# Memories of Moses:

# A Survey Through Genres

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**INTRODUCTION**

During the last few decades an increasing number of biblical scholars have turned to memory studies in their analyses of texts. The figure of Moses is one of the topics discussed, yet so far the studies have not sufficiently considered the genre of the texts that encode the memories.[1] This article looks at the relation between genre and the ways in which Moses is remembered or forgotten.[2] Such a relation can be most clearly seen when approaching a large array of different genres, necessitating the survey of a large material rather than the focus on a few representative texts. This article therefore considers a large material found in the Hebrew Bible, but also makes comments on the Greek Bible, and once the Latin and Slavonic Bibles. As it shows a continuation of the tendencies found in the older parts of the Bible, also the New Testament is included to a limited extent, as is other literature that may be said to belong within a "biblical" horizon.

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[1] Memory study theories are employed in discussions on biblical usages of Moses in e.g. Dijsktra (2003); Ben Zvi (2013); Römer (2013); in part, J. Assmann (1997). Though not employing memory studies, several other scholarly works use similar approaches, of which should be mentioned particularly Lierman (2004); Böttrich, Ego & Eissler (2010).

[2] I would like to thank Diana Edelman, Karl William Weyde and Magnar Kartveit for proposing a similar topic to me.

**THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Our memory is selective; we remember some aspects, and forget others. Indeed, forgetting and remembering are two sides of the same coin. Memories are not objective images, but subjective re-constructions. We re-member, putting together data to create a narrative of the past that is meaningful in the present.

The sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1980) points to the social aspect of memory. For example, at family-gatherings, stories may be told and retold, the memories encoded therein enhancing the identity of the family and the members' sense of belonging to it. The Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1997, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011) and the literature scholar Aleida Assmann (2008) have developed the concept of cultural memory and forgetting in relation to ancient societies. Such memory is closely connected to the hierarchical powers of society, supported by learned institutions, and expressed through media such as rituals, dances, art, architecture and texts. Forgetting may happen through neglect, destruction, negation or caricatures. While the informal family memory of Halbwachs is inter-generational, formal cultural memory may span centuries or even millennia, including formative myths of origin as well as normative expressions such as legal or wisdom literature. "[M]emory," says Jan Assmann, "is not simply the storage of past 'facts' but the ongoing work of reconstructive imagination" (1997, p. 14).

The concept and theoretical framework of social memory studies has led to a new view on biblical literature among scholars such as Mario Liverani (2005), Mark S. Smith (2004), Philip R. Davies (e.g. 2008), Ehud Ben Zvi (e.g. 2011; 2012; 2013), and Diana Edelman (e.g. 2013). While there are important nuances among biblical memory scholars, they agree that the Bible and its texts should be regarded primarily as an expression of cultural memory. Their goal is not to identify fact from fiction, or reconstruct events "as they really happened," but to analyze how the memories encoded in the texts functioned as narratives constructed to make

sense in the society in which these texts were composed and/or read, and particularly how they created an identity for "Israel," whatever is meant by that name.

Not only *events* are re-membered, but the Bible is also bursting with *characters*. Some of these characters play significant roles in the drama of "Israel." Ben Zvi points to the "tendency to organize memory to coalesce around main symbolic figures/sites of memory. Remembering the 'great heroes' of the past draws the attention of the remembering community to their (construed) personality, their main (assigned) attributes, and the outcome of their actions, such as the establishment of institutions, the creation of cities, particular events like battles or political reforms, central texts associated with them, and the like" (2013, p. 355). Indeed, several intertwined memories were attached to such great figures, be they Abraham and Sarah, Deborah, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Huldah—or Moses.[3] Yet even great heroes may be forgotten, as we shall see in our quest for Moses, which begins here.


## HISTORIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

The books from Exodus to Deuteronomy are in a privileged position from the point of view of Moses in biblical memories as they tell his story from birth to death. Indeed, throughout these four books, we may claim that there are three principal actors: Yahweh, a jealous yet merciful god; Israel, the divinely chosen people which continually sins; and Moses, who communicates between the other two actors. This sums up Moses' roles: along the axis from the divine to the human, he brings the divine message (legal and prophetic) to the people (e.g. Lev. 1.1–2 *passim*); and moving along the same axis but in the opposite direction, he intercedes on behalf of the people (e.g. Exod. 32.11–14). However, Moses is also an instrument used by Yahweh to act, whether to perform signs against Egypt (Exod. 7–13), or lead the people through waters or

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[3] See, e.g., the edited volume by Edelman & Ben Zvi (2013).

wilderness (Exod. 14–Deut. 34). In these books, the memories of Moses, the prophet and leader, are simultaneously the memories of "Israel's" past, of Yahweh's salvific events that made "Israel" a nation, forming its identity as a people undergoing exile and return. Indeed, the "biographical" memories of Moses are so intrinsically tied up with "historiographical" memories of "Israel's" foundational past that the two cannot be separated.

Deuteronomy deserves a paragraph on its own, for while it concludes the story of Moses, it also introduces the Deuteronomistic History work, spanning from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. Deuteronomy thus forms a bridge between two large textual corpora. The Hebrew title of the book, *These Are the Words*, sum up its content: the book presents itself as Moses' last sayings (Deut. 1.1–5). Ben Zvi (2013) argues that the book belongs to the prophetic genre: its introduction resembles the introductions of other prophetic books (e.g., Amos), and it contains divine messages and "biographical" elements. I agree that Moses is indeed a prophet in Deuteronomy. His prophecies encapsulate "Israel's" main historiographical memories, from past exodus and wilderness ("remember when…" *passim*) to future memories of a new exile and return ("it will happen when…" *passim*). Indeed, a redactor concluded the book by referring to Moses' role as prophet with the following statement: "never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face" (34.10). Yet, even more striking than the prophetic role is the portrayal of Moses as lawgiver and teacher of all the commandments and statutes and ordinances—laws that Moses gives to the people with divine authority (e.g. 4.5; 5.12; so also Römer 2013). Deuteronomy also refers to itself as law both in the second introduction in 4.44–49 and in one of the older conclusions in chapter 31, which recounts how this book of the law was written and ordered to be read to the entire people every seventh year.

Deuteronomy belongs to the genre of national historiography,[4] as does Exodus–Numbers. Anthony D. Smith, a scholar of modern nationalism, defines ethnohistory as "the selective, shared memories of successive generations of the members of communities, and the ways in which the generations represent and hand down the tales of the community's past to each other" (2003, p. 169). In his list of the elements of which such a "history" is made up (2003, pp. 172–174), it is almost as if he were describing the Bible: myths of origins and ancestry (cf. creation and patriarchal-matriarchal narratives of Genesis); myths of liberation and migration (cf. the exodus, the wandering in the wilderness in Exodus–Deuteronomy); myths of ethnic election (cf. Yahweh choosing Israel from all the nations and peoples in Exodus–Deuteronomy); myths of attachment to homeland (cf. the concept of the promised land in Exodus–Judges); myth-memories of communal golden ages (cf. the monarchical past in 1 Samuel–2 Kings); myth-memories of communal decline (cf. events leading to the exile and the exile itself in some "classical" prophets and in historiographical works, including prophecies by Moses in Exodus–Deuteronomy); myth-memories of communal revival (cf. the "restoration" in prophets and late historiography, as well as prophecies by Moses in Exodus–Deuteronomy); and myth-memories of a communal self-sacrifice (cf. Daniel; cf. 1–2 Maccabees in the Greek Bible). The primary aim of Exodus–Deuteronomy is to tell the great metahistory of "Israel," which is an imaginary community whose identity and existence continues independently of shifting historical circumstances such as deportations and forced settlements outside of its territory. Exodus–Deuteronomy contains this metahistory both through its memories of a foundational past, summed up in the events of the life of Moses, but also through future memories of exile and restoration, as bespoken in Moses' prophecies. During the late sixth-fourth centuries the Yehudites, while being under Persian governance, tried to establish a

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[4] Similar views are held, with different nuances, by e.g. Gross (2004); J. Assmann (2008, 2011); Berquist (2010); Berge (2012).

national identity in the wake of the Babylonian deportations. The memories encoded in Exodus–Deuteronomy served to create one such understanding of "Israel." Moses' role as lawgiver in the absence of a monarch plays well into this. The emphasis of Deuteronomy on its own authority reflects a scribal future memory of obedience to mosaic laws as a main identity-marker of "Israel."

The portrait of Moses in Exodus–Deuteronomy is, however, also complicated. Moses is not only the hero of the story, but also a failing hero. His initial failure to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go may be caused by Yahweh self (Exod. 4.21; 7.3; 14.4), but the repeated rebellions of the people in the wilderness imply that he did not manage to convince the people to obey and worship properly. This culminates in the story set at Meribah in Num. 20.1–13, where Moses himself disobeys Yahweh.[5] A version of the story is found in Exod. 17.1–7: the people complain, Yahweh commands Moses to strike a rock with a staff, he obeys, and water gushes forth. The same events take place in Num. 20, but even though Yahweh also here commands Moses and Aaron to take a staff, they are to *speak* to the rock. However, as in Exod. 17 Moses *strikes* the rock with the staff—and he and Aaron are judged by Yahweh for lack of trust, the punishment for which is that neither of them will enter the promised land (cf. Num. 27.14). In Deut 32.51 (perhaps implicitly also in Deut. 1.37; 4.21–22) the story in Num. 20 explains why Moses dies outside of the promised land.

This complex image of Moses is strikingly absent from other biblical texts. If we focus on traditions related to the Meribah-incident, the texts remember the version of Exod. 17: the texts either portray the incident as a great miracle (Deut. 8.15; Neh. 9.15; Pss. 78.20; 105.41; 114.8; Isa. 48.21; Wis. 11.4) or else they focus on how the people tested Yahweh (Deut. 33.8; Pss. 81.8[7]; 95.8; cf. Heb. 3.5–11). The only texts outside of Numbers and Deuteronomy that remember Moses' failings, are Ps. 106.32 (discussed below) and Sir. 46.7–8, the latter only

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[5] For discussions on this pericope, see e.g. Emmrich (2003); Arden (1957).

indirectly through its naming of Joshua and Caleb as the only two people to be spared to lead the people into the promised land.

Indeed, national memories do not want a failing hero, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the complex figure of Moses is absent in most texts. The story in Num. 20 may have been invented to serve two purposes: One, to explain why Moses dies outside of the land; and two, to prepare the stage for Joshua, who is not guilty. Indeed, the only "biographical" events that Joshua to 2 Kings briefly remember about Moses, is that he, with Aaron, was sent to Egypt by Yahweh (Josh. 24.5–8; cf. 1 Sam. 12.6–8) and that there were two stone tablets (1 Kgs. 8.9) and a bronze serpent (2 Kgs. 18.4–6). There are also some memories of family relations (e.g. Judg 1.16; 4.11; 18.30). Though Joshua, as a figure, is primarily a military leader, he is portrayed as taking over the leadership of Moses, so that Yahweh is "with" Joshua as he was "with" Moses (1.5.17; 3.7; cf. 4.14). As in Num. 20, Moses' relationship with Yahweh thus seems somewhat compromised. However, in Joshua to 2 Kings there is one significant role that Moses occupies and which not even Joshua can fill: that of lawgiver (Josh. 1.7–17; 4.10–12; 11.12–23; 22.2–5; Jdg. 3.4; 2 Kgs. 18.12; 21.8). Though there are different aspects to the memory of Moses, his primary role as lawgiver is in continuity with the same ideological memories and serves the same functions as those in Deuteronomy just discussed. 2 Kgs. 22, which recounts the finding of a book in the temple and the subsequent implementation of that book as national law, certainly refers to Deuteronomy in one form or another (cf. "the book of the law of Moses" in Josh. 8.31–35; 23.6; 2 Kgs. 14.6; cf. 1 Kgs. 2.3; 2 Kgs. 23.25). The story of 2 Kgs. 22 thus underscores the validity and authority of Deuteronomy—the laws of Moses— also for an audience in the sixth–fourth centuries.

In Joshua these mosaic commandments often entail military issues (Josh. 1.3; 1.15; 9.24; 12.6; 13.14; 17.4; 18.7; 21.2.8; 22.4–9; cf. Jdg. 1.20; 1 Kgs. 8.53; probably also 8.56). [6] To

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[6] Jdg. 4.11; 18.30 also names Moses when explaining ancestry.

readers in the sixth–fourth centuries, Moses' commandments to take and divide the promised territory may have been interpreted in the light of contemporary property questions in Yehud. Judahite immigrants from Babylon, some of whom did not regard the permanent population in Yehud as members of "Israel," may have seen the mosaic commands as justifying their claims to property.[7] Thus, the memories of Moses from Exodus to 2 Kings all serve to construe a particular view of "Israel" and its identity in the decisive period of the Persian Empire.

The Book of Ezra–Nehemiah tells the story of the so-called "restoration" from an exclusivist point of view, also emphasizing the rights of the Judahite immigrants over and above those of the Judahite permanent population. Due to its underlying ideology, it construes memories of a sixth-fifth century BCE Jerusalem that must be rebuilt, that requires cultic reestablishment, that needs social reforms, and, in short, law and order.[8] While scholars debate to what degree the term "law" in Ezra–Nehemiah refers to some form of Deuteronomy or the Pentateuch,[9] there is no doubt that it at least sometimes refers to mosaic teachings. Moses, called "man of God" (Ezra 3.2) and Yahweh's "servant" (Neh. 1.7–8; 9.14; 10.29), is remembered solely for the law, or the book.[10] Even though, in the world of the text, the early reestablishment of the cult is according to mosaic law (Ezra 3.2; 6.18), greater reforms take place when Ezra, a "scribe skilled in the law of Moses" (Ezra 7.6) quite literally enters the stage. Neh. 8–10 tells us vividly how the "book of the law of Moses" is read aloud by Ezra to the

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[7] For discussions, see e.g. Japhet (2006); Becking (2011); Grabbe (2004); Willi (1995), or the edited volumes by Lipschits, Knoppers & Oeming (2011); Jonker (2011; 2010); Ben Zvi & Edelman (2014); Becking & Korpel (1999).

[8] While the exile is commonly viewed in the Bible as a result of people not heeding Yahweh in some way or other, Nehemiah explicitly explains the exile as a consequence of not keeping the law of Moses, Neh. 1.7–8.

[9] For discussions, see e.g. Blenkinsopp (1988, pp. 152–158); Grabbe (2004, pp. 332–337).

[10] Even in the long historical summary in Ezra 9, Moses is named only as mediator of the law (v. 14), and forgotten in the detailed accounts of the exodus and the wilderness (vv. 9–22).

congregated people and how it is explained to them by exegetes who study it in details. According to the story, the interpretation eventually leads to cultic reforms and social ones, including the prohibition against mixed marriages, resulting in "Jews" separating themselves from so-called "foreigners." Moses is here remembered as a law that sustains exclusivist claims.

Dating from around the late fourth century BCE, Chronicles is perhaps the youngest historiographical work in the Hebrew Bible. If Ezra–Nehemiah is on one end of the scale—the exclusivist—then Chronicles is on the other end. Chronicles opens with genealogies going back to Adam, and ends with the last days of the exile. For its authors, restoration still lies in the future; they cannot accept the situation described in Ezra–Nehemiah as restoration, as it excludes both Samaria and the permanent population of Yehud. Chronicles strives to show that only "Judah" was exiled (e.g. 1 Chron. 9.1), whereas the identity of all "Israel" embraces both Judah and Samaria, both immigrants and permanent population.[11] One of the issues disputed in the fifth and fourth centuries was that of cultic ministry, particularly the relations between Aaronide priests, Zadokite priests and Levites—a topic in which the Chroniclers took great interest (Jonker 2011, pp. 71–78). We need not go into the different positions in the cultic ministry debate, but simply observe that this forms an explanatory background to Chronicles' dominant memories of Moses being linked to priestly and Levitical matters, whether by way of genealogies or cultic commandments (1 Chron. 6.49; 15.15; 21.29; 22.13; 23.13–15; 26.24; 2 Chron. 1.3; 5.10; 8.13; 23.18; 24.6–9; 30.16; 33.8; 35.6–12).[12] The story of the finding of the book of the law also recounted in 2 Kgs. 22 here gets a curious twist, as 2 Chron. 34.14 explicitly identifies the book as the law "given through Moses." The discovery and subsequent reading of the book, so the story goes in both accounts, ushers in a major religious and cultic reform. To the Chroniclers, Moses, whether remembered as an ancestor or a law-mediator and –giver,

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[11] So the studies of Williamson (1977, 2004); Japhet (1999); Jonker (e.g. 2011); Mitchell (2010).

[12] 2 Chron. 25:4 is the only reference in Chronicles to a mosaic commandment which is not cultic.

is cast in cultic light. The suppression of other memories of Moses serves as a silent protest against the exclusivist use of these.[13]

The tendency in the Deuteronomistic History and in Ezra–Nehemiah to narrow memories of Moses to a legal book becomes acute as we turn to works composed around the turn of the millennia. In Dan. 9.11–13, which is from a historiographical section of this mid-second century BCE book, "Moses" has become a way to refer to the written law of the Jews. In the Greek Bible, the histories of Baruch (2.2; 2.28) and 1 Esdras (1.6–11; 5.49; 7.6–9; 8.3; 9.39) and the historiographical novellas of Tobith (1.8; 6.13; 7.11–13) and Susannah (1.3; 1.62) speak of Moses only in relation to his law or his book. Unlike the older historiographical works, they are no longer preoccupied with a foundational period of "Israel" as a nation. On the contrary, oppression by Greek overlords (and perhaps Roman, depending on dating), accentuated not the question of the nation's identity, but how to live as an individual pious Jew. Moses is forgotten as a historical figure, and is instead remembered for his law/book, that all pious Jews should heed. An exception to this tendency is found in 2 Maccabees, where Moses is remembered not only as a mediator of the law (7.30), but also as a visionary prophet with priestly traits (1.29; 2.4–11; 7.6). This work teems with the Jewish victory over the Greeks experienced in the aftermath of the Maccabean revolts, subtly remembering Moses as a paradigm for Jewish leaders.

Also the NT boasts of a historiographical work: Acts. Acts construes the history of Christianity at an early stage, and one of its aims may be to strengthen the social identity of the members of a newborn religious movement. The author is careful to create bonds between this

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[13] Davies (1992, pp. 129–130) suggests that the contents of the Pentateuch may have been unknown to the Chroniclers, thus explaining the elevation of David over Moses. However, I find it unlikely that a scribal group would not know about the works of other earlier or contemporary scribal groups, due to the limited geography and number of scribes.

novelty and the ancient and well-established religion of Judaism, and to do so, he frequently refers to the Greek Bible. Moses is mentioned no less than twenty times. As with late Jewish historiography, Moses is remembered for his law (the meeting at Jerusalem in 15.1–21, and the following controversy over Paul's teaching in 21.21; cf. accusations against Stephen in 6.14). However, he is also construed as prophesying about Jesus (Peter's speech in Jerusalem, 3.22; Paul's speech before Agrippa, 26.22; Paul teaching people about Jesus while imprisoned in Rome, 28.23). Both aspects are summed up in Stephen's speech before his martyrdom; he is accused of blaspheming "Moses and God" (6.11–14), and responds by summarizing Israel's history, including the main events of Moses' life (7.20–44). The speech culminates with Stephen's accusation that the prophets have not been heeded, nor the law kept; Moses could fit into both of these categories. Yet, we also see here a tendency to identify Moses with written texts; most explicitly so in 15.21, which tells us that "Moses" is "read aloud every Sabbath in the synagogues." For the author of Acts, Moses is a text, or a memory of the Jewish past, yet has a present value because of his prophecies about Jesus. Indeed, in Paul's speech in Antioch in Pisidia, the law of Moses is contrasted with the freedom of forgiveness of sins given by Jesus (13.38[39]).

**PROPHETIC GENRES**

One of the most commonly used prophetic genres is that of the *rib*, which reflects courtroom proceedings. In a historical summary that forms part of Yahweh's accusation against Yahweh's people, Amos 2.10 mentions Yahweh bringing the people out of Egypt and leading them for 40 years in the wilderness (cf. 5.25). The function of the historical summary is to contrast Yahweh's care for Yahweh's people throughout history with the people's sinfulness. There can be only two actors involved: Yahweh and Yahweh's people. Hence, any human agent, such as

Moses, is left out of the equation, perhaps even purposefully forgotten, unless the absence is due to ignorance.

Hosea 12.3[2]–14.1[13.16] is a similar *rib*, with historical summaries that serve the same purpose of contrast as in Amos. In typical hosean fashion, the passage names Yahweh's people variously as "Jacob," "Israel" and "Ephraim" ("Judah" and "Samaria" are mentioned once each). Hos. 12.13[12] must be interpreted in this light; though the passage refers to events in the life of the *ancestor* Jacob (cf. Gen. 27.31–32.2), these events become paradigmatic for the actions of the *people* Jacob. If naming the ancestor Jacob also evoked in the audience memories of how Jacob ended his life in Egypt, this would have built a bridge to the next verse, which presupposes an Egyptian locality for the people. As in Amos, Hos. 12.14[13] (cf. 13.4–6) uses the exodus from Egypt to exemplify Yahweh's care, but this time, Yahweh is said to have brought the people out of Egypt and guarded it "by a prophet." The name of the prophet—which surely is Moses—has been left out due to its insignificance. The name and the identity of the human agent are forgotten, but the memory of his prophetic office is sustained. Why is Moses not named when Jacob is? While Jacob's explicit naming is due to the authors' preference for "Jacob" as a name for the entire people, the anonymity of Moses may underline that he stands in continuity with the prophets back in v. 11[10]—prophets that have been continually sent by Yahweh, just as Hosea is now. The prophets, as such, are people used by Yahweh to lead and guard the people. Both Jacob and Moses are paradigmatic, but in different manners: Jacob, through his explicit mention, becomes a symbol of the people "Jacob," while Moses, exactly because of his anonymity, becomes a model for subsequent prophets.

Micah 6 sets out along the lines of the *rib*, presenting Yahweh as accuser and Israel as defendant. Yahweh's first statement in court (vv. 3–6) reminds Yahweh's people of saving acts, especially Yahweh bringing people out of Egypt. However, the phrasing of the historical summary is intriguing. Verse 4 plays on the standardized formula: "[…] I brought you up from

the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery," but then it uniquely adds "and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." In this passage, the human agents by whom Yahweh saved Yahweh's people are neither detached nor forgotten. On the contrary, they are remembered as part of the divine actions through which Yahweh saves. The commandments within the text to "remember" and to "know" express an implicit accusation that the people have forgotten Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The memory of these three is integral to the memory of salvation, of the event that construes "Israel" as Yahweh's people, constituting the innermost core of its identity.

Moses also turns up in Mal. 3.19–24[4.1–6], which is an oracle of salvation encapsulating a command (3.22 [4.4]) to "remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel." The reference to the teaching—the torah—of Moses undoubtedly reflects a stage in the formation of the Hebrew Bible when the Torah's authority had been well established, and Moses consequently was remembered as a mediator or a teacher thereof.

The Book of Isaiah, particularly chapters 40–55, contains many oracles of salvation which portray a future migration from Babylon to Jerusalem with allusions to the exodus from Egypt (e.g., 43.16–17; 48.21; 51.10).[14] Moses, however, is not mentioned in these. This is only to be expected, for Moses is a figure of the past exodus, and not of the future one. For this reason, we find Moses forgotten also in the oracle of salvation in Zech. 10.8–12, which uses similar imagery. In the entire Book of Isaiah Moses in named only in Isa. 63.11–12, which is part of a historical summary that has been amalgamated with confession of sin and a communal lament asking for Yahweh's conversion (vv. 10–19). Here the exodus is described with memories of Moses as Yahweh's servant with whom Yahweh marches. The explicit naming primarily finds its explanation in the fact that this passage deals with the *past* exodus.

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[14] On the exodus in Isa. 40–55, see e.g. Korpel (1999).

So far, we have been looking at prophetic genres as utterances. However, we need also to consider to what degree the prophetic *characters* reflect memories of Moses.[15] A good starting-point is Jeremiah, whose attributed sayings and book are steeped in Deuteronomistic language; the very language of the character Moses himself.[16] Already in 1966 Holladay claimed that Jeremiah was the new "prophet like Moses" (cf. Deut. 18.15–18); a view that has been supported in varying degrees by recent scholarship. There is not space here to go into the details of the arguments—they have been well analyzed by other scholars, such as Seitz (1989), Fischer (2005, pp. 98–99; 2007, pp. 119–120), Achenbach (2011, pp. 446–451), Ben Zvi (2013) and Lundbom (2013a, pp. 38–43; 2013b, pp. 2–13). The similarities may be summarized in terms of lexical, theological and thematic parallels, such as conditional covenant, obedience to commandments, intercessory role of the prophet, exile in Egypt, and transmission of leadership.

There is no reason to deny such similarities—for that they are too many and too strong. The Deuteronomists had a hand in the formation of the Book of Jeremiah, and with their remembrance of Moses as a unique prophetic figure, it is only to be expected that he would form a paradigm after which to construe Jeremiah. At a much later stage, the Greek Bible made explicit connections between Jeremiah and Moses. The Book of Baruch sees the catastrophes of Jeremiah's time as the threats foreseen in the written law of Moses (Bar. 2.2; 2.28; cf. 1.20). 2 Maccabees has Jeremiah not only talking about Moses, but literally walking in his very footsteps (2 Macc. 2.4–8)

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[15] I delimit my discussion here to those characters that we find among the classical prophets. Other candidates may include e.g. Gideon (Judg. 6.11–27) or Elijah (e.g. 1 Kgs. 19.11–18).

[16] Though Moses is rarely mentioned. Jer. 15:1, which introduces an audition, remembers Moses and Samuel as intercessors. Jer. 35:15 (cf. Zech. 1:1–6) is sometimes considered to refer to Moses as prophet, however, the message is too general to allow for such an identification.

Ezekiel is another prophetic character who may, at least in part, reflect memories of Moses. Earlier suggestions of similarities between the two have been taken up by more recent scholars, with arguments that are to varying degrees convincing—or not. For example, Achenbach's lists (2011, pp. 456–458) of affinities between the Book of Ezekiel and Leviticus tell us no more than that the authors of both were interested in cultic matters. McKeating (1994) analyzes several thematic parallels between the Pentateuch and Ezekiel, particularly Exodus and Ezek. 40–48 (vision on mountain; cultic and priestly regulations; allocation of land), yet, the dissimilarities are more striking than the similarities. Ben Zvi's claim (2013, pp. 352–353) that Ezek. 40–48 remembers Moses due to its emphasis on legal matters and on the prophet being situated outside the land, also seems to me too weak to prove any real link between the two. After all, a legal mentality may just be another result of influence from priestly circles, and the geographical location a necessity brought about by the political situation of exile. Rather than Ezekiel's extraterritoriality reflecting that of Moses, it is more likely that memories of Moses as a person of the law who lives and dies outside of the land are due to the exilic/postexilic situation of the remembering community, which paints both Moses and other prophets in its own image. Yet, I would not reject the possibility that there may be traces of memories of Moses in Ezek. 40–48, but if so, they are very vague. If it is difficult to identify memories of Moses in Ezekiel, the difficulty of the task grows further when it comes to the remaining prophetic characters.[17] Whatever is proposed as evidence is at risk of reflecting the scholar's preconceived opinion.

However, in the two centuries before and after the turn of the millennia, we find several revelatory texts originating in different communities that speak explicitly about Moses. The Book of the prophet Ezra, known as respectively 4 Esdras or 3 Esdras in the Latin and Slavonic Bibles, is a composite work. The Jewish apocalyptic part portrays Moses as the forerunner of

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[17] For instance, the view that the servant songs in Isa. 40–55 portray a mosaic character is possible, but speculative.

the prophet Ezra to whom God speaks from a burning bush (14.1–3; other references to Moses are found in 1.13; 7.106; 7.129). Here, Moses is indeed remembered as the prophet *par excellence*, setting the standard for following prophets.

At Qumran, Moses is a prophet receiving revelations in Jubilees (see the introduction and 1.1-7), several apocrypha (1Q29, 4Q375, 4Q376, 4Q377; perhaps 4Q373; 2Q22), and in Pseudo-Moses (4Q390).[18] However, if, for a moment, we look at other genres, it seems that the qumranites remembered Moses primarily as a lawgiver; for example, in the Words of Moses (1Q22), which is presented as his testament.[19] Certainly, the community rules required full obedience to the law of Moses as interpreted by the community leaders (see e.g. 1QS V of the Community Rule), so much so that this could be said to be *the* membership requirement.[20] Whether Moses was seen as a forerunner of the Teacher of Righteousness or the Interpreter of the Law is, however, disputed.[21]

The Assumption of Moses, a Jewish work from perhaps the first century, also focusses on Moses as prophet, remembering how he passed on to Joshua secret prophecies about Jewish persecution at the hands of the Greeks.[22] Also the Christian NT texts Jude 9—which may refer to the Assumption of Moses—and Rev. 15.3, which has the eschatological victors singing the "song of Moses," belong to apocalyptic genres. A twist to these positive memories of Moses is found in the Nag Hammadi text called the Secret Book of John, which several times claims that

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[18] Excerpts of texts and comments in Vermes (1997, pp. 507–510; 540–545) and Bowley (2001).

[19] For detailed analyses of these texts as well as other qumranic texts referring to what Moses has said or written, see Bowley (2001). 1Q22 in Vermes (1997, p. 537).

[20] Cf. Bowley (2001). 1QS in Vermes (1997, pp. 97–117).

[21] See, for example, debates in Poirier (2003) and in and in Jasson (2007, pp. 188–195).

[22] Critical edition byTromp (1993).

Moses made mistakes when he wrote his first book (=Genesis).[23] This is in line with the general tendency of the Nag Hammadi literature to reject Jewish biblical teachings.

**PSALMS**

Psalms are found scattered here and there throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Exod. 15.1–18.21b; 1 Sam. 2.1.10; Isa. 44.23), but I will delimit this section of my article to the large collection of psalms that now constitutes a separate book. Though there are wisdom psalms that equate wisdom with the Torah (e.g. Pss. 1; 119), and psalms of different genres that reflect a covenant ideology (e.g. Pss. 25; 50; 89), these do not contain memories of Moses or Moses-related events as such. There are, however, some psalms that do.[24]

Pss. 66; 95; 99; 135; 136 are hymns extolling God, praising Yahweh for past deeds. Differing in their treatment of "mosaic" events, Ps. 66.6 mentions the passing through the sea, Ps. 95.8–11 refers, in its admonitory part, to rebellion in the wilderness, Ps. 135.8–9 refers to the signs against Egypt, and Ps. 136.10–16 expands on Ps. 135 by adding the miracle at the sea and the wandering in the wilderness. None of these four psalms, however, mention Moses even implicitly, as Yahweh is portrayed as the sole actor. It may be due to ignorance, or it may be a result of the genre itself—praise of Yahweh and Yahweh only—which requires a forgotten Moses. There are, however, some faint exceptions. Pss. 99 (vv. 6–8); 103 (v. 7) are hymns that

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[23] The Secret Book of John (NHC II,1: 1,1–32,10; III,1: 1,1–40,11; IV,1: 1,1–49,28). Translated by John D. Turner & Marvin Meyer. In Marvin Meyer (Ed.), 2007, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: International Edition* (pp. 103–132, esp. 117; 126–130). There is also a reference to a work called "The Archangelic Book of Moses the Prophet," in On the Origin of the World (NHC II,5; 97,24–127,17; XIII,2; 50,25–34). Translated by Marvin Meyer. In Marvin Meyer (Ed.) (pp. 199–222, esp. 206).

[24] With few exceptions, these psalms occur in clusters or with short intervals between them (Pss 66; 77–78; 90; 95; 99; 103; 105–106; 114; 135–136), yet they span across the traditional fivefold division of the Psalter.

mention Moses briefly, primarily for his special relationship to Yahweh. Psalm 99.6 does, however, place Aaron and Samuel in the same position as Moses, as seen both from the synonymous priestly designations attached to them and from how their special relationship to Yahweh is summed up in one common description in the following verses. A similar case is found in Ps. 77, an individual lament that ends with a praise of Yahweh's deeds (vv. 17–21[16–20]), painting the miracle at the sea in apocalyptic colors, and naming Moses and Aaron as equal shepherds of the people.

Closely related to praise of past deeds are the psalms that are historiographical proper. Into this category I place Ps. 78, which also has wisdom traits and a hymnic introduction, Ps. 114, though it ends with an admonition, and Ps. 105, which is enclosed in a hymnic frame. Ps. 78 offers detailed summaries of the signs against Egypt (vv. 43–51), the miracle at the sea (vv. 13.52–53), care and rebellion in the wilderness (vv. 14–42), and Ps. 114 expresses the miracle at the sea in highly poetic and symbolic language; yet, none of the two psalms mention Moses. Psalm 105.26–43, which summarizes the same events as Ps. 78, does mention Moses and Aaron briefly in v. 26 as chosen servants used by Yahweh to perform signs, yet focuses on Yahweh's acts. Just like the hymns and the lament above, Moses is forgotten, or else marginally mentioned together with Aaron. Unlike the genre of hymnic praises of Yahweh, however, there does not seem to be any inherent necessity requiring such a marginalization by a historiographical genre per se, and we cannot therefore rule out the possibility that the authors composing some of these simply did not know about Moses. However, he may also be purposefully forgotten, as the symbolism of Ps. 114 may preclude any references to more concrete figures, and Ps. 78 is, as we see from the framework, influenced by a hymnic genre. The question why Ps. 78.70–71,

despite its hymnic abstractions, names David but not Moses, finds an answer in the psalmist's background as a proponent of the Zion-David tradition.[25]

Ps. 106, which is hymnic, sapiential, confessional and historiographical all at the same time, contains memories of Moses not found in other psalms. This psalm remembers Moses and Aaron as victims of people's jealousy (v. 16), but portrays how Moses despite this interceded for the people (v. 23), though he himself suffered because of others' sinfulness (v. 32), and eventually became a bitter man, speaking harsh words (v. 33)—one of the few reference to Moses' failure. Yet, even here Moses is marginal, surfacing only rarely in the psalm's surging of rebellions and stubborn people. Moses is also remembered in Ps. 90, though in a unique way in the Psalter. Moses does not figure in the psalm itself, but is, according to the heading, its author. For all its wisdom traits, Ps. 90 is a prayer for forgiveness of the people. As an early redactor saw it befit to attribute this psalm to "Moses, the man of God," he must have remembered him as a great intercessor (cf. Ps. 106.23), and perhaps a paradigm to follow in cultic worship.[26] Through the attribution, Moses may also have been considered a poet pondering the contrasts of God's eternity and human mortality. In conclusion, with the exceptions of Pss. 90; 106, the psalms tend to ignore or forget Moses in their memories of the exodus and wilderness, and the few times Moses is remembered, three out of four times it is together with Aaron (and once, Samuel).

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[25] Hossfeld and Zenger (2000, p. 427) explains Ps. 78:70–71 as a result of the davidization of the Psalter, reflecting royal ideology. Kraus (1993, pp. 130–131) believes that vv. 70–71 breaks off the canonical historical picture taken from Pentateuchal traditions in order to show how the salvific acts includes within it the election of Zion and David.

[26] Similar arguments are found in Kraus (1993, p. 215) and Hossfeld & Zenger (2000, p. 609).

**WISDOM GENRES**

We find wisdom genres across different canonical sections, but there are also entire books that fall into this category, such as Job; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes. Even though some of the texts in these books contain references to Yahweh's power over the sea, these utterings are set in a context of creation (e.g. Job 9.8; Prov. 8.29), and/or of *Chaoskampf* (e.g. Job 26.12). However, the absence of Moses in these texts is not, I think, due to any active repression of his memory, but a natural consequence of the genre itself. Throughout the ancient near east, wisdom literature is preoccupied with making observations on life in general and sometimes giving advice by which to live. Even though wisdom texts are clearly influenced by the contextual cultural presuppositions of their authors (for example, a widespread misogyny), they evidence an attempt to be universally valid. Hence, references to historical events or particular persons would be out of place within this genre. Even Solomon, who is remembered by Ben Sira for his wisdom (Sir. 47.12–22), is not mentioned in other texts even though several books within the genre at some stage were attributed to him (Proverbs; Wisdom; Song of Songs; Odes of Solomon; Psalms of Solomon; cf. Pss. 72; 127).

In the second century BCE Judaism came under great pressure due to violent repression by Greek overlords. The book of Ben Sira, though originally written in Hebrew, is part of the Greek Bible, and explicitly equates wisdom with Torah obedience. Alluding to Prov. 8, Ben Sira explains that personified wisdom is "the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob" (Sir. 24.23). Towards the end of the work we find a prolonged praise of male ancestors, including the glorious Moses (Sir. 44.23b–45.5), who is remembered for his unique communicative relationship with God (cf. Sir. 46.1), including the performance of miracles and the giving of commandments. Yet, Moses is overshadowed by the praises of Aaron (Sir. 45.6–22). Even though Moses' "memory is blessed" (Sir. 45.1), the Torah he commanded and the priestly

brother he left when dying seem to be more important as constitutive of Jewish identity in the early second century BCE, at least as Jewishness was perceived by Ben Sira. The Book of Wisdom, from about 50 BCE, makes much briefer references to ancestors (Wis. 10.1–11.14), including Moses. As with the other ancestors, Moses' name is, however, left out, and he is turned into a non-character; all attention is centered on the properties and doings of personified wisdom, who has, indeed, taken over the role of Yahweh, delivering the people from their oppressors and leading them through the wilderness. It seems reasonable to presume that the increasing impact of Greek philosophizing on *logos* as an active agent and ordering principle of the world is what lies behind this move: the memory of Moses is twisted into a praise of wisdom.

With the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., the memories of Moses came back with force. In the absence of priests and sacrifices, study of the Torah became an even more important identity-marker for Judaism. This in many ways fulfilled Deuteronomy's old claims for a text-centred community, while it took up Ben Sira's praise of the Torah as well as Hellenistic Judaism's equation between Torah and Moses. Pirqe Avoth, being a collection of wisdom sayings of the "fathers" of rabbinical Judaism, may justifiably be categorized as wisdom literature. The work has few references to Moses, but one of them deserves special mention. The opening sentence explains how Moses received the Torah on Sinai, which was then passed on through Joshua, the elders, and the prophets, down to the men of the great assembly, who commanded caution in judgement, establishment of many pupils, and the making of a fence around the Torah (1.1). Here Moses is portrayed as the tradent of both the written and the oral Torah, and thereby the precursor of teachings found in the Talmuds and

Midrashim. In rabbinical Judaism, both written and oral Torah thus receive mosaic authority, while Moses himself becomes the teacher—the rabbi—*par excellence*.[27]

## HOMILIES/TREATISES

Greek influence made itself known also outside of wisdom literature. In a first century CE appendix to the Greek Bible, 4 Maccabees presents itself as a philosophical treatise or homily on the role of reason over emotions. In 2.17, Moses is presented as a paradigmatic man of self-control. He is, however, also presented as a lawgiver (9.2), a prophet speaking of the future (17.19), and a poet to be remembered amongst others (18.18).

Also the NT contains a treatise or homily, known as the Letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews casts Moses as leader (3.16), lawgiver (9.19; 10.28) and prophet (3.5; 7.14; cf. 8.5). However, Moses is primarily a paradigm, not of self-control as in 4 Maccabees, but of faith (3.2–5; 11.23–28; contrast 12.21). Yet, he is a paradigm far exceeded by Jesus (3.3.6; 10.29). In line with the overall purpose of Hebrews—to exalt the priesthood of Jesus for readers attracted to Jewish rituals—the memories of Moses serve to glorify Jesus. The opposite is found in the Nag Hammadi text known as The Second Discourse of the Great Seth, where Moses, together with all the great figures from Adam to John the Baptist, is called a "laughingstock" who blinds people, hindering correct faith in Christ.[28]

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[27] Cf. Ego, Beate (2010, pp. 52–55).

[28] The Second Discourse of the Great Seth (NHC VII,2). Translated by Marvin Meyer. In Marvin Meyer (Ed.) (pp. 473–486, esp. 483–484). The second–third century Nag Hammadi treatise The Testimony of Truth portrays Moses as author of books such as Genesis and Exodus; see The Testimony of Truth (NHC IX,3). Translated by Birger Pearson. In Marvin Meyer (Ed.) (pp. 613–628, esp. p. 623).

**LETTERS**

Though Hebrews is not a proper letter, we do have other NT writings that are real letters. Though marginally mentioned in 2 Tit. 3.8 and Jude 9, it is primarily Paul who remembers Moses. In 1 Cor. 10.1–13, Paul summarizes events attached to Moses, showing that the Israelites sinned, despite their baptism "into Moses." It is a warning to the disintegrating Corinthian community that similar things could happen to them. In 2 Cor. 3.12–18, Paul contrasts himself to Moses, showing the openness of a Christian community and emphasizing his own authority as teacher. [29] Already in 1 Cor. 9.9, Moses is the man of the law, a role which is highlighted in Rom. 5.14; 9.15; 10.5, the letter which, *par excellence*, contrasts the law of Moses to the grace of Christ, ensuring the full inclusion of gentiles into the believing community (cf. Rom. 10.19, a prophecy on gentiles). Paul thus continually construes memories of Moses that serve to underscore his own teachings and authority.

**GOSPELS**

The Gospels make up a genre all by themselves, while consisting of many sub-genres. The apocalyptic vision in Mat. 17.1–13; Mark 9.2–13; Luke 9.28–36 alludes to Moses—a divine voice speaks out of a cloud on a mountain to a transfigured prophet with three friends (see particularly Exod. 24; 34). However, Moses also appears in person, as the disciples see Jesus talk to him and to Elijah. The vision is probably meant to convey the special role of Jesus vis-à-vis the divine, a role comparable to yet exceeding those of the great figures Moses and Elijah. Moses' role, however, is forgotten in the following conversation, which focusses solely on Elijah, who, according to Jewish tradition, would appear before the Messiah's coming (cf. Mal. 3.23[4.5]).

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[29] This topic is elaborated at length in relation by Hafemann (1995).

A frequently found gospel sub-genre is that of contentions. Whether it is Jesus who speaks, or his opponents, "Moses" becomes almost synonymous with the "law," which clearly is the Torah (Mat. 19.7-8; 22.24; Mark 7.10; 10.3-4; 12.19.26; 20.28.37; John 1.17; 5.45; 7.19-23; 8.5; note the absence of Luke). The same tendency is found in the synoptic miracle-story in Mat. 8.4; Mark 1.44; Luke 5.14 (here Luke cannot avoid mentioning the Mosaic law; so also in the nativity story in Luke 2.22, though he prefers "the law of the Lord" rather than "the law of Moses," 2.23–39). Indeed, in a Lukan parable and resurrection story, as well as in opening chapter of John, Moses is explicitly identified to the Torah in canonical summaries like "(the law of) Moses, (all) the prophets, (and the psalms)" (Luke 16.29–31; 27.44; John 1.45; cf. Mat. 5.17; 7.12; 11.13; 22.40; Luke 16.16, which leaves out Moses' name). These summaries serve either to underline the necessity of mercy (as commanded by Moses and the prophets) or to show how Jesus was foreshadowed in the sacred scriptures. Indeed, in its discourses John underlines several times how Jesus is prophesied by Moses (3.14; 5.46; 6.32; 9.28–29).[30] Moses, then, is remembered as a prophet foreshadowing Jesus, a lawgiver and the law itself; a law which is often good, but requires flexibility.

**CONCLUSION**

Memory is, as we saw in the beginning of the article, creative and constructive. Events and even figures are remembered not as they objectively "really happened" or "really were," but as they make sense in the present situation of those remembering them. Memories are used to form identity, and can, particularly on a social scale, be used to support the ideologies of those composing the memories. Biblical texts and the memories they encode are no exception.

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[30] North (2004) argues that John's gospel presents Jesus as a prophet like Moses and as the embodiment of the Torah, while simultaneously exceeding both Moses and law.

In the section on historiographical texts, we saw that the great national metahistory of the imaginative community called "Israel," spanning from Exodus to Deuteronomy, all evolves around Moses. As the glue in the story, keeping both past, present and future events together, Moses ensures the unity of "Israel" through good days and bad, providing an identity through exile and settlement in foreign lands, and preserving hopes for a glorious future. In the book of Joshua, the memories of Moses, who commanded the taking of territory, serve the interests of Judahite immigrants from Babylonia, who faced property disputes with permanent population in Judah. Simultaneously, the Deuteronomistic History here begins to narrow down memories of Moses to that of lawgiver, a tendency continued in Ezra–Nehemiah, which reduces "Moses" to *the* law. Chronicles cannot accept the exclusivist strand inherent in such a position, presenting instead competing memories of Moses from a cultic perspective.

Moving further into a Greek era, the national eposes are left behind, and, facing persecution, Jewish piety comes into focus. Though wisdom literature tends to ignore Moses due to its genre characteristics, Ben Sira exalts Moses' law. The same tendency is found in the historiographical writings from this period: Moses as a figure is forgotten, and instead, emphasis lies on encouraging individual Jews to follow his law even in a difficult and dangerous time. From a mediator of the law, "Moses" seizes as a figure and becomes a name for the law itself. All the historiographers paint Moses according to the picture which best suits their story and their underlying ideologies.

Prophetic texts (outside of the Hexateuch) and the Psalms are similar to each other in the ways they remember and ignore or forget Moses. The most striking element is, perhaps, the absence of Moses. Though there are frequent allusions to the exodus- and wilderness events, Moses is either not known (possible for early texts) or he is forgotten (more likely for late texts). His role as glue in the metahistory recounted in Exodus–Deuteronomy is not needed; in prophetic books and the Psalms, the events are quite well remembered without the figure of

Moses. This only enhances Yahweh's role as sole actor and saviour. Despite this general tendency, we have seen a few examples that do include memories of Moses; yet, most of these memories grant an equal role to Aaron, and, in Mic. 6.4, to Miriam. The possibility, perhaps even probability, that some of these texts are older than the Pentateuch raises the question whether they encode an older memory of the exodus-events in which Moses, Aaron and Miriam were remembered as equal leaders of the people. If so, we could easily see how patriarchy at an early stage led to the active suppression of memories of Miriam, while a sixth-fourth century non-monarchical constitutional era required the suppression of memories of Aaron to the exaltation of Moses: *one* leader for one people.[31] The positive feedback loop by which Moses attracts ever more memories in a Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic setting becomes a negative loop for Aaron and Miriam. In the end, they must be forgotten; and so Moses' song at the sea excels that of Miriam (Exod. 15), and later in the story she and Aaron are remembered as rebels, something for which Miriam—but strangely not Aaron—is punished with skin disease (Num. 12). Later, Miriam and Aaron are ignored altogether. The possibility that memories of Aaron and Miriam were diminished to the advantage of memories of Moses gets support both from the fact that late prophetic texts only remember Moses (Isa. 63; Mal. 3[4]). Much later, at the turn of the millennia, memories of Moses appear in apocalyptic literature, whether in Jewish circles within and outside of Qumran, in Revelations in the Christian NT, or in the so-called Gnostic Nag Hammadi literature mocking him.

The tendency that had been growing over centuries to identify Moses with a lawbook as well as the renewed interest in Moses as a prophet in apocalyptic literature found their way into the NT. Across its genres of gospels, historiography, letters, homily and apocalypticism, Moses is remembered both as a figure of the past who prophesied about Jesus, and as a law whose validity is ambiguous, but is, at any rate, greatly surpassed by Jesus. The NT memories of Moses

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[31] The issue is also briefly discussed by Dijsktra (2003, pp. 78–80).

were thus molded by their authors both to show how their faith in Jesus was in continuity with the ancient Jewish religion, and how it simultaneously exceeded it.

In conclusion, the memories of Moses were created and recreated in the partly developing and partly competing images of the authors to serve their own ideological means in accordance with their chosen genres. The memories of Moses are full of ambiguities, from a major mediator to a minor marginality.

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