—as Philo
of Alexandria already explained in his *De vita
Mosis* (II:189-191). Moses transmitted and
taught the Torah, the divine instruction; his
prophetic successors just served as its
interpreters. For that reason, later Jewish
tradition rightly bestowed upon Moses the
honorary titles of *father of all prophets* (אֲבִי כָל
Wayyiqra Rabbah I:3; Ester Rabbah I;
Shemot Rabbah XXI:4; Bereshit Rabbah
LXXVI:1), and our *master or teacher* (רַבֵּנוּ, cf.
bMegillah 13a; Wayyiqra Rabbah I:15), which
became his decisive attributes.¹⁵ For because of
his successful prophetic mediation
accomplished at Sinai, Moses was considered
not just one prophet among others, but seen
and declared the greatest and most important of
all prophets – *notabene* in Israel –, greater than all
his predecessors and successors, as it is said in
the Babylonian Talmud with reference to Hosea
12:11: “All the prophets looked through a
dim(med) glass, but Moses, our master, looked

through a clear glass” (bYevamot 49b; Wayyiqra Rabbah I:14: כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים נִסְתַּכְּלוּ בְּאַסְפִּקְלֵיָּא דְּמֹשֶׁה; מֹשֶׁה, מְאִירָה, מְאִירָה; for the metaphor used here, see also 1 Corinthians 13:12).

THE PROPHECY OF MOSES ACCORDING TO MOSE B. MAIMON

The perhaps best, concise, summary of what prophecy in general and the prophecy of Moses in particular mean and how the role Moses played as prophet should be understood and explained, can be found in the sixth and seventh of Mose b. Maimon’s Thirteen Principles.¹⁶

The Sixth Principle

The Sixth Principle is [the belief in] prophecy; to wit, it should be known that, within the species of humanity, there are individuals who have a greatly superior disposition and a great measure of perfection. And, if their souls are prepared so that they receive the form of the intellect, then that human intellect will unite with the Agent. Intelligence which will cause a great emanation to flow to it. These people are prophets, this [process] is prophecy; and this is its content. The explanation of this Principle to its fullest, however, would be very long and it is not our intention to demonstrate each of its basic premisses, or to explain the ways by which it is perceived for that is the epitome of all the sciences. Here, we shall mention it only in the form of a statement. The verses of the Torah testifying to the prophecy of the prophets are many.

The Seventh Principle

The Seventh Principle is the prophecy of Moses, our Teacher; to wit, it should be known that: Moses was the father of all the prophets – of those who came before him and of those who came after him; all were beneath him in rank and, that he was the chosen of God from among the entire species of humanity and that he comprehended more of God, may He be

exalted, than any man who ever existed or will exist ever comprehended or will comprehend and, that he, peace be upon him, reached a state of exaltedness beyond humanity such that he perceived the level of sovereignty and became included in the level of the angels. There remained no veil, which he did not pierce, no material hindrance burdened him, and no defect whether small or great mingled itself with him. The imaginative and sensible faculties in his perceptions were stripped from him, his desiderative faculty was still, and he remained pure intellect only. For this reason, they remarked of him that he discoursed with God without the intermediacy of an angel.

I would have been obligated to explain this strange subject, to unlock the secrets firmly enclosed in the verses of the Torah, and to expound the meaning of ‘mouth to mouth’ (Numbers 12:8) together with the whole of this verse and other verses belonging to the same theme had I not seen that this theme is very subtle and that it would need abundant statement, introductions, and illustrations. The existence of angels would, first, have to be made clear and, then, the distinction between their ranks and that of the Creator. The soul would have to be explained and all its faculties. The circle would, then, grow wider until we should have to say a word about the images which the prophets attribute to the Creator and the angels. The *Shi’ur Qomah* [‘divine measurements’] and its meaning would have to enter [into our survey]. And, even if I were to be as brief as possible, this purpose alone could not be attained even in a hundred pages. For this reason, I shall leave it to its place, whether in ‘the book of the interpretation of the discourses’ which I have promised, or in ‘the book of prophecy’ which I have begun, or in a book which I shall compose as a commentary to this Principle.

I shall now return to the purpose of this Seventh Principle and say that the prophecy of Moses is separated from the prophecy of all other prophets by four differences:

The first difference: To every other prophet that ever was, God did not speak except by an intermediary. But Moses had no intermediary, as it is said ‘mouth to mouth did I speak with him’ [Numbers 12:8].

The second difference: Every other prophet received inspiration only when, in a state of sleep, as He said in various places: ‘in a dream of the night’ [Genesis 20:3], ‘he dreamed and he saw a ladder’ [Genesis 28:12], ‘in a dream of a vision of the night’ [Job 33:15], and in many other places with similar intent; or during the day, after a deep sleep had fallen upon the prophet and his condition had become one in which his sense-perceptions were rendered inactive and in which his thoughts were empty as in sleep. This condition is called *mahazeḥ* and *mar’eh* and it is referred to in the phrase ‘in visions of God’ [Ezekiel 8:3, 40:2]. But to Moses, peace be upon him, discourse came in the day when ‘he was standing between the two cherubim,’ as God had promised him, ‘And, there, I will meet with you and I will speak with you’ [Exodus 25:22]. And He, may He be exalted, also said, ‘If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known to him in a vision and will speak with him in a dream. Not so my servant Moses. He, in all my house, is faithful’ [Numbers 12:6-8].

The third difference: Every other prophet receives inspiration only in a vision and by means of an angel [and] indeed his strength becomes enfeebled, his body becomes deranged, and a very great terror falls upon him so that he is almost broken by it, as is illustrated when Gabriel spoke to Daniel in a vision and Daniel said, ‘And there remained no strength in me and my dignity became destructive for me’ [Daniel 10:8]. He also said, ‘I was in a deep sleep on my face and my face was towards the ground’ [Daniel 10:9]. And, again, ‘In the vision, my pains turned upon me’ [Daniel 10:16]. But not so with Moses. Rather, discourse came to him and no confusion of any kind overtook him, as He, may He be exalted, has said, ‘And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man

speaks to his neighbour’ [Exodus 33:11]. This means that just as no man feels disquieted when his neighbour talks with him, so he, peace be upon him, had no fright at the discourse of God, although it was face to face. This was so because of the strength of his union with the [Agent] Intelligence, as we have said.

The Fourth difference: Every other prophet did not receive inspiration by his own choice but by the will of God. The prophet would remain a number of years without inspiration or, an inspiration could be communicated to the prophet, but he could be required to wait some days or months before prophesying, or not to make it known at all. We have seen that there are those among them who prepared themselves by simplifying their souls and by purifying their minds as did Elisha when he declared ‘Bring me, now, a minstrel’ [II Kings 3:15] and, then, inspiration came to him. It was not, however, necessary that he receive inspiration after he was prepared for it. But Moses, our Teacher, was able to say whenever he wished, ‘Stand, and I shall hear what God shall command concerning you’ [Numbers 9:8]. And He also said, ‘Speak to Aaron, your brother, that he not come at any time into the sanctuary’ [Leviticus 16:2]. [To this], they said, ‘Aaron was bound by the prohibition ‘that he not come at any time’ hut Moses was not bound by that prohibition.’

MOSES, THE PROPHET IN ISRAEL AND THE PROPHETS OF THE NATIONS

Although Jewish tradition regarded and regards Moses as the most outstanding, incomparable prophet, it nevertheless, as should be noticed, made it subject to a certain limitation. For this was and is true only in the way expressed in Deuteronomy 34:10, that “there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses.” The possibility that among the nations of the world there can and did arise prophets like Moses, is therefore not excluded, as the Rabbinic Midrash already illustrates using the example of the seer

Bil'am ben Be'or, who always is referred to in this context: "There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses – in Israel has not arisen [a prophet], but among the nations of the world has arisen [a prophet]. Who is it? It is *Bil'am ben Be'or*" (Sifre Devarim § 357; *Yalqut Shim'oni* II § 966). The later Midrash adds: "There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses – in Israel has not arisen [a prophet], but among the nations of the world has arisen [a prophet], so that the nations of the world do not have any reason or excuse to say, 'If we would have had a prophet like Moses, we would have revered the Holy One, blessed be He. Which prophet like Moses did they have had? *Bil'am ben Be'or*'" (Bemidbar Rabbah XIV:20). In addition, the Babylonian Talmud mentions in this context even seven prophets of the nations of the world:

שבעה נביאים נתנבאו לאומות העולם, והם בלעם ואביו
ואיוב ואליפז התימני ובילדד השוחי וצופר הנעמתי
ואליהוא בן ברכאל הבוזי

"Seven prophets prophesied to the nations of the world, and they are: Balaam, his father, Job, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, and Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite."

Of course, the Rabbinic Midrash – anticipating somehow Mose b. Maimon's summary – leaves no doubt that there are fundamental qualitative differences between the prophecy of Moses and the prophecy of *Bil'am*, and the prophethood of the other prophets of the nations of the world (cf. Wayyiqra Rabbah I:1 and XIV:20; Sifre Devarim § 357 with reference to Numbers 24:4 and 16). Nevertheless, it does, and did, not rule out the possibility of a prophet from among the nations of the world like Moses even beyond the above-mentioned seven prophets, including the possibility of a prophet from among the Arabs, *Muhammad*, as pondered by the Yemenite philosopher *Netan'el al-Fayyūmī*¹⁷ (cf. also Midrash ha- Gadol on Deuteronomy 34:10, ed. Fisch p. 790).¹⁸ With reference to this Arab prophet, in the Nistarot de-Rabbi *Shim'on* bar

Yohai ("Secrets of Rabbi *Shim'on bar Yohai*"), compiled probably at the turn of the 7th / 8th centuries and preserved in several different versions, it is even stated: "The Holy One, blessed be He, shall raise them up [the children of Ishmael]" (הקדוש ברוך הוא מעמיד). "Their children according to His will" (עליהם בני).¹⁹

THE PROPHET MOSES IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In the New Testament and other early Christian writings, Moses is encountered more often than any other figure spoken about in the Hebrew Bible. In addition to that, in some Christian calendars of saints, he is assigned a special place until today. Thus, for example, in the calendar of the Armenian Church, in which Moses is listed among "the Holy Forefathers [...] and other Holy Patriarchs,"²⁰ or in the Orthodox calendar, in which Moses is remembered on the 4th of September as "Holy Prophet and Seer of God".²¹ Despite all that, it cannot be overlooked, that from the very beginning Christian tradition held a view of his prophecy and prophethood that significantly differs from the image of Moses in Jewish tradition. In Christian tradition, Moses primarily is the "lawgiver" or even the symbol of the "law" rather than a prophet serving as mediator between God and His people and transmitter of the divine instruction. Although Justin Martyr (d. 165) calls him "the first of the prophets" (Apology I: 32, 54, 59), and 1 Clement 48 puts him on a higher level than all other prophets, who are "merely followers" of Moses, here too he is essentially perceived as a "legislator," as the giver of a law,²² that with the advent of the Messiah, with the coming of Jesus the Christ, has become obsolete. For τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστός, "the Messiah (Christ) is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4).

As the almost normative interpretation of Moses and his prophethood in Christian tradition may certainly be regarded the

interpretation of Exodus 34:29-35, which Paul provided in his Second Letter to the Corinthians (3:3-18) focussing on the antithesis of the “old” (mediated by Moses) and “new” covenant (in Christ) or testament respectively (II Corinthians 3:14). Since the times of early patristic exegesis of the Bible, Paul’s interpretation has had a lasting influence throughout the centuries particularly on the Christian use and explanation of the Hebrew Scriptures and thereby turned Moses’ prophethood almost into its opposite. It was also Paul, who drew the picture of Moses’ veiled face and, thus, created a metaphor, which – as Riemer Roukema has shown²³ – had a long and fateful reception history. Not only, that the clear-sighted, “through a clear glass looking” Moses of Jewish tradition (see above) faces here a Moses who only “looks through a dim(med) glass” and, therefore, is blind (blinded in the truest sense of the word). In addition, his prophetic work, which made him the prophet par excellence, his mediation and transmission of the Torah, the divine instruction, is reversed into its opposite. The observance of the Torah, which is light and gives life to those who observe it (cf. Deuteronomy 30,15-20), is here perverted into a “ministry of death” (*διακονία τοῦ θανάτου*), as opposed to the “ministry of Spirit” (*διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος*), which is described as a “ministry of justice” (*διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης*) (II Corinthians 3:7-9).

That in view of this perception, the prophethood of Moses, if it is of any significance, must be interpreted completely differently is rather obvious. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Moses here is no longer the mediator and transmitter of the life-giving Torah, and certainly no longer can be seen as the “father of all prophets.” Here is Moses not more than a – literally – *προ-φήτης*, a “herald” and “announcer”, whose “prophetic” function is limited to the role of a harbinger and foreteller who predicts the coming of a prophet to come after him, compared with whom he is but a pale reflection, if not even his counter-image. At the beginning of the Gospel of John

(1:19-21), we hear that: “(19) The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem [to John the Baptist] to ask him: ‘Who are you?’ (20) He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah (Christ).’ (21) And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No’.”

While the second question, whether he (John) is Elijah, clearly refers to Malachi 3:23, and alludes to Elijah’s role as precursor and harbinger of the Messiah, the question about the prophet unmistakably refers to Deuteronomy 18:15-19. In this part of his “farewell speech”, Moses announces, “A prophet from among you, from among your brothers, as I am one, the Eternal One, your God, will raise up for you; to him you shall listen” (Deuteronomy 18:15, *נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ*). That in his speech, Moses indeed announced the coming of Jesus as God’s messenger is confirmed not only in the Gospel of John, but also in other writings of the New Testament. To quote just a few examples: “Thus, John has Philip from Bethsaida say to Nathanael, ‘We have found him of whom Moses wrote in the Law and the prophets: Jesus from Nazareth, the son of Joseph’ (*ὃν ἔγραψεν Ἰησοῦν Μωϋσῆς τὸν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ καὶ οἱ ἐβράκαμεν υἱὸν ἀπὸ υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ*)” (John 1:45). Likewise, it is said elsewhere in the Gospel of John: “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, ‘This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!’ (*οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι τὸν ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι ὁ τοῦτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὃ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον*)” (John 6:14).

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Peter also identified Jesus as the prophet announced by Moses and sent by God in his defence before the High Council, quoting Deuteronomy 18:15 explicitly: “For Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brothers as I am one. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.’ (Μωϋσῆς μὲν εἶπεν ὅτι προφήτην ὑμῖν ἀναστήσει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν ἐκ τῶν

ἀδελφῶν ὑμῶν ὡς ἐμέ· αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε κατὰ πάντα ὅσα ἂν λαλήσῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς) (Acts 3:22). Similarly, Stephen is his last sermon: “This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet from among your brothers as I am one.’ This is the one, who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Μωϋσῆς ὁ εἶπας τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ· προφήτην ὑμῖν ἀναστήσει ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ὑμῶν ὡς ἐμέ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ γενόμενος ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ μετὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ λαλοῦντος αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σινᾶ καὶ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, ὃς ἐδέξατο λόγια ζῶντα δοῦναι ἡμῖν)” (Acts 7:37-38).

But he, who is a “prophet as Moses was one” is none other than Jesus. Correspondingly similar is the list of attributes and honorary titles that Jesus was given. In accordance with this similarity of Moses and Jesus, already the Gospels, when telling a “life story” of Jesus, repeatedly point out analogies between the life of Moses and Jesus’ “life story”, thus providing a kind of parallels that, as Carl Umhau Wolf wrote, “reaches its peak in Archelaus’ disputation with Manes”, a fictitious debate between – rather a caricature of – the Persian sage Mani and Bishop Archelaus of Karchar (= Carrhae in Osrhoene?) in Mesopotamia.²⁴ In addition to that, the New Testament already, and the patristic literature after it too, do not make do with outlining analogies between Moses and Jesus and their respective “life stories” or destinies. Much more important to them is: Even if Jesus can be, and in fact is, presented in this way as a “new Moses,” it is clear from the very outset that he is definitely not only a “prophet like Moses was one,” but in any case, “more than Moses.”

For the Torah given through Moses, even if it was, and still is, a “light and guidance to life” for those who observe and follow it, is no longer considered that “way to life”, but provides knowledge of sin only (Romans 3:19-20). In contrast, the new Torah given in Jesus, that is,

with his person, the “law of the Messiah” (*I Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2, νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*), the “true, eternal light” that shows the way not only to life, but also to life eternal (John 8:12). Even as prophet, Jesus is therefore a greater prophet than Moses ever was; for in him, with him and through him, all that is fulfilled what was announced by Moses and the prophets after him (cf. Mark 9:2ff; Hebrews 3:3).

That all this implies much more than a mere analogy or correspondence between Moses and Jesus, but goes far beyond that, can be deduced not least from the typology applied in Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible since the early days of Christian scriptural exegesis, but also in the Qur’an and Islam. It is not without reason and meaning that the almost classical example of (earlier) typological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in the Gospel of John (3:14) and the Letter of Barnabas (12:4) – that is, the typological interpretation of Moses’ making a fiery bronze serpent and setting it on a pole (Numbers 21:6-9) – has no parallel in the Qur’an. To pursue this further, however, would be another topic.

THE PROPHET MOSES IN ISLAM

Significance and importance attached to Moses as a prophet in Islam is already testified to by the epithets or respective honorary titles he like other prophets has been given. Whereas Adam is called “God’s Pure” (صافي الله *ṣafīy Allāh*), Nūḥ / Noah “God’s Trusted One” (نجي الله *naḡīy Allāh*) and Ibrāhīm / Abraham – as in Isaiah 41:8 – “God’s Friend” (Surah 4:125: خليل الله *ḥalīl Allāh*), ‘Isā / Jesus “God’s Word and Spirit of Him” (كلمته وروح منه *kalimatuhū wa-rūḥun minhu*; according to Surah 4:171) and Muḥammad is referred to as “God’s Messenger” (رَسُولُ الله *rasūl Allāh*). Mūsā / Moses, in the Qur’an, is not only called كليم الله (*Kalīm Allāh*) — “the one spoken to by God” — as in Surah 4:164 (“and God really spoke with Moses”), but he is also addressed as رَسُول (rasūl) —

“messenger” — and نَبِيّ / nabīy — “prophet” — as in Surah 19:52.

The exact meaning of the title **كَلِيمُ اللَّهِ** kalīm Allāh in this context, however, is controversial and subject to discussion among Qur’anic commentators and lexicographers alike, because kalīm can refer to both, to someone speaking to someone (kalīm = mukālim; cf. Surah 2:253), and to someone who is spoken with or addressed. Both cases, however, imply a form of direct communication, here thus between God and Mūsā, Mūsā and God, as clearly stated in Surah 4:164 :

وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا **اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا** (Wa-kallama llāhu Mūsā taklīmā) which, according to the commentators, is not to be understood as a metaphorical way of speaking, but must be taken literally. Taken literally, this statement is all the more remarkable and deserves to be taken into consideration, because it seems to be in contradiction with what is said in Surah 42:51: “And it is not given to any human being that God should speak unto him otherwise than through direct inspiration (*wahyan*), or from behind a veil (*min warā’i ḥiḡāb*)²⁵, or by sending a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise” وَمَا كَانَ لِيُتَنَبَّرَ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بَأْذَنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيُّ حَكِيمٌ.

Not so, however, with Moses. Whereas verses such as Surah 2:37, 124 and 253, might suggest that God communicated also with others directly, in the first case with Adam, in the second with Abraham, and in the third with other prophets, it is still more than an open question whether these verses do imply that God spoke with them in the same way as He spoke with Moses according to Surah 4:164, and passages such as Surah 19:51- 52; 7:143-144; 20:11-24, 83-84; 26:1016; 27:8-11; 28:30-35,46; 79:16-19 may indicate. Nonetheless, al-Baidāwī (died c. 1290), for example, was convinced that in this immediacy and directness God spoke with Moses and *Muḥammad* only,²⁶ but later commentators added the name of Adam to them.

In accordance with Christian tradition, fully developed in Manichaeism, the Qur’anic and Islamic tradition too presupposes that the prophets sent by God one after the other, constitute a sequence of prophets as well as revelations transmitted by them: “Indeed, We have sent messengers before you(r time); some of them We have mentioned to you, and some of them We have not mentioned to you. And it was not given to any messenger to bring forth a verse (or: miracle) other than by God’s leave.” (Surah 40:78). Among those constituting that sequence of prophets and mentioned by name in the Qur’an are: Adam, *Nūḥ* (Noah), Ibrāhīm (Abraham), *Lūṭ* (Lot), *Isma‘īl* (Ishmael), *Ishāq* (Isaac), *Ya‘qūb* (Jacob), Yūsuf (Yosef), Mūsā (Moses), Hārūn (Aaron), Dāwūd (David), Sulaimān (Solomon), Ilyās (Elijah), *al-Yaša‘* (Elisha), Yūnus (Jonah), Ayyūb (Job), *‘Uẓair* (Ezra), Zakariyā (Zachariah), *Yahyā* (John) and *‘Isā* b. Maryam (Jesus) as well as Idrīs (Enoch?), *Hūd*, *Ṣāliḥ*, *Dhū l-Kiḡl* (Ezekiel?), *Shu‘aib* (Yitro), Luqmān, Dhū l-Qarnain (?) and finally – *Muḥammad*. But Moses is not only included into this sequence of prophets he is marked also with all the attributes that characterize prophets (and are part and parcel of the Qur’anic prophetology), including even their sinlessness.²⁷

According to the Qur’an, sequence of prophets means that each nation has its own prophet (Surah 10:47; 16:36; cf. 40:78). Each prophet coming from “its midst” (Surah 7:35) to proclaim to his people, at his time, and in his language (Surah 14:4) always the same, but also always new message of God (Surah 7:35; 57:25), i.e., the revelation (i.e., revealed scripture) vouchsafed unto him in order to transmit it. Moses thus was given the Torah (called *tawrāt*, *kitāb*, *furqān* or *ṣuḥuf*: Surah 2:53 etc., 21:48; 53:36; 87:19) to convey it in Hebrew to the Children of Israel. There is no difference between all these prophets and transmitted by them revealed scripture (Surah 2:136, 285; 3:84). Therefore, the sequence of prophets is to be seen as their succession, or chain of succession,

to be more precise, according to which each prophet explicitly predicts his successor and announces his coming, as vice versa, every successor explicitly refers to his predecessor. In accordance with this concept of succession, the Qur'an presupposes explicitly that *Muhammad* and his coming have been announced in the Torah and the Gospel (Surah 7:157), by Moses in the Torah (Surah 7:157- 158 and 2:129 with reference to Deuteronomy 18,15), and by *Jesus in the Gospel* (Surah 61:6 with reference to John 14,26; 16,7 etc.).²⁸

However, unlike Christian tradition that sees in Moses and Jesus *typos* and *anti-typos*, the Qur'an and later Islamic tradition do not interpret these predictions by way of typology. Although the parallelism of the "life stories" of Moses and Jesus here corresponds to the parallelism of the "life stories" of Moses and *Muhammad*,²⁹ in the Qur'an Moses does not appear as a *τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος* *typos tou mellontos*, "a type of the one who was to come" (Romans 5:14), as years ago Gustave Edmund von Grunebaum already rightly observed:

Both Christians and Muslims start from the basic assumption that biblical statements predict the coming of Jesus (Christ) and *Muhammad* respectively (including details of their appearance and accompanying circumstances of their coming), but only Christianity accepted the concept of the *praefiguratio* of events as reported in the New Testament through *dicta et gesta* reported in the Old Testament. [...] From the historian's point of view, the *praefiguratio* is a way to complete the Old Testament or to get along with it. Although the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible is not as close as that between the Old and New Testaments, a typology would have been useful -and helpful- for example, in the comparison of the fate of the earlier prophets with that of *Muhammad* (while, in fact, Muslim interpretation is content with outlining of parallels in order to confirm *Muhammad's* credibility by way of pointing out the

similarities between the vicissitudes of his life and the life of his predecessors) as well as in the debate between the various faith communities within Islam. But not even among the 'extreme' mystics did it (i.e. typology) serve as a tool for the systematic interpretation of the revelation or the *dicta* of the sacred tradition.³⁰

Muhammad was a prophet like Moses (cf. Surah 53 and Surah 17). According to Sura 2 and other Qur'anic passages their (hi)stories are similar, and there is no difference between them (Surah 2:136, 285; 3:84), as is confirmed in a Hadith handed down by Abū Huraira:

Abu Huraira reported that two persons, one from amongst the Jews and the other from amongst the Muslims, fell into dispute and began to abuse one another. The Muslim said, 'By Him Who chose Muhammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) in the worlds.' And the Jew said, 'By Him Who chose Moses (peace be upon him) in the worlds.' Thereupon the Muslim lifted his hand and slapped at the face of the Jew. The Jew went to the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) and told him about his affair and the affair of the Muslim. Thereupon the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, 'Don't make me superior to Moses (peace be upon him) for mankind will swoon, and I would be the first to recover from it and Moses would be at that time seizing the side of the Throne, and I do not know (whether) he would swoon and would recover before me, or God would make an exception for him.'³¹

THE SUCCESSION OF PROPHETS AND REVELATIONS

According to the Qur'anic and later Islamic prophetology, the concept of the succession of prophets and revealed scriptures and the idea of the unity of revelation and indiscriminateness of revealed scriptures (cf. Surah 2:136, 285; 3:84),

associated with it, do not imply, however, their equivalence nor their equality.⁷

The term succession rather indicates a sequence in time, a temporal succession, as well as a sequence in ranking of the prophets and revealed scriptures transmitted by them: Abraham and the “leaves of Abraham” preceded Moses and the “Torah of Moses.” These in turn preceded Jesus and the “Gospel of Jesus,” which in turn preceded *Muḥammad* and the Qur’an (cf. Surah 3:65). In addition to that, succession of prophets also entails that Moses, Jesus – and according to the Manichaeans, Mani as well as *Muḥammad* were “the seal of the prophets,” each in his time. *Muḥammad*, however, is no longer just “the seal of the prophets” in his time, but according to Muslim perception, “the seal of all the prophets” (Surah 33:40) and it is with him that the succession of prophets end. He does not predict the coming of any prophet after him.

Likewise, as the Torah (*taurāt*) and the Gospel (*ingīl*) were “guidance and light” (هُدًى وَنُورٌ - *hudā wa-nūr*), each in its time (Surah 5:44.46), so the revelation transmitted by *Muḥammad* – with one important difference. The revelation vouchsafed unto and transmitted by *Muḥammad* is not only the last one in time, but also the last one in terms of significance and validity – the ultimate revelation (Surah 3:3). In that sense, the – temporal – sequence of prophets and revealed scriptures proves at the same time their sequence in ranking. The afore-mentioned – temporal – sequence of the prophets and the ranking of the revealed scriptures associated with it, do render, of course, the previously revealed scriptures irrelevant and meaningless, devalued by their respective “successors”. To the contrary, succession in this context also means “confirmation” (*taṣḍīq*) and “ultimate affirmation” (*ḥaimana*). Each of the successively revealed scriptures “confirms” (*muṣaddiq*) and “ultimately affirms” (*muhaimin*) the – admittedly temporary, limited – truth as “guidance and light” contained in its respective preceding revealed scripture.

The Qur’an, in turn, does not only repeat in pure Arabic the divine message previously transmitted in the Torah and the Gospel without any innovation (Surah 41:43; 46:9), but at the same time “confirms” (مصدق *muṣaddiq*) and “ultimately affirms” (ومهيم *muhaimin*; literally: “saying ‘amen’ to it”) the truth and meaning as “guidance and light” contained in them. The same way the Gospel “confirms” (مصدق *muṣaddiq*) and “ultimately affirms” (ومهيم *muhaimin*) the Torah, the Qur’an “confirms” (مصدق *muṣaddiq*) and “ultimately affirms” (ومهيم *muhaimin*) the Gospel. The best concise summary of this concept of succession of prophets and scriptures can be found in Surah 5:44-49:

(44) Verily, it is We who sent down the Torah (التوراة *tawrāt*), wherein there was guidance and light, by which the prophets, who had surrendered themselves unto God, deliver judgment unto those who follow the Jewish faith. [...] (46) And in their footsteps, We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Torah that had come before him, and We gave him the Gospel (الإنجيل *ingīl*), wherein there was guidance and light, confirming [the truth of] the Torah (... التوراة مصدقا) that had come before it, a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing. [...] (48) And We sent down to you the scripture with the truth (وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ), confirming the scripture that had come before it and ultimately affirming it (مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنْ) (الْكِتَابِ وَمُهِيمًا عَلَيْهِ) *muṣaddiqan li-mā baina yadaihi mina l-kitāb wa- muhaiminan* (*alaihi*)).

Cf Surah 2:91: When they are told: ‘Believe in what God has sent down,’ they say, ‘We believe in what has been sent down to us,’ while they deny what came after, even though it is the truth confirming what they have (وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا) (*wa-huwa l-ḥaqq muṣaddiqan limā ma’abum*)).

Jewish tradition, however, understands the concept of the succession of prophets and revealed scriptures as a climax descendens, a

descending line. Moses is the “father of all prophets,” he is not only the first of the prophets, the beginning of the succession chain (cf. mAvot I:1ff), but at the same time the greatest and most important of all. Compared with him, all his successors are beneath him in rank, as Mose b. Maimon explicitly stated. In addition to that, the succession chain is not open-ended; it ends up with the last prophet mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, Malachi (cf. *Tosefta Sotah* II:30). Prophets arising after the departure of Malachi, eo ipso cannot be prophets like Moses.

Islamic tradition uses the same scheme, but turns it upside down. It interprets the succession chain in the sense of a climax *ascendens*, meaning that every preceding prophet is placed on a level lower than his successor and finds himself – per *definitionem* – beneath him in rank. Thus, *Muḥammad* is not only the last prophet, but at the same time the greatest and most important of all. With him, the succession chain ends. Therefore, he is called the “Seal of the Prophets” (Surah 33:40: خَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّينَ *ḥatam an-nabīyīn*). A Hadith has *Muḥammad* saying about Moses and the Torah:

Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’ told us: Ibn Numair told us of Muḡālīd, of ‘*Amir*, of Ġābir that ‘*Umar* b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb brought a copy of the Torah to the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) and said: ‘O Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace), this is a copy of the Torah.’ But he remained silent. Then he began to read, and the face of the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) changed. Abū Bakr powerfully interrupted him and said: ‘Do you not see the face of God’s Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace)?’ ‘*Umar* saw the face of God’s Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace) and said: ‘May God save me from His and His Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace)! We have accepted God as our Lord and Islam as our religion and Muhammad as our prophet.’ Then the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) said: ‘To him who holds *Muḥammad*’s soul in His hand! If Moses had appeared to you and you had followed him and left me, you would have strayed from the right path, and if he [Moses] had lived and experienced my prophecy, he would have followed me.’³⁴

NOTES

1. R. Martin-Achard, Remarques en guise de conclusion, in: idem et alii, La figure de Moïse. Écriture et relectures, Paris 1978, pp. 157-162, here p. 157. – Cf. further J. Gorsky, Moses from a Jewish Perspective, in: N. Solomon, R. Harries, Tim Winter, Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conversation, London- New York, 2005, pp. 40-48; B. Ego, Mose im Judentum, in: C. Böttrich, B. Ego, F. Eissler, Mose in Judentum, Christentum und Islam, Göttingen, 2010, pp. 11-66.
2. For the Hebrew וַיִּכְבְּדוּ אֱלֹהִים, וַיֵּאֱמָצְהוּ בַּמְרוֹמִים in Sirach 45:2, the Greek version has “saints” (ὁμολώσαντες αὐτὸν δόξης ἀγίων), likewise the Vetus Latina: similem illum fecit in gloria sanctorum.
3. These are the signs and miracles, which – according to biblical and post-biblical, Jewish, Christian as well as Qur’anic and post-Qur’anic Islamic prophetologies – a prophet has to do in order to prove his credibility and prophetic mission; cf. Fiqh Akbar II § 16, and A. J. Wensinck, The Muslim Creed – its Genesis and Historical Development, Cambridge,

1932 (repr. New Delhi ²1979), pp. 192. 224-229.

4. Cf. Surah 2:55-56 und 4:153, and H. Speyer, Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran, Gräfenhainichen 1931 (repr. Hildesheim ³1988), pp. 298-299.
5. The Latin translation (Vulgata) misunderstood the Hebrew קָרַן (that has two different meanings: 1. shine, radiate; 2. have horns, be horned). Instead of quod coronata esset facies sua, it reads: quod cornuta esset facies sua, thus creating a “horned Moses”. For further details see, Ruth Mellinkoff, The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought (California Studies in the History of Art 14), Berkeley- Los Angeles- London, 1970.
6. For further details see L. H. Feldman, Philo’s Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism, Notre Dame, Ind. 2007; L. H. Feldman, Josephus’ Portrait of Moses, The Jewish Quarterly Review 82 (1992), pp. 285-328; 83, 1993, pp. 7-50, 301-330; W.A. Meeks, The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 14), Leiden, 1967, pp. 100-146.
7. Jewish tradition never speaks of them as “ten commandments” (תּוֹצֵאִים), but calls them always “Ten Words” (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4: עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרוֹת; aseret ha-dibberot), in the Septuaginte δέκα λόγοι, and in the Vulgate verba decem. Post-biblical rabbinic usage has coined the special term עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרוֹת to denote them, rendered into Aramaic as עֲשָׂרֶת הַדְּבָרָא (asarte dibberayya as in the Palestinian Targumim) and פִּתְגָּמִין (asara pitgamin in Targum Onqelos). See, Moshe Greenberg, “The Decalogue Tradition Critically Examined,” in: Ben-Tzion Segal (ed.), The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition, Jerusalem 1990, 83-119, here pp. 83f; Stefan Schreiner, “Das Zehnwort vom Sinai nach Rashīd ad-Dīn,” in: IDEM, Die jüdische Bibel in islamischer Überlieferung (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 27), Tübingen 2012, pp. 93-157, here pp. 105-106.
8. C. U. Wolf, Moses in Christian and Islamic Tradition, Journal of Bible and Religion 27, 1959, 102a-108b, here p. 105a; G. E. Von Grunebaum, Islam. Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition (Memoir / American Anthropological Association 81 = Comparative Studies of Cultures and Civilizations 4), Menaska, Wisc. 1955 (several reprints, last Whitefish, MT 2010), pp. 85, 93 ff.
9. Speyer, Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran, pp. 296-297.
10. S. Schreiner, Das Zehnwort vom Sinai nach Rashīd ad-Dīn, pp. 152-157; S. Schreiner, Der Dekalog in Ibn Kaṭīr’s Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā, in: IDEM, Die jüdische Bibel in islamischer Überlieferung (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 27), Tübingen, 2012, pp. 158-172, here pp. 169-171.
11. P. Judaeus, De decalogo, in: L. Cohn, P. Wendland, Philonis Alexandrini Opera quae supersunt, vol. 4, Berlin, 1902 (reprint 1962), pp. 269-307; for further details see, E. E. Urbach, The Sages – their Concepts and Beliefs, 2 vols. Jerusalem 1975, vol. I, pp. 362ff.
12. I. Davidson, S. Assaf, Y. Joel (eds.), Siddur R. Saadja Gaon, Jerusalem, 1941, pp. 191-216.
13. See, A. Yehoshua, Mose als Verfasser der Tora bei Philon, in: IDEM, Die hellenistische Gestalt des Judentums bei Philon von Alexandrien (Forschungen zum jüdisch-

- christlichen Dialog 5), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1983, pp. 77-106.
14. J. Ha-Levi, *Kitāb ar-radd wa-d-dalil fī d-dīn ad-dalil (al-kitāb al-Ḥazari)*, Jerusalem, 1977, 24-25; IDEM, *Sefer ha-Kuzari – maqor we-tirgum*, Qiryat Ono 1997, pp. 24-25 (German: *Das Buch al-Chazari aus dem Arabischen des Abu-l-Hasan Yehuda Hallewi*, transl. By H. Hirschfeld, Breslau, 1885, pp. 27f).
 15. H. Kreisel, *Prophecy – the History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Thought 8), Dordrecht [etc.] 2001.
 16. Arabic with Hebrew translation with commentary in: J. Holzer, *Zur Geschichte der Dogmenlehre in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters: Mose Maimūni's Einleitung zu Chelek. Im arabischen Urtext und in der hebräischen Übersetzung kritisch herausgegeben und mit erklärenden Anmerkungen versehen*, Berlin 1901, pp. 23-26. – The following translation is that of David R. Blumenthal, in: IDEM, *The Commentary of R. Ḥoter ben Shelomo to the Thirteen Principles of Maimonides (Études sur le Judaïsme médiéval 6)*, Leiden, 1974 (reprint 1997).
 17. N. al- Fayyumi, *Bustan al-‘uqūl*, ed. by Y.d. Qafih, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 103-110; English translation: *The Bustan al-Ukul by Nathanael ibn al-Fayyumi*, transl. by D. Levine (Columbia University Oriental Studies 6), New York 1908 (repr. 1966), pp. 103-108.
 18. Similarly Zechariah bin Shlomoh ha-Rofe', *מדרש החפץ*, ed. M. Havatzelet, 2 vols., Jerusalem 1990-1992, vol. II, p. 482.
 19. Shemuel, Even Y, *השי האלף ראשית ועד הבבלי התלמוד מחתימת היהדות האפוקליפסה*, *פרקי גאולה: מדרש* Jerusalem 1953 (2000), pp. 161-198, here p. 188.
 20. See, <https://www.heiligenlexikon.de/Literatur/ArmenischerKalender.html>.
 21. So unter <https://www.orthodoxe-kirche.de/Sonstiges/heiligenkalender/heiligenkalender06.html>, and *Μέγας Συναξαριστής 4 Σεπτεμβρίου: Ὁ Προφήτης Μωϋσῆς*.
 22. U. Wolf, *Moses in Christian and Islamic Tradition*, p. 105b. – See further, J. Barton, *Moses from a Christian Perspective*, in: N. Solomon, R. Harries, T. Winter, *Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conversation*, London -New York 2005, pp. 49-54; C. Böttrich, *Mose im Christentum*, in: Idem, B. Ego, F. Eissler, *Tora und Evangelium – Mose in der christlichen Überlieferung*, in: A. Middelbeck-Varwick et al., *Die Boten Gottes: Prophetie in Christentum und Islam* (Theologisches Forum Christentum – Islam), Regensburg, 2013, pp. 75-88; T. Heither, *Biblische Gestalten bei den Kirchenvätern*, vol. 4: *Mose*, Münster 2010.
 23. R. Roukema, *The Veil over Moses' Face in Patristic Interpretation*. in: Idem et al., *The Interpretation of Exodus. Studies in Honour of Cornelis Houtman* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 44), Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA 2006, pp. 237-252; see also, K. Suso Franck, *Der verhüllte Glanz. 2 Kor 3,14-16 bei den Kirchenvätern*, in: A. Raffelt, B. Nichtweiss, *Weg und Weite. Festschrift für Karl Lehmann*, Freiburg im Breisgau. 2001, pp. 147-156.
 24. U. Wolf, *Moses in Christian and Islamic Tradition*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 27, Issue 2, April 1959, Pages 102–108, p.106, regarding Archelaus see ,

- The Acts of the Disputation with the Heresiarch Manes, transl. by S. D. Salmond, in A. Roberts, Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Buffalo-NY 1886, vol. VI, pp. 20ff, available also through: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0616.htm>.
25. On this metaphor see, Wayyiqra Rabbah I:13, and Speyer, Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran, pp. 300-301.
 26. 'A. b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī Abū al-Ḥair Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Baiḍāwī, Anwār at-tanzīl wa-asrār at-ta'wīl, ed. M. Subḥī Hasan Hallāq, M. Ahmad al-Atraš, 3 vols. Beirut 1421 / 2000, vol. I, pp. 213-214.
 27. 27 See Fiqh Akbar II § 8, and Wensinck, The Muslim Creed, pp. 192, 217.
 28. Later Muslim Qur'an exegesis, however, was eager to identify many more verses in the Bible predicting the coming of Muḥammad. Impressive examples of that effort are, inter alia, 'Alī B. Rabban at-Ṭabarī, Kitāb ad-dīn wa-d-dawla fī ṭibāt nubuwwat an-nabīy Muḥammad, Beirut, 1973, esp. pp. 137-189; Abū Muhammad 'Abd Allāh B. Muslim Ibn Qutaiba ad-Dīnawārī (828–885. 889), Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa oder A'lām al-Nubuwwa; cf. S. Schmidtke, The Muslim Reception of Biblical Materials: Ibn Qutayba and his A'lām al-nubuwwa, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 22 (2011), pp. 249-274; Biblical Predictions of the Prophet Muhammad among the Zaydis of Iran, Arabica 59 (2012), pp. 218-266; and L. Demiri's article A'lām al-nubuwwa, in D. Thomas, Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History, Brill Online 2013, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/christian-muslim-relations/alam-al-nubuwwa-COM_24667; in addition to them, M. Asad, The Message of the Qur'an, Gibraltar-Dublin 1980 (1992), p. 861 note 6; R. Paret, Der Koran – Kommentar und Konkordanz, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1977 (several reprints), pp. 476–477; M. Izzat Ismā'il at-Taḥṭārī, Muḥammad – nabīy al-islām fī t-taurāt wal-ingīl wal-qur'an, Kairo o. J.; D. Benjamin, Muhammad in der Bibel, München 1992. – In the same way, long before Islam, the Manicheans used Moses' prediction of the coming of a prophet like him and Jesus' prediction of the coming of the parakletos as praefiguratio of, and reference to, their prophet Mani (216–276/7); cf. A. Böhlig, Die Gnosis – der Manichäismus, Düsseldorf / Zürich 1997, pp. 23–24 etc.).
 29. Additional material provide the “stories of the prophets” (*qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), e.g., A. Ibn Muhammad Tha'labī, Islamische Erzählungen von Propheten und Gottesmännern: *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* oder 'Arā'is al-mağālis, transl. and commented on by H. Busse (Diskurse der Arabistik 9), Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 216-317.
 30. G. E. Von Grunebaum, Studien zum Kulturbild und Selbstverständnis des Islam, Zürich-Stuttgart, 1969, p. 310.
 31. Muslim B. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ (817/21–875), al-Ġāmi' aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ (English translation: Abdul Hamid Siddiqi), Book 30: Kitāb al-Faḍā'il, no. 5854 (Book 44, no. 6300).
 32. Similarly, Ibn Kaṭīr intentionally calls Jesus “the Seal of the Prophets of the Children of Israel” (*Abū l-Fida' Ismā'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kaṭīr, Muḥtaṣar tafsīr al-Qur'an*, ed. M.A. aṣ-Ṣabūnī, 3 vols. Beirut-Mekka, 1984, vol. III, p. 493). For further details see, C. Colpe, Das Siegel der Propheten. Historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam (Abhandlungen zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und

Zeitgeschichte 3), Berlin 1990, esp. pp. 15-37, 227-243.

33. Cf. S. Schreiner, Der Koran als Auslegung der Bibel – die Bibel als Verstehenshilfe des Korans, in: IDEM, Die jüdische Bibel in islamischer Überlieferung, pp. 1-18, esp. pp. 11ff.
34. Transmitted by Abū *Muḥammad* ‘*Abd Allāh* B. ‘*Abd ar-Raḥmān* ad-Dārimī (797–869), Sunan al-Musnad, 2 vols. Beirut 1407 / 1986, vol. I, Bāb 39, no. 435.