A Legend is Born

Moses' Childhood and the Hero's Journey

Parashat Shemot 5774

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."

- Joseph Campbell

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. Exodus 2: 1-10

Sargon, strong king, king of Agade, am I. My mother was a high priestess, my father I do not know. My paternal kin inhabit the mountain region. My city (of birth) is Azupiranu, which lies on the bank of the Euphrates. My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me. She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch. She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape. The river carried me along: to Aqqi, the water drawer, it brought me. Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up. Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son. Aqqi, the water drawer, set me to his garden work. During my garden work, Istar loved me (so that) 55 years I ruled as king. – Akkadian Legend

Joseph Campbell's Monomyth (*Hero With A Thousand Faces*)
The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation--initiation--return:* which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.

Stages of the hero's journey:

1. Birth: Fabulous circumstances surrounding conception, birth, and childhood establish the hero's pedigree, and often constitute their own monomyth cycle.

2. Call to Adventure: The hero is called to adventure by some external event or messenger. The Hero may accept the call willingly or reluctantly.

3. Helpers/Amulet: During the early stages of the journey, the hero will often receive aid from a protective figure. This supernatural helper can take a wide variety of forms, such as a wizard, and old man, a dwarf, a crone, or a fairy godmother. The helper commonly gives the hero a protective amulet or weapon for the journey.

4. Crossing the Threshold: Upon reaching the threshold of adventure, the hero must undergo some sort of ordeal in order to pass from the everyday world into the world of adventure. This trial may be as painless as entering a dark cave or as violent as being swallowed up by a whale. The important feature is the contrast between the familiar world of light and the dark, unknown world of adventure.

5. Tests: The hero travels through the dream-like world of adventure where he must undergo a series of tests. These trials are often violent encounters with monsters, sorcerers, warriors, or forces of nature. Each successful test further proves the hero's ability and advances the journey toward its climax.

6. Helpers: The hero is often accompanied on the journey by a helper who assists in the series of tests and generally serves as a loyal companion. Alternately, the hero may encounter a supernatural helper in the world of adventure who fulfills this function.

7. Climax/The Final Battle: This is the critical moment in the hero's journey in which there is often a final battle with a monster, wizard, or warrior which facilitates the particular resolution of the adventure.

8. Flight: After accomplishing the mission, the hero must return to the threshold of adventure and prepare for a return to the everyday world. If the hero has angered the opposing forces by stealing the elixir or killing a powerful monster, the return may take the form of a hasty flight. If the hero has been given the elixir freely, the flight may be a benign stage of the journey.

9. Return: The hero again crosses the threshold of adventure and returns to the everyday world of daylight. The return usually takes the form of an awakening, rebirth, resurrection, or a simple emergence from a cave or forest. Sometimes the hero is pulled out of the adventure world by a force from the daylight world.

10. Elixer: The object, knowledge, or blessing that the hero acquired during the adventure is now put to use in the everyday world. Often it has a restorative or healing function, but it also serves to define the hero's role in the society.

11. Home: The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

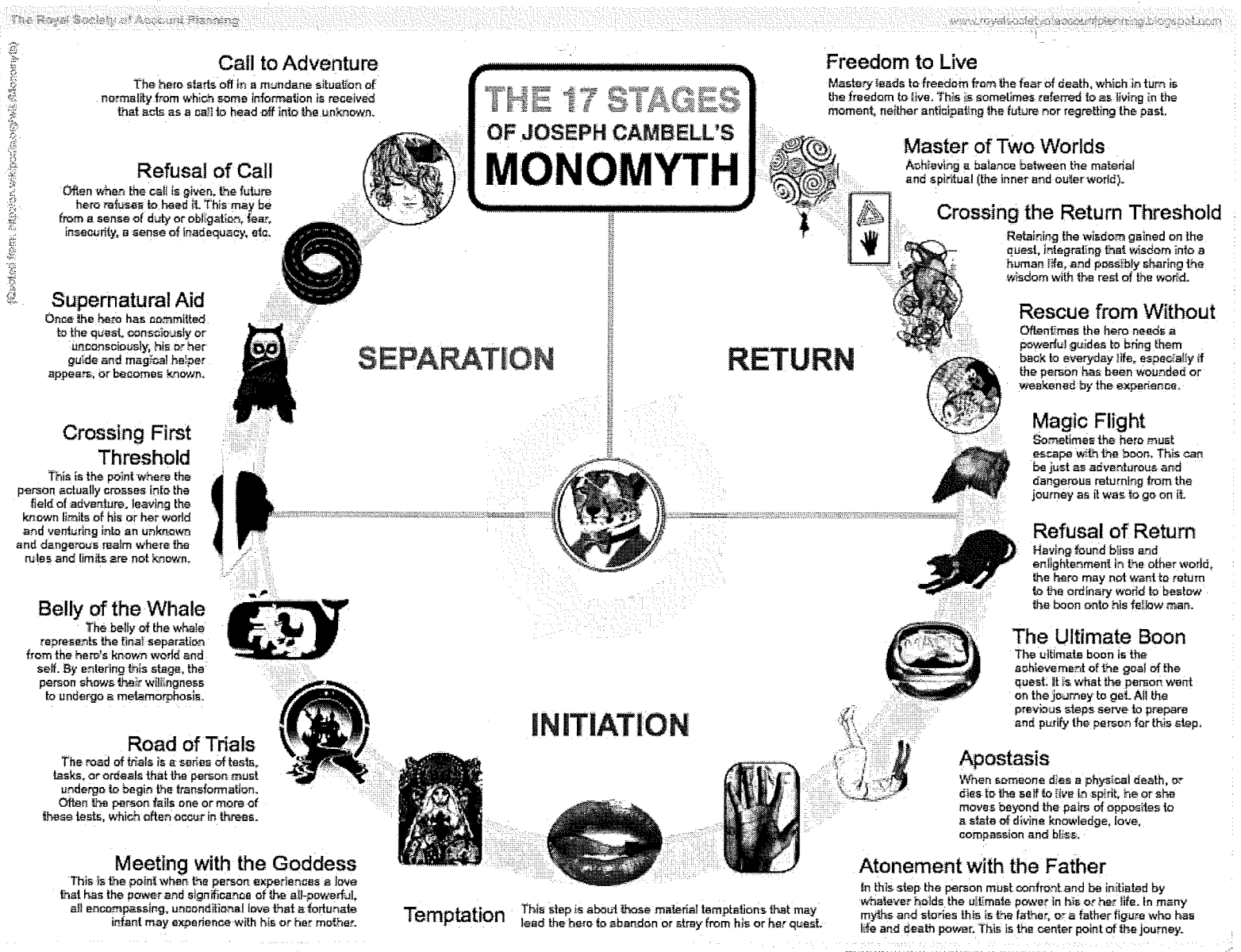
As we discuss the hero's development, we see that the hero's fundamental problem at the beginning of the story is his unwillingness to become committed to a cause that is bigger than himself. The hero *refuses* to change at first. But as he receives counsel from a mentor, and as his conscience prods him to do what is right, he starts to change his values and grow in nobility. By the end of the story, the main character has risked his life to do something good—and can truly be called a hero. He has become a different person, someone who is willing to die for something that is more important than self, and someone that the students can see, at least in some ways, as virtuous.

Hands-On Analysis

Here's a worksheet that I've used to get students familiar with using the Hero's Journey to analyze a story. In the chart I show how Bilbo (in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*) and Moses (in the Exodus story) both become less self-centered and more self-sacrificial through their journeys. As the students work through the worksheet, they can also take a favorite story of their own and see how it fits into the Hero's Journey structure.

	The Hobbit	The Exodus	A Favorite Story of Yours
SEPARATION			
Ordinary World	Bilbo sits on his doorstep, calm and content (and somewhat selfish).	Moses lives in Midian with his family.	
Call to Adventure	Gandalf unexpectedly invites him to accompany the dwarves on their journey to the Lonely Mountain. (Bilbo is invited to change his values to help others.)	God appears to Moses at the burning bush and calls Moses to deliver Israel from the Egyptians.	
Refusal of the Call	Bilbo is not very interested. He goes on the journey only when Gandalf essentially makes him go.	Moses tries to persuade God that he's not the one who should go.	
Meeting the Mentor	Gandalf encourages Bilbo to go.	During the story, Moses gets advice from his father-in-law Jethro, and many times he receives direction from God.	
DESCENT			
Crossing the Threshold	Bilbo finds himself running to the Green Dragon Inn and joining the dwarves.	Moses obeys God's call and goes to Egypt.	
Tests, Allies, and Enemies	Bilbo encounters trolls, goblins, elves, men, spiders, and so forth.	Moses encounters Aaron, magicians, Israelites, Pharaoh, and others.	
Approach the Inmost Cave	Bilbo must walk alone down the secret path to the heart of the Lonely Mountain, where the dragon Smaug lies.	As the Egyptians pursue, Moses must show great faith by leading Israel to a seemingly dead end at the Red Sea.	

The Ordeal	Bilbo holds a conversation with Smaug.	As Israel finishes crossing the Red Sea, the Egyptians are on their heels.	
Reward	Bilbo gains a goblet; more importantly, he *matures* in many ways as a result of his ordeals.	Because of Moses, the Israelites escape from slavery and their enemies are dead.	
RETURN			
Road Back	Bilbo continues his quest to help the dwarves.	Moses continues leading Israel toward Canaan.	
Resurrection	Bilbo miraculously survives the Battle of Five Armies.	When Israel thinks Moses is dead, he emerges from Mt. Sinai.	
Return with Elixir	Bilbo returns to Hobbiton with self-knowledge, wisdom, and gold.	Israel's trust (at least temporarily) in God; Moses' knowledge of having been used of God to deliver Israel.	



Moses Journey

Joseph Campbell brought together a collection of ideas that are known as Monomyth or Hero's Journey. This journey is a path that Campbell set up that he believed many heroes take. There are many heroes to choose from but this paper will be describing the path that Moses took in the The Ten Commandments. Even though this path is mostly applied to mythological journeys Moses's journey fits into the path well. This story is believed by many to be a real event. The three components of a Hero's Journey: departure, initiation and the return will be fully described.

The deperature

To begin the entire journey one must depart so the beginning of a Hero's Journey is the departure. The first part of Moses's journey is the call to adventure. I believe that this is when Moses is saved when all other boys his age are killed. The point that he was saved makes him the center of attention. The next part on the Hero's path is refusal of the call. When Moses gets older and it is found out that he was born a slave, the Hebrews call him the savior. Moses says he has not idea who this savior is, but that he is a slave. He is refusing the call to become the hero when he refuses to acknowledge that he is the savior. The next point of supernatural aid is when the burning bush resembles God and talks to Moses. This supernatural power convinces him that he is the savior and that he must fulfill what he was sent there to do. The crossing of the first threshold is then Moses actually makes the journey home to Egypt. The final part of the departure is the belly of the whale. Moses enters the "belly of the whale" when he returns to Egypt and tells the pharaoh to "let my people go."

The initation

The middle stage of Moses's journey is called the initiation where he accomplishes his goal of freeing the slaves. The first stage in the initiation is the road of trials. Moses tries to convince the pharaoh to let his people go but he refuses. Therefore Moses completes a series of tasks to convince the Egyptian people that he truly has the power of God behind him. He does many things but one such thing is turning all the water to blood in Egypt. Moses never meet his real mother and meets her when he discovers that he was born a slave. Even though he meets her in the departure stage, he reunites with her when he returns and therefore this reuniting with his mother is the part of meeting with the Goddess. Even though he knew that he was the savior and that he was married he is tempted by the first love of his life. She meets with him and tempts him to drop what he is doing. Moses refuses and continues with what he has started. After he returned to Egypt he was meeting with the pharaoh and this is one of what I consider the atonement with the father. The other I believe is the relationship that he has with God. Therefore Moses has two atonement's with the father. Each is with a powerful being but one is with him and the other against. Pharaoh decides the apotheosis. When the angel of death sweeps over Egypt and kills all of the firstborn of Egypt, the salves or Hebrews are having passover. This feast which is still celebrated today, was in preparation for their journey and for the angel of death passing over them. The final part of initiation is when the Pharaoh finally says that the slaves are free to go. There is rejoicing and celebration which leads to the trip to the promise land.

The return

After the slaves are freed, Moses and his fellow people must make the a trip to the promise land. This begins the final stage of the Hero's Journey, the return. Even though Moses does not refuse to return to the promised land, he wavers on he will lead all of these people but is convinced that he must continue. The long trip that

they must take is the magic flight in a hero's journey. This trip is to get away from the Egyptians before they change their mind. On their journey the Egyptian pharaoh decides that he still wants his slaves and sets out after them with his army. This is where Moses holds up his hands the the Red Sea parted for them to cross. This would be the rescue from without. Even though he thought they were free, it took the pharaoh's army to bring him back to reality. They were not totally free quite yet, they had to get out of the Egyptian's reach. Then as the final people crossed the sea crashed on top of the Egyptian army. This whole scene of crossing the Red Sea is the rescue from without part of the Hero's Journey. As they make their journey to the promised land, Moses stops the group at a mountain. Alone, Moses transcends the mountain to the top. At the top Moses has a conversation with God and is handed the Ten Commandments. This would be the crossing of the return threshold. The wisdom that God had taught him and he had acquired were now on tablets for all to see. As he comes down the mountain, the people are worshiping a cattle made of gold. This angers Moses so much that he smashes the tablets into pieces. He then transcends the mountain again to get another set of tablets with the Ten Commandments. After breaking the will of God by breaking the tablets, Moses is not able to enter the promised land. This is the point where master of the two worlds is accomplished. He is both a Hero to the Hebrews but a mortal because he has done wrong. He understands both worlds. However, Moses still leads the Hebrews to the promised land where they make their home. From then on, Moses has the freedom to live. He no longer is obligated to lead the Hebrews and can go back to his normal life that he once lead. In conclusion, Moses' journey fits the Hero's journey very well. There are some aspects that do not seem to fit perfectly but fit nonetheless. The three stages: departure, initiation, and return are all accomplished by the end of the movie, but in ways one may not expect. Moses was and is a hero to many people and in many religions, his adventure is fact.

Philo of Alexandria

ON THE LIFE OF MOSES, I

I. (1) I have conceived the idea of writing the life of Moses, who, according to the account of some persons, was the lawgiver of the Jews, but according to others only an interpreter of the sacred laws, **the greatest and most perfect man that ever lived,** having a desire to make his character fully known to those who ought not to remain in ignorance respecting him, (2) for the glory of the laws which he left behind him has reached over the whole world, and has penetrated to the very furthest limits of the universe; and those who do really and truly understand him are not many, perhaps **partly out of envy**, or else from the disposition so common to many persons of resisting the commands which are delivered by lawgivers in different states, since the historians who have flourished among the Greeks have not chosen to think him worthy of mention, (3) the greater part of whom have both in their poems and also in their prose writings, disparaged or defaced the powers which they have received through education, composing comedies and works full of Sybaritish profligacy and licentiousness to their everlasting shame, while they ought rather to have employed their natural endowments and abilities in preserving a record of virtuous men and praiseworthy lives, so that honourable actions, whether ancient or modern, might not be buried in silence, and thus have all recollection of them lost, while they might shine gloriously if duly celebrated; and that they might not themselves have seemed to pass by more appropriate subjects, and to prefer such as were unworthy of being mentioned at all, while they were eager to give a specious appearance to infamous actions, so as to secure notoriety for disgraceful deeds. (4) But I disregard the envious disposition of these men, and shall proceed to narrate the events which befell him, having learnt them both from those sacred scriptures which he has left as marvellous memorials of his wisdom, and having also heard many things from the elders of my nation, for I have continually connected together what I have heard with what I have read, and in this way I look upon it that I am acquainted with the history of his life more accurately than other people.

II. (5) And I will begin first with that with which it is necessary to begin. Moses was by birth a Hebrew, **but he was born, and brought up, and educated in Egypt,** his ancestors having migrated into Egypt with all their families on account of the long famine which oppressed Babylon and all the adjacent countries; for they were in search of food, and Egypt was a champaign country blessed with a rich soil, and very productive of everything which the nature of man requires, and especially of corn and wheat, (6) for the river of that country at the height of summer, when they say that all other rivers which are derived from winter torrents and from springs in the ground are smaller, rises and increases, and overflows so as to irrigate all the lands, and make them one vast lake. And so the land, without having any need of rain, supplies every year an unlimited abundance of every kind of good food, unless sometimes the anger of God interrupts this abundance by reason of the excessive impiety of the inhabitants. (7) **And his father and mother were among the most excellent persons of their time, and though they were of the same time, still they were induced to unite themselves together more from an unanimity of feeling than because they were related in blood; and Moses is the seventh generation in succession from the original settler in the country who was the founder of the whole race of the Jews.**

III. (8) **And he was thought worthy of being bred up in the royal palace,** the cause of which circumstance was as follows. The king of the country, inasmuch as the nation of the Hebrews kept continually increasing in numbers, fearing lest gradually the settlers should become more numerous than the original inhabitants, and being more powerful should set upon them and subdue them by force, and make themselves their masters, conceived the idea of destroying their strength by impious devices, and ordered that of all the children that were born the females only should be brought up (since a woman, by reason of the weakness of her nature, is disinclined to and unfitted for war), and that all the male children should be destroyed, that the population of their cities might not be increased, since a power which consists of a number of men is a fortress difficult to take and difficult to Destroy (9) **Accordingly as the child Moses, as soon as he was born, displayed a more beautiful and noble form than usual,** his parents resolved, as far as was in their power, to disregard the proclamations of the tyrant. Accordingly they say that for three months continuously they kept him at home, feeding him on milk, without its coming to the knowledge of the multitude; (10) but when, as is commonly the case in monarchies, some persons discovered what was kept secret and in darkness, of those persons who are always eager to bring any new report to the king, his parents being afraid lest while seeking to secure the safety of one individual, they who were many might become involved in his destruction, with many tears exposed their child on the banks of the river, and departed groaning and lamenting, pitying themselves for the necessity which had fallen upon them, and calling themselves the slayers and murderers of their child, and commiserating the infant too for his destruction, which they had hoped to avert. (11) Then, as was natural for people involved in a miserable misfortune, they accused themselves as having brought a heavier affliction on themselves than they need have done. "For why," said they, "did we not expose him at the first moment of his birth?" For people in general do not look upon one who has not lived long enough to partake of salutary food as a human being at all. "But we, in our superfluous affection, have nourished him these three entire months, causing ourselves by such conduct more abundant grief, and inflicting upon him a heavier punishment, in order that he, having at last attained to a great capacity for feeling pleasures and pains, should at last perish in the perception of the most grievous evils."

IV. (12) And so they departed in ignorance of the future, being wholly overwhelmed with sad misery; but the sister of the infant who was thus exposed, being still a maiden, out of the vehemence of her fraternal affection, stood a little way off watching to see what would happen, and all the events which concerned him appear to me to have taken place in accordance with the providence of God, who watched over the infant. (13) Now the king of the country had an only daughter, whom he tenderly loved, and they say that she, although she had been married a long time, had never had any children, and therefore, as was natural, was very desirous of children, and especially of male offspring, which should succeed to the noble inheritance of her father's prosperity and imperial authority, which was otherwise in danger of being lost, since the king had no other grandsons. (14) And as she was always desponding and lamenting, so especially on that particular day was she overcome by the weight of her anxiety, that, though it was her ordinary custom to stay indoors and never to pass over the threshold of her house, yet now she went forth with her handmaidens down to the river, where the infant was lying. And there, as she was about to indulge in a bath and purification in the thickest part of the marsh, she beheld the child, and commanded her handmaidens to bring him to her. (15) **Then, after she had surveyed him from head to foot, and admired his elegant form and healthy vigorous appearance,** and saw that he was crying, she had compassion on him, her soul being already moved within her by maternal feelings of affection as if he had been her own child. And when she knew that the infant belonged to one of the Hebrews who was afraid because of the commandment of the king, she

herself conceived the idea of rearing him up, and took counsel with herself on the subject, thinking that it was not safe to bring him at once into the palace; (16) and while she was still hesitating, the sister of the infant, who was still looking out, conjecturing her hesitation from what she beheld, ran up and asked her whether she would like that the child should be brought up at the breast by some one of the Hebrew women who had been lately delivered; (17) and as she said that she wished that she would do so, the maiden went and fetched her own mother and that of the infant, as if she had been a stranger, who with great readiness and willingness cheerfully promised to take the child and bring him up, pretending to be tempted by the reward to be paid, the providence of God thus making the original bringing up of the child to accord with the genuine course of nature. Then she gave him a name, calling him Moses with great propriety, because she had received him out of the water, for the Egyptians call water "mos."

V. (18) But when the child began to grow and increase, **he was weaned, not in accordance with the time of his age, but earlier than usual;** and then his mother, who was also his nurse, came to bring him back to the princess who had given him to her, inasmuch as he no longer required to be fed on milk, and as he was now a fine and noble child to look upon. (19) And when the king's daughter saw that he was more perfect than could have been expected at his age, and when from his appearance she conceived greater good will than ever towards him, she adopted him as her son, having first put in practice all sorts of contrivances to increase the apparent bulk of her belly, so that he might be looked upon as her own genuine child, and not as a supposititious one; but God easily brings to pass whatever he is inclined to effect, however difficult it may be to bring to a successful issue. (20) **Therefore the child being now thought worthy of a royal education and a royal attendance, was not, like a mere child, long delighted with toys and objects of laughter and amusement, even though those who had undertaken the care of him allowed him holidays and times for relaxation, and never behaved in any stern or morose way to him; but he himself exhibited a modest and dignified deportment in all his words and gestures, attending diligently to every lesson of every kind which could tend to the improvement of his mind.** (21) **And immediately he had all kinds of masters, one after another, some coming of their own accord from the neighboring countries and the different districts of Egypt, and some being even procured from Greece by the temptation of large presents. But in a short time he surpassed all their knowledge, anticipating all their lessons by the excellent natural endowments of his own genius; so that everything in his case appeared to be a recollecting rather than a learning, while he himself also, without any teacher, comprehended by his instinctive genius many difficult subjects;** (22) for great abilities cut out for themselves many new roads to knowledge. And just as vigorous and healthy bodies which are active and quick in motion in all their parts, release their trainers from much care, giving them little or no trouble and anxiety, and as trees which are of a good sort, and which have a natural good growth, give no trouble to their cultivators, but grow finely and improve of themselves, so in the same manner the well disposed soul, going forward to meet the lessons which are imparted to it, is improved in reality by itself rather than by its teachers, and taking hold of some beginning or principle of knowledge, bounds, as the proverb has it, like a horse over the plain. (23) **Accordingly he speedily learnt arithmetic, and geometry, and the whole science of rhythm and harmony and metre, and the whole of music, by means of the use of musical instruments, and by lectures on the different arts, and by explanations of each topic; and lessons on these subjects were given him by Egyptian philosophers, who also taught him the philosophy which is contained in symbols, which they exhibit in those sacred characters of hieroglyphics, as they are called, and also that philosophy which is conversant about that respect which they pay to animals which they invest with the honours due to God. And all the other branches of the encyclical education he learnt from Greeks; and the philosophers from the adjacent countries taught him Assyrian literature and the knowledge of the heavenly bodies so much studied by the Chaldaeans.** (24) And this knowledge he derived also from the Egyptians, who study mathematics above all things, and he learnt with great accuracy the state of that art among both the Chaldaeans and Egyptians, making himself acquainted with the points in which they agree with and differ from each other--making himself master of all their disputes without encouraging any disputatious disposition in himself--but seeking the plain truth, since his mind was unable to admit any falsehood, as those are accustomed to do who contend violently for one particular side of a question; and who advocate any doctrine which is set before them, whatever it may be, not inquiring whether it deserves to be supported, but acting in the same manner as those lawyers who defend a cause for pay, and are wholly indifferent to the justice of their cause.

VI. (25) And when he had passed the boundaries of the age of infancy **he began to exercise his intellect; not, as some people do, letting his youthful passions roam at large without restraint, although in him they had ten thousand incentives by reason of the abundant means for the gratification of them which royal places supply; but he behaved with temperance and fortitude, as though he had bound them with reins, and thus he**

restrained their onward impetuosity by force. (26) And he tamed, and appeased, and brought under due command every one of the other passions which are naturally and as far as they are themselves concerned frantic, and violent, and unmanageable. And if any one of them at all excited itself and endeavored to get free from restraint he administered severe punishment to it, reproving it with severity of language; and, in short, he repressed all the principal impulses and most violent affections of the soul, and kept guard over them as over a restive horse, fearing lest they might break all bounds and get beyond the power of reason which ought to be their guide to restrain them, and so throw everything everywhere into confusion. For these passions are the causes of all good and of all evil; of good when they submit to the authority of dominant reason, and of evil when they break out of bounds and scorn all government and restraint. (27) Very naturally, therefore, those who associated with him and everyone who was acquainted with him **marvelled at him**, being astonished as at a novel spectacle, and inquiring what kind of mind it was that had its abode in his body, and that was set up in it like an image in a shrine; whether it was a human mind or a divine intellect, or something combined of the two; because he had nothing in him resembling the many, but had gone beyond them all and was elevated to a more sublime height. (28) For he never provided his stomach with any luxuries beyond those necessary tributes which nature has appointed to be paid to it, and as to the pleasures of the organs below the stomach he paid no attention to them at all, except as far as the object of having legitimate children was concerned. (29) And being in a most eminent degree a **practicer of abstinence and self-denial**, and being above all men inclined to ridicule a life of effeminacy and luxury (for he desired to live for his soul alone, and not for his body), he exhibited the doctrines of philosophy in all his daily actions, saying precisely what he thought, and performing such actions only as were consistent with his words, so as to exhibit a perfect harmony between his language and his life, so that as his words were such also was his life, and as his life was such likewise was his language, like people who are playing together in tune on a musical instrument. (30) Therefore men in general, even if the slightest breeze of prosperity does only blow their way for a moment, become puffed up and give themselves great airs, becoming insolent to all those who are in a lower condition than themselves, and calling them dregs of the earth, and annoyances, and sources of trouble, and burdens of the earth, and all sorts of names of that kind, as if they had been thoroughly able to establish the undeviating character of their prosperity on a solid foundation, though, very likely, they will not remain in the same condition even till tomorrow, (31) for there is nothing more inconstant than fortune, which tosses human affairs up and down like dice. Often has a single day thrown down the man who was previously placed on an eminence, and raised the lowly man on high. And while men see these events continually taking place, and though they are well assured of the fact, still they overlook their relations and friends, and transgress the laws according to which they were born and brought up; and they overturn their national hereditary customs to which no just blame whatever is attached, dwelling in a foreign land, and by reason of their cordial reception of the customs among which they are living, no longer remembering a single one of their ancient usages.

VII. (32) But Moses, having now reached the very highest point of human good fortune, and being looked upon as the grandson of this mighty king, and being almost considered in the expectations of all men as the future inheritor of his grandfather's kingdom, and being always addressed as the young prince, **still felt a desire for and admiration of the education of his kinsmen and ancestors,** considering all the things which were thought good among those who had adopted him as spurious, even though they might, in consequence of the present state of affairs, have a brilliant appearance; and those things which were thought good by his natural parents, even though they might be for a short time somewhat obscure, at all events akin to himself and genuine good things. (33) Accordingly, like an uncorrupt judge both of his real parents and of those who had adopted him, he cherished towards the one a good will and an ardent affection, and he displayed gratitude towards the others in requital of the kindness which he had received at their hands, and he would have displayed the same throughout his whole life if he had not beheld a great and novel iniquity wrought in the country by the king; (34) for, as I have said before, the Jews were strangers in Egypt, the founders of their race having migrated from Babylon and the upper satrapies in the time of the famine, by reason of their want of food, and come and settled in Egypt, and having in a manner taken refuge like suppliants in the country as in a sacred asylum, fleeing for protection to the good faith of the king and the compassion of the inhabitants; (35) for strangers, in my opinion, should be looked upon as refugees, and as the suppliants of those who receive them in their country; and, besides, being suppliants, these men were likewise sojourners in the land, and friends desiring to be admitted to equal honors with the citizens, and neighbors differing but little in their character from original natives. (36) The men, therefore, who had left their homes and come into Egypt, as if they were to dwell in that land as in a second country in perfect security, the king of the country reduced to slavery, and, as if he had taken them prisoners by the laws of war, or had bought them from masters in whose house they had been bred, he oppressed them and treated them as slaves, though they were not only free men, but also strangers, and suppliants, and sojourners, having no respect for nor any awe of God, who presides over the

rights of free men, and of strangers, and of suppliants, and of hospitality, and who beholds all such actions as his. (37) Then he laid commands on them beyond their power to fulfill, imposing on them labor after labor; and, when they fainted from weakness, the sword came upon them. He appointed overseers over their works, the most pitiless and inhuman of men, who pardoned and made allowance for no one, and whom they from the circumstances and from their behaviour called persecutors of work. (38) And they wrought with clay, some of them fashioning it into bricks, and others collecting straw from all quarters, for straw is the bond which binds bricks together; while others, again, had the task allotted to them of building up houses, and walls, and gates, and cutting trenches, bearing wood themselves day and night without interruption, having no rest or respite, and not even being allowed time so much as to sleep, but being compelled to perform all the works not only of workmen but also of journeymen, so that in a short time their bodies failed them, their souls having already fainted beneath their afflictions. (39) And so they died, one after another, as if smitten by a pestilential destruction, and then their taskmasters threw their bodies away unburied beyond the borders of the land, not suffering their kinsmen or their friends to sprinkle even a little dust on their corpses, nor to weep over those who had thus miserably perished; but, like impious men as they were, they threatened to extend their despotism over the passions of the soul (that cannot be enslaved, and which are nearly the only things which nature has made completely free), oppressing them with the intolerable weight of a necessity beyond their powers.

VIII. (40) At all these events Moses was greatly grieved and indignant, not being able either to chastise the unjust oppressors of his people nor to assist those who were oppressed, but he gave them all the assistance that was in his power, by words, recommending their overseers to treat them with moderation, and to relax and abate somewhat of the oppressive nature of their commands, and exhorting the oppressed who were laboring thus to bear their present distresses with a noble spirit and to be men in their minds, and not to let their souls faint as well as their bodies, but to hope for good fortune after their present adversity; (41) for that all things in this world have a tendency to change to the opposite, cloudy weather to fine, violent gales to calm and absence of wind, storms and heavy billows at sea to fair weather and an unruffled surface of the water; and much more are human affairs likely to change, inasmuch as they are more unstable than anything. (42) By using these charms, as it were, like a good physician, he thought he should be able to alleviate their afflictions, although they were most grievous. But whenever their distress abated, then again their taskmasters returned and oppressed them with increased severity, always after the respite adding some new evil which should be even more intolerable than their previous sufferings; (43) for some of their overseers were very savage and furious men, being, as to their cruelty, not at all different from poisonous serpents or carnivorous beasts--wild beasts in human form--being clothed with the form of a human body so as to give an appearance of gentleness in order to deceive and catch their victim, but in reality being harder than iron or adamant. (44) One of these men, then, the most violent of them, when, in addition to yielding nothing of his purpose, he was even exasperated at the exhortations of Moses and rendered more savage by them, beating those who did not labor with energy and unremittingly at the work which was imposed upon them, and insulting them and subjecting them to every kind of ill-treatment, so as even to be the death of many, **Moses slew, thinking the deed a pious action; and, indeed, it was a pious action to destroy one who only lived for the destruction of others.** (45) When the king heard of this action he was very indignant, thinking it an intolerable thing, not for one man to be dead, or for another to have killed him, whether justly or unjustly, but for his grandson not to agree with him, and not to look upon his friends or his enemies as his own, but to hate persons whom the king loved, and to love persons whom the king looked upon as outcasts, and to pity those whom he regarded with unchangeable and implacable aversion.

Moses narrative Islam (Wikipedia)

Youth

According to Islamic tradition, Moses was born into a family of Israelites living in Egypt. Of his family, Islamic tradition generally names his father *'Imran*, corresponding to the Amram of the Hebrew Bible, and traditional genealogies name Levi as his ancestor.[12] Islam states that Moses was born in a time when the ruling Pharaoh had enslaved the Israelites after the time of the prophet Joseph (*Yusuf*). Around the time of Moses' birth, Islamic literature states that the Pharaoh had a dream, in which he saw fire coming from the city of Jerusalem, which burnt everything in his kingdom except that of the Israelites.[13] When the Pharaoh described his dream to his priests and soothsayers, they predicted that the fall of the Pharaoh would be brought about by a boy from the Israelites.[14] Islamic tradition states that when the Pharaoh was informed that one of the male children would grow up to overthrow him, he ordered the

killing of all new-born Israelite males in order to prevent the prediction from occurring.[15] Islamic literature further states that the experts of economics in Pharaoh's court advised him that killing the male infants of the Israelites, would result in loss of manpower.[16] Therefore they suggested that the male infants should be killed in one year but spared the next.[16] Aaron was born in the year in which infants were spared, while Moses was born in the year in which infants were to be killed.[17]

On the Nile

According to Islamic tradition, Moses's mother suckled him secretly during this period. The Qur'an states that when they were in danger of being caught God inspired her to put him in a basket and set him adrift on the Nile.[18] She instructed her daughter to follow the course of the ark and to report back to her. As the daughter followed the ark along the riverbank, Moses was discovered by the Pharaoh's wife, Asiya, who convinced the Pharaoh to adopt him.[19] The Qur'an states that when Asiya ordered wet nurses for Moses, Moses refused to be breastfed. Islamic tradition states that this was because God had forbidden Moses from being fed by any wet nurse as to reunite his mother with him.[20] His sister worried that Moses had not been fed for some time, therefore, she appeared to the Pharaoh and informed him that she knew someone, who could feed him.[21] Islamic tradition states that after being questioned, she was ordered to bring the woman being discussed.[21] The sister brought their mother who fed Moses and thereafter she was appointed as the wet nurse of Moses.[22]

Test of prophecy

According to Isra'iliyat hadith, during his childhood when Moses was playing on Pharaoh's lap, he grabbed the Pharaoh's beard. This action prompted the Pharaoh to consider Moses as the Israelite who would overthrow him. The Pharaoh decided to kill Moses but stopped after the Pharaoh's wife interceded and argued that he was just an infant, and due to her intercession the Pharaoh decided to test Moses.[23] Two plates were set before young Moses, one contained rubies and the other held glowing coals.[23] Moses reached out for the rubies, but the angel Gabriel directed his hand to the coals. Moses grabbed a glowing coal and put it in his mouth, burning his tongue.[24] After the incident Moses suffered from a speech defect, but was spared by the Pharaoh.

The Man Moses

by Peter Machinist

The introduction of Moses in the first chapters of Exodus marks a new, a second beginning in the Bible's account of the history of Israel. The first beginning had been in the Book of Genesis with Abraham and the patriarchs that followed him. There the focus was on Israel as a family bound in relationship or covenant to its God. Moses' beginning marks the extension of the group from family to nation, though a nation still with a strong sense of kinship. Here the emphasis is on the development of a common administration, as well as on the re-presentation of the covenant as a code of law that gives the nation its structure, without which it cannot survive.

The Moses who shepherds in this second beginning dominates the biblical narrative through the remainder of the Book of Exodus, indeed through the rest of the Pentateuch; his only rival, and ultimate superior, in narrative attention, as, of course, in other spheres, is God Himself. But this Moses comes to us as a strange and difficult person. Running throughout the narrative of Exodus, and of the Pentateuch as a whole, is the depiction of a unique individual: one with little or no precedent, solitary, not easily approachable, set apart from the very community he is born to lead.

This quality apart emerges in a variety of ways. For one thing, Moses' origins may be in the community of Israel, yet they are not of it. The text of Exodus 2 (verses 1 and following) is at pains to assign him a genealogy within the family of Israel—at pains, perhaps, because it then has to recognize that he was adopted into the court of the

Pharaoh, given his name by the Pharaoh's daughter, and raised as Egyptian royalty. It is well known what Sigmund Freud did with this portrait,[1] arguing that the Israelite genealogy was, in fact, a later, pious construction that tried to mask Moses' true roots as an Egyptian who only subsequently took on the cause of the Israelite slaves as his own. Whether Freud's thesis—and, as he made clear, he was not the originator of it—is correct or not, it does underscore the ambiguity of Moses' connection with Israel in the biblical portrayal.

That ambiguity is fortified by other features of Moses' family life. His wife, Zipporah, is not from Israel, but from the Midianites of the region of Sinai (e.g., Exodus 2:15–22), and her foreignness is later criticized by none other than Moses' brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, in the context of a challenge to Moses' own legitimacy and leadership (Numbers 12). (Incidentally, the label that Aaron and Miriam pin on Moses' wife, "Cushite," has the effect of making her even stranger to an Israelite settled in Palestine, since it normally refers to the Ethiopians, a people much farther away from Palestine than the Midianites.) There is also the son Moses has with Zipporah: he is named Gershom, according to the biblical text, precisely because this is to memorialize Moses as outsider (Exodus 2:22).a Gershom has as well a curious genealogical niche. For while he has descendants, they are not arranged in a line of divine promise and authority such as is found with Abraham and his family (e.g., Genesis 26:2–5). Indeed, in Judges 18:30–31 (following here the textual tradition that reads the ancestor's name as Moses, not Manasseh), we learn that Gershom's descendants were priests to an idolatrous cult in the Israelite tribe of Dan.

As for the character of Moses' leadership, here too there is difference. He is assigned, for example, a traditional title in Israel, that of prophet—a title first given to Abraham (Genesis 20)—but he is unlike Abraham and the others, for as Deuteronomy comments: "There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10; cf. Numbers 12:6–8). To be sure, in another biblical encounter, Moses is not allowed to see God's face, but only His back (Exodus 33:20–23); still that encounter leaves Moses a preternatural, even divine sheen, which once more sets him apart: "When Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, his face was all aglow with radiance (qaṛran), and they were afraid to come near to him" (Exodus 34:30)—just as, one may add, they had been afraid to go near to God and His quaking mountain of Sinai (Exodus 19).

Even apparent defects or negatives in the character of Moses become occasions on the part of the biblical authors to find superlatives of uniqueness. Thus, in the confrontation with Aaron and Miriam, the sinful effrontery of their challenge to Moses emerges all the more clearly in the description of Moses at the opposite extreme: "The man Moses was very meek, more than all humanity that was on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). And when God commands Moses to free the Israelites from Egypt, and Moses protests his competence to challenge the Pharaoh because of a speech defect—a "heaviness of mouth and heaviness of tongue" as the text says (Exodus 4:10)—this defect is turned, by God, into the basis of a new arrangement, wherein Aaron shall do the speaking, and Moses will direct him as though he were God Himself (Exodus 4:16).

Finally, there is the matter of Moses' death, at the end of the Pentateuch in Deuteronomy 34. It flatly contradicts the pattern of expectation that the biblical narrative had accustomed us to, namely, that promises would be fulfilled and lives would reach closure. For Moses is not allowed to die in, let alone enter, the land promised to Israel already in patriarchal days—the land that he had been divinely commanded to return Israel to, without any indication, initially, that he would be barred from it (so Exodus 3, 6:2–9). Indeed, at the end Moses cannot even be buried in the promised land, as key patriarchal figures had been, including Jacob and Joseph, who had died outside of Israel (Genesis 49:29–50:14, 24–26; Joshua 24:32–33). Rather, Moses dies and is buried outside of the land, across the Jordan River in Moab, a region otherwise often at odds with Israel; and he is buried in a spot unknown, placed there not even by human hands, but by God alone. Now the Bible, it has to be noted, tries to explain this end; yet it succeeds in doing so only by a series of incomplete and obscure reasons (Numbers 20, esp. 6–13; 27:12–14; Deuteronomy 3:26; 4:21; 32:50–52)—a situation that later Jewish commentaries, in turn, made desperate

efforts to fill out and discuss, if not to clarify.[2] All of this, thus, only serves to underscore what an extraordinary fate Moses is given in the biblical text, and how well it echoes and rounds out the equally strange picture of his origins in, but not of, Israel.

For the Bible, in sum, Moses is indeed a man apart—apart not only from the people he guides and the land to which he directs them, but apart also, in many fundamental ways, from the kinds of leaders the previous generations of patriarchal figures had been. He remains the permanent outsider, a unique and towering figure.

The question that remains is why should this be so, and what does it mean. Three possibilities, at least, come to mind. First, one might say that, considered from a broader historical perspective, Moses' characterization is not completely surprising. The stories circulating in many societies often picture their founders as different from the rest, even as distant—in short, as heroes. Yet if Moses in some sense belongs to this common type, in other ways he is an unusual, perhaps rare mutation of it, since, in his excessive modesty, distance, inexplicable fate, and strangeness, he is a kind of anti-hero: someone who does not easily serve in the native tradition as a role model, someone who cannot really be emulated.

Moses' strangeness in the Bible may also be understood as a mirror of Israel as a whole, for Israel, too, is portrayed as the quintessential outsider, without easy parallel or precedent, to the other nations around it and to the religions and cultures they represent. Indeed, Israel is an outsider to the very land which its God promises it and which it then has to make its own in a continual struggle. Or, as the prophet Balaam exclaims, "Behold a people dwelling alone, and not reckoning itself among the nations" (Numbers 23:9).

Thirdly, and lastly, by focusing on Moses as outsider, and especially as remote, inimitable outsider, the Bible ends up by shifting the emphasis away from who Moses is to what he communicates, namely, to the Law and to God as its source. We face, then, the paradox that the towering character of Moses may be stressed in the Bible, at least in part, precisely to efface him, so that his message may emerge more clearly and sharply. In other words, there is no cult of personality here—that is, no cult of human personality—and this comports with a more general strain of ambivalence in the biblical corpus toward human leaders and the limits of human authority (e.g., Judges 8:22–24; 1 Samuel 8–10; Hosea 8:4, 13:9–11). If the ultimate emphasis, therefore, is on Moses' message, on the laws he mediates from a totally nonhuman source, we must observe, as a final point, that this is a message which, against the person Moses, is not remote or inimitable. For the laws it offers are laws designed for the human community: laws that, however difficult, all can carry out (e.g., Deuteronomy 29:10–14; 30:11–14), and must carry out if they are to complete the process by which "God created humanity in His image" (Genesis 1:27).

Who, then, is Moses, as the biblical authors see him? Despite the complexities of their portrayal, he is at the core the appointed one who brings Israel to "serve God on this mountain [Sinai]" (Exodus 3:12), and so to receive the Law for their lives.

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Everett Fox
SCHOCKEN BIBLE

"stripping" the Egyptians (3:22, 12:36) links up with the regulation of release in Deut. 15:13. ". . . you are not to send him free empty-handed." Daube sees our text as bearing the stamp of Israelite social custom: Pharaoh is made to flout "established social regulations."

Finally, several scholars (Kikawada, Ackerman 1974, Fishbane 1979, and Isbell) have pointed out that the vocabulary of the first few chapters of the book foreshadows the whole of Part I. This use of sound and idea helps to create unity in these narratives (despite their possibly diverse origins), and is also of importance in viewing the biographical material in the first four chapters.

THE EARLY LIFE OF MOSHE AND RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY

Dominating the early chapters of Exodus, more than the description of bondage itself, is the figure of the reluctant liberator, Moshe. The portrayal of his beginnings contrasts strongly with the classic hero stories of the ancient world.

This is not immediately apparent. Moshe's birth narrative parallels that of King Sargon of Akkad; his flight from Egypt and return as leader are reminiscent of Jephthah and David in the Bible, and of the Syrian king Idrimi (as recounted in Akkadian texts) as well. In addition, half a century ago Lord Raglan attempted to demonstrate common elements in hero biographies by compiling a list of up to thirty key motifs. Those relevant to Moshe include: the father a relative of the mother, an attempt made to kill him at birth, his escape through the action of others, being raised by foster parents, little information about his childhood, his traveling to his "future kingdom" upon reaching adulthood, promulgating laws, losing favor with the deity, dying on the top of a hill, not being succeeded by his children, and a hazy death/burial. Moshe therefore shares with Oedipus, Hercules, Siegfried, and Robin Hood, among others, a host of common elements; his point total according to Raglan's scheme puts him toward the top of the list as an archetypal traditional hero. It must be concluded that, far from being a factual account, his biography is composed largely of literary constructs.

When one looks closer at the biblical portrayal of Moshe, however, the purpose and particularly Israelite thrust of these constructs becomes clear. Almost every key element in Moshe's early life—e.g., rescue from death by royal decree, rescue from death by water, flight into the desert, meeting with God on the sacred mountain—foreshadows Israel's experience in the book of Exodus. The key theme of the distinction between Israel and Egypt, so central to the Plague Narrative and to Israelite religion as a whole, is brought out beautifully in the depiction of Moshe's development from Egyptian prince to would-be liberator to shepherd in the wilderness, the latter an ancestral calling (cf. Nohrnberg, who also discusses Yosef as developing in exactly the opposite direction—from Israelite shepherd boy to Egyptian viceroy, complete with Egyptian appearance, wife, and name). What is important in these early chapters of Exodus, then, is not

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the customary focus on the young hero's deeds (e.g., Hercules strangling serpents in the cradle) or his fatal flaw (although there is a hint of this too!), but on what he shares with his people, or, more precisely, how he prefigures them.

Another aspect of these stories removes them from the usual realm of heroic biography. Elsewhere in the Bible, individual hero types are at least partially overshadowed by the true central "character": God. This appears to be true in Exodus as well. Moshe develops only so far; he recedes as a full-blown personality during the Plague Narrative, to emerge sporadically in later encounters with the people (e.g., Chaps. 16 and 32–33; the portrait expands in the narratives of the book of Numbers). No wonder that later Jewish legend (and further, Christian and Muslim stories as well) found it necessary to fill in the tantalizing hints left by the biblical biographer, with sometimes fantastic tales. But in the Exodus text, it is God who holds sway. In this context, one is reminded that Israelite thinking had room neither for worship of human heroes nor interest in the biography of God (i.e., divine birth and marriage) on the model of surrounding cultures. The biblical portrayal of both God and Moshe has been reduced in our book to only such facts as will illuminate the relationship between Israel and its God. Thus we learn from the Moshe of Exodus much about the people themselves, and about prophecy (cf. Chaps. 3–4); from the God of Exodus, how he acts in history and what he demands of the people. More than that is not easily forthcoming from our text (interestingly, the Passover Haggadah picked up on the Bible's direction and all but omitted Moshe's name in the celebration of the holiday).

As we have suggested, later Jewish legend—some of which may actually be of great antiquity—sought to fill in various aspects of Moshe's life that are missing from the Exodus text. A perusal of Ginzberg will uncover rich legendary material, dealing with Moshe's childhood, family identity, experience in Midyan and elsewhere as a hero. While this material does not always illuminate the biblical story, it does demonstrate how folk belief includes a need for heroes in the classic Raglan mold; the Midrashic portrait of Moshe corresponds nicely to what we find in other cultures.

Turning to stylistic characteristics of these early chapters, we may note that a good deal of repetition occurs, as if further to highlight the themes. Baby Moshe is saved from death twice; three times he attempts acts of opposing oppression; twice (Chaps. 2 and 5) he fails in his attempts to help his enslaved brothers; and twice (Chaps. 3 and 6) God reassures him with long speeches that center around the Divine Name. This kind of continuity is artfully literary, but it is also an echo of real life, where people often live out certain themes in patterns.

Finally there is the matter of recurring words. Most important is the telling use of "see," from the loving gaze of Moshe's mother (2:2), through to the auspicious glance of Pharaoh's daughter (2:6), then to Moshe's sympathetic observing of his brothers' plight (2:11); all this seems to be linked to the episode at the Burning Bush, where God "is seen" by the future leader (3:2), and where the climax of this whole development takes place: God affirms that he has "seen, yes, seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt. . . . and I have also seen the oppression with

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which the Egyptians oppress them" (3:7, 9). Thus Moshe's biography leads to, and is an outgrowth of, the people's own situation.

In sum, Moshe's early biography leads us to ponder the "growing up" process through which the people of Israel must pass on their way out of Egypt. The narratives that deal with his leadership of the people in the wilderness period, from Ex. 16 on, will help to round out our picture of him as a real personality, with the tragedies and triumphs that are a part of human life but magnified in the case of great individuals.

On the Journey Motif

World literature is dominated by stories involving a journey. More often than not, these tales are framed as quests for holy or magical objects (e.g., the Holy Grail), or for eternal youth/immortality (Gilgamesh). The classic pattern, as Joseph Campbell has described it, calls for the hero to make a kind of round trip, crossing dangerous thresholds (monsters, giants, unfriendly supernatural beings) both on the way toward the goal and on the way home. Either at the middle or at the end of the journey stands the goal, which often entails meeting with the divine and/or obtaining a magical or life-giving object (e.g., the Golden Fleece).

Such stories mirror our own longings for accomplishment and acceptance, as well as our universal desire to overcome the ultimate enemy, Death. In the hero's triumphs, we triumph; his vanquishing of death cathartically becomes our own.

This mythic substructure has penetrated the biblical tales, but it has been toned down for human protagonists, to suppress the idea of the mortal hero in favor of the divine one. Thus all the Patriarchs except Yitzhak (Isaac) go on fateful long journeys (his is reserved for the three-day trip to Moriah in Gen. 22), yet there is none of the color and adventure that we find, for example, in Greek mythology. Outside of Yaakov's encounter with the mysterious wrestler in Gen. 32, there is little in Genesis to suggest hero tales on the classic mold. In Exodus, too, Moshe makes a significant journey—to Midyan—one might say, within himself, to find his true identity and calling, but it is highly muted, containing virtually no details. The round trip contains two thresholds of death, with Moshe first threatened by Pharaoh's justice (2:15) and, on the way back to Egypt, by God himself (4:24–26). The initial goal is attained at the "mountain of God" "behind the wilderness," where, meeting with divinity amid fire, he is finally able to integrate his own past, present, and future (as he will return to this mountain with the entire people in Chaps. 19ff). At the Burning Bush, the Egyptian prince, the Israelite shepherd, and the Hebrew liberator coalesce, investing Moshe with unique qualifications for his task.

But it is to a larger journey framework that we must look to understand the "hero" content of Exodus, and with it, that of the Torah as a whole. The major journey undertaken is, of course, that of the people of Israel, from slavery to

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Moshe's Birth and Early Life (2:1–22): Picking up from the last phrase of Chap. 1, "let every daughter live," Chap. 2 opens as a story of three daughters (the word occurs six times here), Moshe's real and foster mothers, and his sister.

It has long been maintained that the story of Moshe's birth is a classic "birth of the hero" tale, sharing many features with other heroes of antiquity. (See p. 298.) The parallel most often drawn is that of Sargon of Akkad, whose birth story is set in an era before Moshe but was written down later; similar elements include being separated from the real parents through a death threat, and being set adrift on the river. Hallo cites other parallels in Hittite and Egyptian literature, noting at the same time that "none of them includes all of the elements of the Moses birth legend."

If, as I maintained in the introduction ("On the Book of Exodus and Its Structure"), most of this material has been collected for didactic and not for historical purposes, we are entitled to ask what this story was intended to teach. It cannot simply be written off as an attempt to explain away Moshe's name and origins. Two elements seem crucial. First, the text as we have it centers around the activity of women—giving birth, hiding, watching and adopting Moshe. The female principle of life-giving triumphs over the male prerogatives of threatening and death-dealing; the Nile, source of all life in Egypt, births another child. Second, the story and its continuation to the end of the chapter set up Moshe as a man of two sides: Hebrew and Egyptian. He is at once archetypal victim (of Pharaoh's death decree) and archetypal collaborator, growing up, as he apparently does, in Pharaoh's palace. What are we to make of this two-sided fate and personality? It may well have been intended as a reflex of the people of Israel itself. Often in the Hebrew Bible the hero's life mirrors that of Israel (see Greenstein 1981), and the case of Moshe is a good example. Moshe develops into a Hebrew—that is, he eventually recovers his full identity. This is accomplished, first, through his empathy with and actions on behalf of "his brothers" (vv.11, 12), then through his exile from Egypt, and finally through the purifying life in the wilderness as a shepherd. Thus Moshe's personality changes are wrought by means of separations, and the same process will characterize the coming Plague Narrative (with its emphasis on "distinction" between Egypt and Israel) and the entire Israelite legal and ritual system, which stresses holiness and separation.

The first section of the chapter (vv.1–10) uses a number of repeating words: "take" appears four times, indicative of divine protection; "child," seven times (Greenberg 1969); and "see," which as I have mentioned, will recur meaningfully in Chap. 3. There is also a threefold motif of death threat in the chapter: at birth, on the Nile, and at the hand of the avenging Pharaoh. Isbell notes several items of vocabulary (e.g., "deliver," "feared," "amid the reeds") that return in the victory account at the Sea of Reeds (Chap. 14).

From the other two accounts here (vv.11–14 and 15–22), we learn all we need to

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know about Moshe's early personality: he is Hebrew-identifying but Egyptian-looking; concerned with justice, but impetuous and violent in pursuit of that goal. It is also ominous that his first contacts with the Israelites end in rejection, since that will so often be his experience with them later on. The doubly unsatisfactory situation of confused identity and impetuous means must be rectified, and it is exile that accomplishes it. The Midyanite wilderness transforms Moshe into shepherd, foreigner, father, and seer—in short, into a son of the Patriarchs (see also "On the Journey Motif," above).

Incredibly, the man whose activity is to span four whole books has, it seems, half his life (or, according to the chronology of 7:7, two-thirds of his life!) described in a single chapter. Typical of biblical storytelling, much has been compressed and left out, but enough is told to establish the person who is to come.

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