

THE BIRTH AND INFANCY NARRATIVE

(1:18-2:23)

The existence of a Moses typology in Matt. 1-2 has been affirmed by many modern commentators, and rightly so.³ Certain events in the Gospel strikingly resemble certain traditions about Moses, language from Exodus is plainly borrowed (as in 2:19; cf. Exod. 4:19-20), and a biblical text having to do with the deliverance from Egypt (Hos. 11:1) is expressly quoted (2:15). The inference appears inevitable. Thus it is that even Saito, who otherwise disputes the existence of a Moses typology, cannot enlarge his doubt sufficiently to purge the Mosaic features altogether from the infancy narrative: he can only wash Matthew's hands of them, that is, assign them to pre-Matthean tradition.

Previously, on pp. 19-20, I listed six devices commonly used in constructing typologies: explicit statement, implicit borrowing, reminiscent circumstances, key words or phrases, structural imitation, and resonant syllabic and/or word patterns. I should now like to show that, in Matthew 1-2, all but the last of these devices has been employed in the construction of an extensive typology. The effect is an infancy narrative permeated by Mosaic motifs.

Explicit statement. 2:15 quotes MT Hos. 11:1: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Did the evangelist take these words, against their original sense, to be a genuine prophecy of Jesus?⁴ There is nothing at all messianic about Hos. 11:1 or its context, nor can the object of the sentence be in doubt when one reads the prophet: the son is Israel of old. One is accordingly tempted to credit Matthew with bad faith, or, no less condescendingly, with an inept hermeneutical method. But I believe we should instead entertain the possibility that our author, with his keen knowledge of Scripture, was neither naively oblivious of, nor intentionally refused to perceive, the obvious meaning of Hos. 11:1. This last, after all, begins with, "When Israel was a child, I loved him." It is one thing to assert that Matthew's hermeneutical methods

³See below, p. 293, n. 1; also Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 110-19; Michael Goldberg, *Jews and Christians: Getting Our Stories Straight* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 144-49; Perrot, "Recits d'enfance," 512; T. Saito, *Mosevorstellungen*, 51-72 (see p. 18, n. 27); H. M. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, 74-75 (regarding the Mosaic motifs as "Matthew's invention"); Anton Vögtle, "Die matthäische Kindheitsgeschichte," in *L'Évangile selon Matthieu: Rédaction et Théologie*, ed. M. Didier (BETL 29; Gembloux: Leuven University, 1972), 153-83; and Paul Winter, "Jewish Folklore in the Matthean Birth Story," *HeyJ* 53 (1954):34-42.

⁴So Luz, *Matthew*, I:146, n. 24.

were far from ours, quite another to imply that he could not comprehend the plain sense of a Hebrew sentence.⁵ Surely it is reasonable, at least initially, to assume that he knew what Hosea intended to say. But what then did Matthew think himself to be doing when he introduced Hos. 11:1 with, "This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet"?

In ancient Jewish sources concerned with eschatological matters the redemption from Egypt often serves as a type for the messianic redemption, and the prospect of a new exodus is held forth: before the consummation, there will be another exodus followed by another return (cf. pp. 194-99). In view of this well-attested fact, it would, I think, have been no extraordinary thing for Matthew to have found such expectation played out in the life of the Messiah, and all the more when we take into account the circumstance that Q had already portrayed Jesus as repeating or recapitulating certain experiences of Israel (see pp. 165-66). All this suggests that 2:15 is a typological interpretation of Jesus' story: "in Jesus the exodus from Egypt is repeated and completed."⁶ As one recent commentator has expressed himself:

Hosea's words are not a prediction, but an account of Israel's origin. Matthew's quotation thus depends for its validity on the recognition of Jesus as the true Israel, a typological theme found elsewhere in the New Testament, and most obviously paralleled in Matthew by Jesus' use of Israel-texts in the wilderness [in chapter 4]...; there too it is as God's son that Jesus is equated with Israel.⁷

This interpretation means that the reader of Matthew 1-2 is to behold in Jesus' story the replay of another, that of the exodus from Egypt, a story whose hero is Moses. In other words, 2:15, by quoting Hos. 11:1, tells us that there is parallelism between what unfolds in Matthew 2 and what unfolded long ago in Egypt. The quotation does not, I hasten to add, make plain the extent of that parallelism. Yet it cannot but encourage the thoughtful reader to set the story of Jesus and the story of the exodus—which is the story of Moses—side by side and ask: how exactly are they similar?

⁵I believe, and have elsewhere argued, both that Matthew knew Hebrew and that he mined most of the formula quotations himself; the evidence that he used a book of testimonies does not amount to proof; see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I:32-58; 2:323-24; also George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew* (AnBib 63; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976).

⁶Luz, *Matthew* 1-7, 146.

⁷R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1985), 86. Cf. my article, "The Son of God as Israel: A Note on Matthean Christology," *IBS* 9 (1987):74-81.

At this point some might raise an objection: 2:15 makes Jesus the new Israel, not the new Moses. That is, Jesus the Son corresponds to Israel the son, not to the lawgiver; hence, on the redactional level, there can have been no interest in a Moses typology. Just such an argument has been forwarded by Saito. But against this, where is the tittle of evidence that Matthew did not construe Jesus' status as the new Israel and his identity as another Moses as correlative conceptions? Was his thought really so constricted and wooden as to prohibit such? In Deutero-Isaiah the servant is, at least sometimes, Israel; but he is also one like Moses (see pp. 68-71). Moreover, the Messiah was, at least in rabbinic sources, to be both like Moses and a king; but in ancient thought a king represented, could indeed be said to be, his people: so why imagine that Matthew was unable to equate the Messianic king like Moses with true Israel? Even more to the point: if one claims that in chapter 2 Matthew turned the Moses typology of the pre-Matthean tradition into an Israel typology (so Saito), what does one make of chapter 4, where similar reasoning would lead one to urge—as has Teeple—that the evangelist did just the opposite, namely, turned the Israel typology of Q into a Moses typology (see p. 167)? The truth is, such an alleged inconsistency as this exists only in the eye of the beholder, and Matthew beheld something else. I contend that for him, Jesus' experience of another exodus made him both like Israel and like Moses.⁸ Jesus is many things in the First Gospel, and there is no more tension or contradiction between maintaining that Jesus is simultaneously like Moses and the embodiment of true Israel than in saying that Jesus is the son of Abraham and the Son of David.

Implicit citation. Matt. 2:19-21 recounts Jesus' return from Egypt to Israel. As the commentaries generally recognize, the verses depend upon Exod. 4:19-20:

Matthew	Exodus (LXX)
But when Herod died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child	After these many days, the king of Egypt died. The Lord said to Moses in Midian:

⁸See further Vögtle, "Kindheitsgeschichte," 175-77. He convincingly demonstrates the harmony between the quotation of Hos. 11:1 and Matthew's Moses typology.

and his mother
and go
to the land of Israel,
for those seeking
the life of the child
have died."
And he rose and took

the child
and his mother,

and went unto
the land of Israel.

"Go back
to Egypt,
for all those seeking
your life
have died."

Moses, taking
his wife
and his children,

mounted them on asses,
and returned to
Egypt (MT: the land of Egypt).

Particularly striking is the plural in Matt. 2:20: "those seeking... have died." Herod is the only immediate antecedent. This might be explained as a "rhetorical" or "allusive" plural, with reference to Herod's coactors in 2:3-4 (BDF § 141). But it is easier to believe that the language of Exod. 4:19 was retained without perfect grammatical adjustment, in order to make the parallel with the sentence from Exodus unmistakable.

According to Ulrich Luz,

The differences between Matt. 2:13-23 and the Moses haggadah are quite great... Not only the cleverness of the mother or the father but God's intervention saves the child Jesus; Jesus flees to Egypt, (the adult) Moses flees from Egypt. In the passage deliberately adduced by Matthew, Exod. 4:19f., Moses has his correspondence in the father of Jesus, not in Jesus. Thus it is not so that in Matt. 2:13-23, as the late passage *Pesiq.* 49b = Midr Ruth on 2:14 = 5:6 (Str-B I 86f.) says, the last deliverer is like the first one. If a correspondence is maintained, it is that between Herod and the Pharaoh, not that between Jesus and Moses.⁹

These remarks are problematic and afford yet one more illustration of the fallacy of discrediting a typology by adding up differences between type and antitype. It is true that in Exod. 4:19-20 Moses takes his family back to Egypt whereas in Matt. 2:19-21 it is Joseph, not Jesus, who performs that task; and the destination in the Gospel is, further, now Israel, not Egypt. But the observation does not establish Luz's prohibitory inference, for it misses the clear point of comparison. Jesus is the object of "those seeking the life of the child" (Matt. 2:20), a clause

⁹Matthew, 1:144, n. 13.

with its parallel in Exod. 4:19, "all those seeking your life." In this last Moses is the object, and it is precisely here that the parallelism lies, as the rest of the Gospel makes manifest. In 1:18ff. Joseph, as we shall see soon enough, is like Amram, Moses' father, while Jesus is like Moses, the savior of Israel. Surely that circumstance should dictate how one reads chapter 2. Nothing has prepared us to think of Joseph as Mosaic. Much, however, has prepared us to think of Jesus as such. Hence the parallelism of 2:19-21 should be unfolded as follows:

—Moses went into exile, as did Jesus

—Moses was in exile until the king seeking his life expired,
an event supernaturally communicated; so too with Jesus

—Moses, like Jesus later, returned from exile with his family

Pace Luz, we do have here resemblance between the first redeemer and the last. Indeed, such resemblance was, one presumes, precisely the reason for the borrowing from Exod. 4:19.

Similar circumstances. The following parallels between Matthew 1-2 and traditions about Moses are those most obvious, and the majority of them have been noted and discussed by others before me:

The story of Moses
According to Josephus, *Ant.*
2:210-16, Amram, the noble and
pious father of Moses,
was fearful, ill at
ease, and at a loss as to what
to do about his wife's
pregnancy, for Pharaoh had
decreed death for male infants;
being in such a state, God
appeared to the man in a dream,
exhorted him not to despair, and
prophesied his son's future greatness

The story of Jesus
While Joseph, the just father of
Jesus, is contemplating his
course of action with regard to
his wife's pregnancy, the angel
of the Lord appears to him in a
dream and bids him not to fear,
then prophesies his son's future
greatness (1:18-21)

Moses was remembered as Israel's "savior,"¹⁰ and Joseph, *Ant.* "You will call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people

¹⁰See Artapanus *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9:27.21-22 (*diosōsanta, apolysai*); Josephus, *Ant.* 2:216; *LAB* 9:10; Acts 7:25 (*didōsin sotērian autois*); *b. Sota* 12b ("the savior of Israel"—

2:228, associated his very name with an Egyptian verb for "save": "It was indeed from this very incident [the rescue of the infant Moses from the water] that the princess gave him the name recalling his immersion in the river, for the Egyptians call water *mou* and those who are saved *esēs*; so they conferred on him this name compounded of both words" (cf. *C. Ap.* 1:286: "Moses" signifies "one saved out of the water")

At the time of Moses' birth, the king, Pharaoh, gave the order to do away with every male Hebrew child (Exodus 1)

Near the time of Jesus' birth, the king, Herod, gives the order to do away with the male infants of Bethlehem (2:16-18)

In extra-biblical tradition, Herod slaughtered the Hebrew infants because he learned of the birth of the future liberator of Israel (Josephus, *Ant.* 2:205-209; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod. 1:15; etc.)

Herod orders the slaughter of Hebrew infants because he has learned of the birth of Israel's liberator (2:2-18)

According to Josephus, *Ant.* 2:205, 234, Pharaoh learned of Israel's liberator from scribes, and in the *Jerusalem targum* on Exod. 1:15 it is said that Jannes and Jambres, chief magicians, were the source of information¹¹

Herod learns of the coming liberator from chief priests, scribes, and magi (2:1-12)

Unnamed astrologers foretold Israel's deliverer (so *b. Sanh.* 101a; *b. Sota* 12b; and *Exod. Rab.* on 1:22)

The magi see a star and interpret it as signifying the birth of Israel's deliverer (2:1-2)

on the lips of Pharaoh's magi); *Exod. Rab.* 1:18; Gregory of Nyssa, *Laud. Bas.* 21; and recall the rabbinic formula, "as the first redeemer [Moses], so the last."

¹¹Jannes and Jambres, designated "holy scribes" and "magicians" in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9:8 (quoting Numenius), were held in Jewish tradition to be the sons of Balaam (see p. 109, n. 40). This is so intriguing because, as exegetical history shows, Matthew's magi have frequently been associated with Balaam; see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:230-231, 234-35.

According to Josephus, *Ant.* 2:206, when Pharaoh heard the scribe prophesy the deliverer, he was "seized by fear;" in the *Chronicle of Moses* all the people are "seized by a great fear because of Pharaoh's dream," which dream is interpreted to signify Moses' advent (cf. below, p. 157)

Moses was forced to leave his homeland because Pharaoh sought his life (Exod 2:15); before that, as an infant, he was under the shadow of death and kept safe by divinely ordered circumstances (Exodus 2:1-10; Philo, *Mos.* 1:12; Josephus, *Ant.* 2:217-27)

After the death of Pharaoh, Moses was commanded by God to return to Egypt, his homeland; *tethnēkasin gar pantes hoi zētountes sou tēn psychēn* (Exod. 4:19)

Moses took his wife and his children and returned to Egypt (Exod. 4:20)

"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (2:3)

Jesus is providentially taken from the land of his birth because Herod seeks to kill him (2:13-14)

After the death of Herod, Joseph is commanded by an angel to return to Israel, his homeland; *tethnēkasain gar hoi zētountes tēn psychēn tou paidiou* (2:19-20)

Joseph takes his son and his wife and goes back to Israel (2:21)

There are, I should like to submit, a few additional parallels which, although less obvious, will remunerate review. (1) David Daube, in his book on *Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament*, conjectured that the *Passover Haggadah* interprets Exod. 2:25 ("God saw the people of Israel and God knew") in a sexual sense (*yada* = both "to know" and "to have sexual intercourse with"), thereby attributing the conception of Moses to God's direct intervention.¹²

Most, including myself at one time, have quickly dismissed the conjecture. Thus Raymond Brown, in *The Birth of the Messiah*, relegates the possibility to a footnote under the unflattering adjective, "dubi-

¹²David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London, 1965), 5-9.

ous."¹³ There are, if we overlook the flight in the face of certain cherished theological convictions, three problems: (i) the proposed interpretation is not explicit in any extant Jewish literature; (ii) Josephus and the *Liber Biblicarum Antiquitatum*, both from the first century, make it plain that Amram fathered Moses; and (iii) Moses could not have been virginally conceived in any event because he was not the first-born: Aaron and Miriam came before him, by natural means. These problems, it is held, take us to a dead-end.

There are nonetheless reasons for further investigation, for Daube's proposal is not unattested by evidence—not all of it noticed by him. For one thing, Josephus had this to say about Moses' birth: the piety of Amram and Jochebed, their faith "in the promises of God was confirmed by the manner of the woman's delivery, since she escaped the vigilance of the watch, thanks to the gentleness of her travail, which spared her any violent throes" (*Ant.* 2:218). According to this, Moses' mother was not subject to the curse of Eve, as recorded in Gen. 3:16: "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children." This same tradition reappears in *b. Sota* 12a and *Exod. Rab.* 1:20. Clearly some Jews believed, by Matthew's time, that at least Moses' *delivery* was extraordinary. Is there any evidence that his conception was also considered extraordinary?¹⁴

The haggadah has it that Jochebed, Moses' mother, was old when she conceived the deliverer. According to *b. B. Bat.* 120a, "As it is written, 'And there went a man of the house of Levi [Amram], and took to wife a daughter of Levi;' how could she be called 'daughter' when she was a hundred and twenty years old?"¹⁵ The text explains: "This teaches that the signs of maidenhood [*sīmānê- na'ārūt*] were restored in her. The flesh was again smooth, the wrinkles were

¹³Brown, *Birth*, 524, n. 21.

¹⁴We should keep in mind that Judaism did know of the possibility of extraordinary conceptions. *1 En.* 6-7; *1QapGen.* 2; *T. Sol.* 5.3; and *Prot. Jas.* 14.1 reflect the belief that angels could impregnate human beings. There is also the bizarre story of the miraculous conception and birth of Melchizedek at the end of some mss. of 2 Enoch (chapter 71)—although this is of uncertain date and origin. That a divine begetting of the Messiah should be found in *1QSa* 2.11-2 is doubtful; but perhaps attention needs to be directed to the obscure text in *b. Yeb.* 64a-b: R. Ammi stated: "Abraham and Sarah had hidden [or: undeveloped] genitals (*šmšūmīn*); for it is said: "Look to the rock whence you were hewn and to the hole of the pit whence you were digged;" and this is followed by the text: "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you." R. Nahman stated... Our mother Sarah was incapable of procreation; for it is said, "And Sarah was barren; she had no child." She had not even a womb."

¹⁵Other sources say she was one hundred and twenty-six years, still others one hundred and thirty; but to my knowledge Jochebed is always old when her age at the time of Moses' conception or birth is mentioned.

straightened out and beauty returned." This notion, overlooked by Daube, that Jochebed's youth was restored before the conception of Moses, is attested also in *Tg. Exod. 2:1*; *Exod. Rab. 1:19*; and *b. Sota 12a*.¹⁶ Now there seems little doubt as to the meaning, in *b. B. Bat. 120a*, of "the symptoms of maidenhood were restored," especially because, in context, the case of Jochebed is illustrative of how the daughters of Zelophehad, who did not marry until forty, past which the text says conception is impossible, could still conceive: not only were Jochebed's wrinkles removed, but her reproductive mechanism was renewed; that is, her fertility and presumably hymen were restored.¹⁷ If this interpretation be correct, Jochebed was a virgin immediately before Moses was conceived. Now this does not, I freely confess, entail that Moses was conceived virginally. Yet it is certain that, in the rabbinic texts cited, Moses' birth is associated with a new and miraculous beginning.¹⁸ Further, *b. B. Bat. 120a* and the parallel texts, interpreted as I have interpreted them, do away with one argument against Daube's proposal, namely, that Moses' conception could not have been analogous to that of Jesus because Jochebed, having already given birth to Aaron and Miriam, was not a virgin: Jewish legend restored her virginity.

A second consideration, one ignored, for understandable reasons, by Daube's critics, lends credence to his theory. Jewish tradition equated the "affliction" of Deut. 26:7 ("And he saw our affliction, and our distress, and our oppression") with sexual abstinence. As the *Passover Haggadah* puts it: "And saw our affliction: this is enforced marital continence. As it is said: 'And God saw the children of Israel, and God knew'" (Exod. 2:25). This tradition, that the Israelites abstained from intercourse in order to prevent the slaughter of male infants is an ancient one, occurring already in *LAB 9* (from the [late?] first century C.E.). One can therefore understand how belief in Moses' supernatural conception might have arisen: the tradition closely associated the time of Jochebed's impregnation with a time of sexual abstinence. The indubitable fact has given me much cause for pondering.

And it does not stand alone. According to *Exod. Rab. 1:13*, Jochebed was three months pregnant when Amram divorced her. But according

¹⁶It is interesting that while Josephus does not preserve this tradition, he does have God reassure Amram through recall of Sarah's fertility in old age: *Ant. 2:213*.

¹⁷In *b. Kidd. 4a* the *stimarim* of *na'arut* clearly denote the signs of puberty.

¹⁸In part this was no doubt stimulated by *Exod. 2:1*, which naturally implies that Moses was the first-born; but what then of Aaron and Miriam? See further below, pp. 203-204.

to *Exod. Rab. 1:19*, she was three months pregnant when Amram took her back. Visually:

1:13 conception——(3 months)——> divorce
 1:19 conception——(3 months)——> remarriage

We have here, it seems, two conflicting traditions. How is their relationship to be evaluated? *Exod. Rab. 1:13*, in which Amram divorces Jochebed three months after conception, does not make much sense, for if, as the text teaches, Jochebed "was already with child, how could her husband hope to thwart Pharaoh's plan by divorcing her?" (Daube). The difficulty is not felt in *Exod. Rab. 1:19*, if it is assumed that divorce occurred before knowledge of the pregnancy came to Amram (that is, shortly after conception). Nor is there any problem in *b. Sota 12a*: here the divorce precedes both remarriage and conception, so it serves the function of saving life (cf. *Sefer ha-Zikronot*). Now the curious fact, with surprising implications, is that despite their apparent chronological contradiction, *Exod. Rab. 1:13* and *19* agree that Jochebed conceived before she remarried; and if anyone ever believed that and simultaneously believed (as many of the sources relate) that Amram divorced Jochebed in order to circumvent Pharaoh's decree, it would follow that Jochebed became pregnant between the time that her husband divorced and then remarried her, that is, during a temporary cessation of sexual relations. As explanation, only unlawful intercourse (of which there is no trace in the tradition) or supernatural intervention offer themselves for consideration.

Let me submit one more piece of evidence. In a fascinating article on an obscure topic, P. W. van der Horst has reviewed the ancient sources which tell of individuals born in the seventh month after conception. Outside of Jewish and Christian texts he finds seven such, all men: Apollo, Dionysius, Heracles, Eurystheus, Demaratus of Sparta, Julius Caesar, and Corbulo. The first two were gods, the third a hero begotten by Zeus, the fourth a mythical king who claimed Zeus as his great-grandfather, the fifth an historical king supposedly begotten by a hero (Astrabacus), and the sixth a great dictator with a divine lineage. Only the seventh, a consul, had a simple human origin. The situation is similar in Jewish and Christian documents, for in them the following are sometimes said to have been born in the seventh month: Jesus, Mary, Isaac, Samuel, and Moses. Now Jesus was thought born of a virgin, and in *Protevangeliium James 4* Anna has clearly conceived without Joachim. As for Isaac, already in Genesis his conception is miraculous, for "it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of

women," and only divine aid enabled her, at the infertile age of ninety, to bear a child. Further, Philo says Isaac was begotten by God (*Leg. all* 3:219; cf. *Mut. num.* 130-32, 137); and while the interpretation of his words are disputed,¹⁹ *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 21:1 records that, "the Lord wrought a miracle for Sarah," while *Gen. Rab.* 47:2 offers that God fashioned for Sarah an ovary; and Gal. 4:21-31 may also assume a miraculous birth for Isaac, although most commentators have thought otherwise. What of Samuel? His mother, Hanna, was barren because "the Lord had closed her womb" (1 Sam. 1:5), and only in response to prayer was she opened. Moreover, "that also Jochebed and Hanna were felt to be parallel cases is proved by the fact that Hanna too, like Jochebed, is said to have been 130 years of age when she conceived Samuel... [And] Samuel's birth has clearly been a model for the miraculous birth of Mary in the *Protevangelium Jacobi*."²⁰

The emergent pattern is undeniable: a seven months delivery in pagan or Jewish or Christian sources betokens a divine origin or a conception supernaturally assisted. So when we find, in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod. 2:2; *Mek. of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai*, p. 6 (Epstein); and *Sefer ha-Zikronot*,²¹ that Moses too was born at the end of six months or in the seventh month, this is one more sign that his advent was thought of as surrounded by mysterious circumstances.

We are perfectly free to affirm, and with the evidence on our side, that Jewish tradition nowhere explicitly confirms Daube's interpretation of the line from the *Passover Haggadah*.²² Further, the proposal under consideration suffers from the disadvantage that Josephus and Pseudo-Philo tell the story of Moses' birth in such a way as to exclude it. On the other hand, the haggadic imagination did, beyond all dispute, speculate about the supernatural circumstances of both Moses' conception and delivery.²³ So whether or not a virgin birth for the lawgiver had any currency, a proposition of greater plausibility—I do not say probability—than most have admitted, people did think of the circumstances of his advent as miraculous, as due to the direct intervention of God. Is this then not yet one more important way in which Matthew's Jesus resembles Moses?

¹⁹See P. Grelot, "La naissance d'Isaac et celle de Jésus: Sur une interprétation 'mythologique' de la conception virginale," *NRT* 94 (1972):462-87, 561-85.

²⁰"Seven Months' Children in Jewish and Christian Literature from Antiquity," *ETL* 54 (1978), 358.

²¹For additional sources see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:397, n. 44.

²²Although perhaps someone might want to contend that the interpretation of *Moseh 'išhā' 'ēlohīm* (Deut. 33:1) as "Moses, man and God" (see p. 155) might reflect such a belief.

²³It also speculated on his infancy. Philo, for example, says he was weaned at a surprisingly early date: *Mos.* 1:18.

(2) In Matt. 1:18 it is said that Mary, after betrothal, but before marriage and before sexual intercourse, was with child of the Holy Spirit. Then, in 1:24, we read that Joseph, dispelled of suspicions regarding Mary's behavior, took her to wife. So the narrative tells of a man marrying an already-pregnant woman. The situation, to my knowledge, has its closest and perhaps only Jewish parallel in the Moses traditions. As previously indicated, *Exod. Rab.* 1:13 and 19 record that, when Amram remarried Jochebed, she was already pregnant with Moses. Whether or not the circumstance ever was (as Daube suspected) explained by a supernatural intervention, or whether it was always assumed, as *Exod. Rab.* 1:13 offers, that Amram impregnated his wife before he divorced and subsequently remarried her, there can be no denying the formal parallel: just as Joseph took to himself a pregnant wife, so too, according to certain Jewish sources, did Amram marry a woman already with child.

(3) In one of the volumes in his great study of Jewish symbols, E. R. Goodenough observed that there is an interesting scene at the Dura-Europos synagogue (west wall, north half) which may be related to Matthew 2. In the latter the new-born Jesus is adored by magi who bring three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In the former there is a depiction of the birth of Moses, and he too seems to be presented with gifts.²⁴ Three Egyptian maids or princesses (depicted as nymphs) hold forth dishes, a box, and a juglet. Unfortunately, the precise significance of these objects is unknown: there is apparently no literary parallel to help us in interpretation. Goodenough, however, was fairly confident that the three women are offering gifts to the new-born savior.

Although the correctness of Goodenough's interpretation is beyond the compass of certainty—perhaps some future discovery may yet settle the matter—it may be observed that, in later Christian art, the infant Moses does receive gifts.²⁵ Was the motif borrowed from the Jewish tradition? or did Christians instead assimilate the birth of Moses to that of Jesus? In the former case Goodenough's interpretation would be recommended and the parallel with Matthew 2 made firm. In the latter case we would at least have evidence that some Christians, at some point in time, thought it appropriate to liken the birth of the first redeemer to that of the last. And in either case the

²⁴For what follows see Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 9:203-17. On p. 208 he makes the comparison with Matthew 2.

²⁵Goodenough, *Symbols*, 11:176, plate 174.

possibility that there might be a Mosaic background for the adventure of the magi is enhanced.

(4) According to Matt. 2:14, Joseph took "the child and his mother by night" and went into Egypt. Why the notice of time (such a rarity outside the later chapters)? Perhaps it creates a parallel with the passion narrative: at the end too it was at night that Jesus was overtaken. Or maybe *nyktos* makes plain the danger: the family had to go under cover of darkness. Or perchance the word suggests that Joseph immediately did as he was commanded, for he was commanded in a dream, and so, presumably, at night. It is more likely, however, that the cluster of motifs—flight, night, Egypt—should recall the exodus. Tradition held that Moses and the Israelites fled Egypt *at night* (Exod. 12:31-42; the fact was firmly planted in Jewish memory because the Passover was celebrated in the evening; cf. Exod. 12:8; *Jub.* 49:1, 12; etc.).

The objection to this reading is that the notice comes in 2:14, not in 2:21, where the family of Jesus leaves Egypt.²⁶ But this overlooks that the parallelism lies not in the identity of course taken but in the flight itself. It is true that Moses and the Israelites fled *from* Egypt, Jesus and his family *to* Egypt. But the emphasis is upon what is shared, that being the act of fleeing from hostility. Moreover, Joseph and his family were only fleeing when they exited Palestine, not when they left Egypt; so the typology is more effective with *nyktos* in 2:14, where there is urgency, instead of 2:21, where haste is unnecessary.

(5) *b. Meg.* 14a informs us that when Moses "was born, the whole house [he was born in] was filled with light." This legend, widely attested,²⁷ has occasionally been associated with Matthew's story of a guiding star.²⁸ At first sight, the parallel seems ill-considered: is a star really reminiscent of a light within a room?²⁹ An additional consideration, however, begets second thoughts. We inevitably regard Matthew's star as a heavenly object, that is, an energetic mass located in deep space. But in ancient Judaism stars were often thought of as living beings, and there are texts which identify them with angels.³⁰

²⁶Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:261.

²⁷Cf. *b. Sota* 13a; *b. Meg.* 14a; *Exod. Rab.* 1:20; *Cant. Rab.* 1:20; *Sefer ha-Zikronot*; *SB* 1:78; 2:678;

²⁸E.g. Davies, *Setting*, 80.

²⁹But *Sefer ha-Zikronot* refers to the bright light at Moses' birth as "like that of the sun and moon at their rising."

³⁰Such as *Judg.* 5:20; *Job* 38:7; *Dan.* 8:10; *I En.* 86:1,3; 90:20-27; *Rev.* 9:1; 12:4; *LAB* 32:15; *T. Sol.* 20:14-17; *Arabic Gospel of Infancy* 7. The whole subject of astral immortality is also

Matthew's star is in fact equated with such in the *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy* 7. Now the pertinence of this becomes evident when we admit that we are at a loss before the tale of the magi: how in the world could a star in the sky guide men, however wise, to a particular residence? I submit that our puzzlement flows from our idea of a star, which idea was not Matthew's. 2:9 ("the star they had seen in the East went before them") seems clear enough. It implies what *Prot. Jas.* 21:3 relates, that the star went "before them, until they [the magi] came to the cave," and also that the star "stood over the head of the child." Compare the words of Chrysostom: the star

did not, remaining on high, point out the place; it not being possible for them [the magi] so to ascertain it, but it came down and performed this office. For you know that a spot of so small dimensions, being only as much as a shed would occupy, or rather as much as the body of a little infant would take up, could not possibly be marked out by a star. For by reason of its immense height, it could not sufficiently distinguish so confined a spot, and discover it to them that were desiring to see it (*Hom. on Mt.* 6:3).

While all this seems fantastic to us, it was not to Chrysostom or to the author of the *Protevangelium James*, and I see no sound reason to suppose it would have been fantastic to Matthew. On the contrary, his text, which is certainly otherwise full of miracles, and which plainly avows that the star "went before" (*proegen autous*) the magi (2:9), requires that the guiding light came down from on high to lead the magi whither they were going. If so, we do indeed have in Matthew 2 a close parallel to the phenomenon associated with the infant Moses.

But it is another matter confidently to add this parallel to the others we have compiled in our expository pilgrimage. The reason is that the theme of a supernatural light attending the birth of a great man was not exclusively associated with Moses. It was rather a popular item of folklore, attached now to this hero, now to that hero. In *LAE* 21:3 Cain, it says, was full of light at birth, while according to *I En.* 106:2, 10, the infant eyes of Noah sent forth visible beams which made his whole house glow; and *Liv. Proph. Elijah* 2-3 testifies that shining men greeted

pertinent, especially as human destiny was often depicted as angelic; see *Dan.* 12:3 (on which see the commentaries); *Wisd.* 5:5; *I En.* 104:2-6 (cf. 39:5); *Philo, De gig.* 2; *IQSb* IV:25; *Matt.* 22:30 par.; *2 Bar.* 51:1, 5; *As. Mos.* 10:7; *T. Isaac* 4:43-48; *Apoc. Zeph.* 8:1-5; *Apoc. Adam* 5:64, 14-19; 76, 4-6; *CMC* 51; discussion in James H. Charlesworth, "The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. George W. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 135-51. —I note that *Philo, Mos.* 1:166, speculated that the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites in the desert had "an unseen angel" enclosed within it.

the baby Elijah and wrapped him in fire. The motif of an illuminated birth-place also appears outside Jewish tradition, in legends about Hercules, Zoroaster, and Mohammed. Obviously it would be hazardous to insist that the light of Matthew 2 must have reminded ancient readers of Moses in particular.

(6) In 1:23 our evangelist inserts a quotation from LXX Isa. 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel." The first nine words relate to the circumstances of Jesus' conception and birth and make them fulfillments of an ancient oracle. The last seven interpret Jesus' significance by bestowing upon him a name or title, Emmanuel. The importance of this last follows from its receiving a clarifying clause, drawn from LXX Isa. 8:8: "which, being interpreted, means, With us is God." Unfortunately, Matthew's interpretive addition obscures as much as it clarifies. Is Jesus here unequivocally designated God, as he seems to be in John's Gospel? Or should we think instead that in him God's salvific presence has been made real? While I have elsewhere tried to answer the question, one must admit that there are good arguments for both possibilities, so that a dogmatic judgment is here inappropriate.³¹ One fact, however, is manifest: Jesus' appellation (Emmanuel) has God's name in it.

What might this have to do with Moses? Exod. 4:16 reads: "You [Moses] shall be to him [Aaron] as God" (MT: *l'ē lōhīm*; LXX: *ta pros ton theon*). Similar is Exod. 7:1: "I [God] make you [Moses] God to Pharaoh" (MT: *'ēlōhīm lēpar' ōh*; LXX: *theon pharaō*). In these two places Moses is called *theos* or *'ēlōhīm*. Now obviously Exodus does not identify Moses with Yahweh. "God to Pharaoh" and "God to Aaron" are simply striking phrases which make Moses play the rôle of God, that is, speak for Him (see the commentaries). Nonetheless, Exod. 4:16 and 7:1 later stimulated much speculation. Philo was very intrigued by the two texts and offered commentary upon them in several books, not a little of which is difficult to understand.³² Whatever the reader may make of Philo's sometimes obscure statements, one thing is clear: the Alexandrian did not shrink from calling Moses, in some sense, *theos*. The same may be said of Jesus ben Sira. The LXX of Ecclus. 45:2 has this: Moses was *hōmoïōsen auton doxē hagiōn*, equal in glory to the holy ones (= angels). The Hebrew is, as so often, defective. But the line was almost certainly an allusion to Exod. 4:16 and/or 7:1 and should

³¹Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:217.

³²*Sac.* 9-10; *Mos.* 1:158; *Mig.* 81, 84, 169; *Det.* 162; *Quod Omm. Prob.* 43-44; *Mut.* 129. See further p. 304, n. 30.

be reconstructed as: *yēkanehō bē* [or: *'is*] *'ēlōhīm*.³³ According to this, Moses was titled "God." The Samaritans also made much of Moses receiving the divine name: it well served their exaltation of the lawgiver.³⁴ And in the rabbinic corpus there are several texts which, under the influence of Exod. 4:16 and 7:1, (wrongly) construe the phrase, *Mōseh 'is hā' ēlōhīm*, found in Deut. 33:1, to mean: "Moses, man and God" (*Deut. Rab.* 11:4; *Midr. Ps.* on 90:1). For further discussion of this fascinating topic of Moses as bearer of God's name I refer the reader to Wayne Meeks' helpful study of the subject.³⁵

Returning to the First Gospel, should Jesus' status as Emmanuel be in any way connected with the tradition that Moses was called "God"? In Exodus, Moses, in a certain sense, acts in the place of God, that is, functions as the deity, and so is called "God." Is this not very close to what we have in Matthew, where Jesus, although he is not (I think) simply identified with God, functions as God and so is known as "Emmanuel"? The parallel is there, but whether the text was designed to evoke it I do not know. I do note, however, that exegetical history does present us with at least one example of someone associating Moses' status as *theos* with that of Jesus. Nestorius purportedly wrote in one place: "Just as we call the Creator of all things God, and just as we call Moses 'God' (for the Scripture says, 'I have made you as a God to Pharaoh')... so also the Lord Christ we call, 'God.'"³⁶

Key words and phrases. 1:18-2:23 contains a few phrases which may have been intended to sound echoes of the early chapters of Exodus. Consider these parallels:

Matthew	Exodus (LXX)
<i>prin ē synelthein autous</i> , 1:18	<i>prin ē eisēlthein autas</i> , 1:19
<i>zēteïn to paidion tou apolesai</i>	<i>ezētei aneleïn Mōusen +</i>

³³See W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), 204, following R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1906). Cf. the notes of Box and Oesterley in *APOT* 1:484-85.

³⁴See e.g. *Memar Marqah* 1:2, 9; 2:12; 4:1; 5:3, 4.

³⁵Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 354-71.

³⁶So Justinian, *Against the Monophysites*, quoting from the *acta* of the Council of Ephesus, *Exc. Eph.* 6. See *On the Person of Christ: the Christology of the Emperor Justinian*, trans. K. P. Wesche (Crestview: Saint Vladimir's, 1991), 41-42. For a contrast between "god" as applied to Moses in Exod. 7:1 and "God" as applied to "the who was incarnate in the womb of the virgin" see Gregory the Great, *Hom. Ezek.* 3:7.

+ <i>anechōresen</i> , 2:13-14; <i>aneilen pantas tous paidas</i> , 2:16	<i>anechōresen</i> , 2:15
<i>tēs teleutēs Herōdou</i> , 2:15	<i>eteleutēsēn ho basileus</i> , 2:23; 4:19
<i>paralabe to paidion kai tēn mētera autou</i> , 2:13	<i>analabōn... tēn gunaika kai ta paidia</i> , 4:20

There are also isolated words which, taken together, may have been designed to summon the exodus period. This is above all true of the personal names. Jesus' father shares the name of the patriarch who is referred to at the beginning of Exodus: "Now a new king arose who did not know Joseph" (1:18).³⁷ Jesus' mother bears the name of Moses' sister, Miriam. And Jesus himself is called by the name of Moses' successor, Joshua—a fact which should perhaps be stressed given that Joshua was remembered as one like Moses. Furthermore, Matthew 2 moves all three people—Jesus, Joseph, Mary—to Egypt, the setting for the first exodus story. Do these coincidences not trigger memories in the biblically informed reader?³⁸

Similar narrative structure. Matt. 1:18-2:23 is customarily divided into three main sections:

- 1:18-25, the dream about and birth of the coming deliverer
- 2:1-12, the star, Herod's scheme, the magi's worship
- 2:13-23, Jesus' exile and return

One must wonder whether this tripartite structure itself is not a clue to the narrative's background and intention. More precisely, one must wonder whether Matthew's arrangement was not derived from the Moses traditions. The central portion of Josephus' account of Moses' infancy (*Ant.* 2:205-23) also contains three main acts (cf. the Whiston and Loeb divisions):

- 2:205-209, Pharaoh's dream and its interpretation
- 2:210-16, the dream of Amram
- 2:217-23, Moses' birth and providential deliverance

³⁷Both Pompeius Trogus, *Hist. Phil.* 36:2.1, and Apollonius Molon *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9:19.3, make Joseph the father of Moses; but I hesitate to make anything of this.

³⁸Cf. below, p. 161, and Frye, *Great Code*, p. 172, who also observes: "The third Sura of the Koran appears to be identifying Miriam and Mary; Christian commentators on the Koran naturally say that this is ridiculous, but from the purely typological point of view from which the Koran is speaking, the identification makes good sense."

The order is not the same as in Matthew: in Josephus the parent's dream is in second position, not first. Still, the themes of the three main sections are quite similar.

This general agreement merits additional examination. Josephus' narrative, unlike that in Exodus, links Pharaoh's decree of execution to foreknowledge of the coming deliverer. That foreknowledge is gained through the prophecy of a sacred scribe. So we actually have *two prophecies* of Moses' advent—one to his nemesis, the other to his father. Thus a momentous event is about to occur, knowledge of which has been bestowed through two different means to two different parties; and with that knowledge one group will seek to kill the savior to be, the other to hide him. This, then, is more precisely the fundamental structure of *Ant.* 2:205-23.

- prophecy to deliverer's foes and decree of death
- prophecy (in a dream) to deliverer's family
- the deliverance of the deliverer from danger

This basic arrangement is not exclusive to Josephus. It recurs in the later legends about Moses's infancy and can be found in, for example, *The Chronicle of Moses* and *Sefer ha-Zikronot*. Indeed, in these last two books, as in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod. 1:15 and *Sefer ha-Yašar*, the prophecy to Pharaoh comes in the form of a dream which has to be interpreted. This makes for even greater resemblance to Matthew, where the prophecy to the enemies is an ambiguous sign (a star) that has to be interpreted (by the magi and by Jewish scribes). The result is this outline:

- indirect prophecy to deliverer's foes/
interpretation by scribes/
decree of death
- direct prophecy (in a dream) to deliverer's father
- the deliverance of the deliverer from danger

We obviously have here a conventional way of ordering the infancy traditions about Moses, one going back at least to the time of Josephus. It follows that the basic structure of Matt. 1:18ff. was not invented by the First Evangelist. It was in fact not the invention of any Christian. Rather, it was borrowed from the Jewish traditions about Moses. The three main sections of Matthew 1-2 present us with a pattern that can be found in the *Antiquities* and elsewhere.

There is a second significant structural agreement between Matthew 1-2 and the Jewish traditions about Moses. The narratives that tell of a sign granted to Pharaoh often develop in five steps:

- indirect sign to the king
- troubled feelings in response to that sign
- consultation of advisors
- interpretation of sign by scribes
- resolution to slaughter Hebrew infants

The following appears in the *Chronicle of Moses* (of unknown date):

It happened in the one hundred and thirtieth year after the descent of the children of Israel into Egypt and sixty years after the death of Joseph, that Pharaoh had a dream: an old man stood before him and there was a balance in his hand; he made all the people of Egypt, men, women and children, climb into one scale of the balance, and in the second scale he placed a lamb, and the lamb outweighed all the Egyptians. The king was astonished and pondered in his heart this prodigy, this great vision. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream. He assembled all the wise men and magicians of Egypt and told them his dream. All the people were seized by a great fear because of the dream, until there came before the king one of the princes who said to him, "This dream signifies a great misfortune and a calamity for Egypt." The king asked him, "What is it, then?" He replied, "A child will be born unto the children of Israel who will destroy all of Egypt. But now, my Lord King, I would like to give you good counsel: Give the order to kill every boy who will be born to the children of Israel. Perhaps then the dream will not come to pass." These words found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his court and the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives...

Very similar accounts appear in *Sefer ha-Yašar*; *Yalqut Sim'oni* on Exod. 1:15; and *Sefer ha-Zikronot*: in these all five elements appear. It is, admittedly, also true that we cannot here speak of invariance: Josephus lacks the sign and the consultation, and the *Jerusalem Targum* fails to record Pharaoh's fear. But these exceptions notwithstanding, the cluster of five elements and their order was, to judge from their recurrence in several sources, well established.

What do we find in Matthew? Precisely the same pattern:

- 2:1-2: sign (the star) called to the king's attention
- 2:3: troubled feelings in response to that sign
- 2:4: consultation of advisors
- 2:5-6: interpretation of the sign by scribes
- 2:7-8, 16-18: resolution to slaughter Hebrew infants

To observe this is not to overlook that Matthew's episode of the good magi has no precise parallel elsewhere,³⁹ nor that the sign in Mat-

³⁹ Astrologers do, however, appear in the Moses infancy traditions. In *Exod. Rab.* 1:18; *b. Sanh.* 101a; and *b. Sotā* 12b, for instance, they prophesy a coming savior and in effect substitute for Pharaoh's dream and its interpretation.

thew's account is a star, not a king's dream. Still, the similarities amidst the differences are obvious and fundamental. Again I cannot but surmise that we have here more than curious coincidence. Rather, the very structure of Matthew's account reflects the Moses traditions: the new Christian stories were set in a traditional mould.

There is yet a third way in which this is true. *LAB 9* offers a first-century account of Moses' origins, one quite different than that found in Josephus. Notably, the slaughter of infants is not attributed to knowledge of a Jewish redeemer, and, in accord with later rabbinic tradition, the prophecy to the family, given in a dream, is received not by Amram but by Miriam, Moses' sister. These variations alert us that the haggadah about Moses was anything but fixed. Different storytellers told different versions of what happened before and after Moses' birth: motifs were developed or omitted, and others inserted, as occasion or purpose warranted (cf. the variant infancy traditions in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2).

One point *LAB 9* makes, one not made by Josephus, is this: because Pharaoh decreed the slaughter of Hebrew children, the Jewish men resolved to divorce their wives:

And after Joseph's passing away, the sons of Israel multiplied and increased greatly. And another king who did not know Joseph arose in Egypt, and he said to his people: "Behold that people has multiplied more than we have. Come, let us make a plan against them so they will not multiply more." And the king of Egypt ordered all his people, saying, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews, throw into the river; but let their females live." And the Egyptians answered their king, saying, "Let us kill their males, and we will keep their females so that we may give them to our slaves as wives. And whoever is born from them will be a slave and will serve us." And this is what seemed wicked before the Lord. Then the elders of the people gathered the people together in mourning, and they mourned and groaned, saying, "The wombs of our wives have suffered miscarriage; our fruit is delivered to our enemies. And now we are lost, and let us set up rules for ourselves that a man should not approach his wife lest the fruit of their wombs be defiled and our offspring serve idols. For it is better to die without sons until we know what God may do" (9:1-2).

This legend, as we have had occasion to observe, reappears in the later haggadah. This is the version of *Sefer ha-Zikronot*: "When the Israelites heard the decree that Pharaoh ordained, that their male children should be thrown into the river, some of the people divorced their wives; but the others stayed married to them." A similar account also appears in *Exod. Rab.* 1:19.

The notice of divorce is usually followed by a divine intervention: Providence reassures and encourages Amram, so that he takes back his wife.⁴⁰ Divine intervention is in turn usually succeeded by the remark that Amram duly went into his wife, as in *Sefer ha-Zikronot*: "When Amram heard the words of the child [that is, the prophecy of Miriam] he went and remarried his wife whom he had divorced. . . . And in the third years of the divorce he slept with her and she conceived by him." The pattern here is: divorce—reassurance—remarriage.⁴¹

The same pattern underlies Matthew 1. Because of Mary's circumstances, which imply adultery, the just Joseph, following Jewish law, resolves to obtain a divorce.⁴² Next we are informed that Joseph was deterred from his intention, for the angel of the Lord appeared to him and revealed the true cause of Mary's pregnancy. Finally, the text says that "he [Joseph] knew her [Mary] not until she had borne a son" (1:25). Despite later dogma, the meaning is that, after Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary lived a normal life as man and wife.

Matthew's story is obviously not the same as any of those told about Amram and Jochebed. Yet its structure is recollective:

1:18-19: Joseph determines to divorce Mary

1:20-21: God reassures him

1:24-25: He takes back his wife

At some point in the tradition, it has been suggested, Joseph may have sought to divorce his wife because he learned of Herod's decree.⁴³ This presupposes that, in the pre-Matthean tradition, there was a stage in which act II (2:1-12) preceded act I (1:18-25): thus the parallels with Moses were once even greater than they are now. That is a possibility to which I am attracted. But it remains speculative, and all I need show is the structural resemblance between Matthew 1 and the Moses traditions. Again one cannot but feel that, while the content is not all paralleled, the structure of Matthew 1 is traditional.

Before leaving Matthew 1-2 there are four issues that should be considered, however cursorily.

⁴⁰In the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, however, Amram refuses from the first to act as have his fellows, and God rewards him accordingly—a sequence that is probably redactional; cf. Saul M. Olyan, "The Israelites Debate their Options at the Sea of Reeds," *JBL* 110 (1991):85-86.

⁴¹Cf. John Dominic Crossan, "From Moses to Jesus: Parallel Themes," *BibRev* 2 (1986):26.

⁴²See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:202-205.

⁴³See Brown, *Birth*, 115-16.

Later tradition. Happily, the parallelism between Matthew 1:18ff. and certain traditions about Moses was noticed by later readers. Indeed, they themselves sometimes enlarged the correlations. Ephrem the Syrian, for example, in *Hymn 24* on the nativity, wrote this:

The doves in Bethlehem murmured since the serpent destroyed their offspring.

The eagle fled to Egypt to go down and receive the promises.

Egypt rejoiced to be the capitol for repaying the debts.

She who had slain the sons of Joseph labored to repay by the son of Joseph

the debts of the sons of Joseph. Blessed is He who called him from Egypt!

Obviously Ephrem understood that Matthew's text evokes the exodus.⁴⁴ The execution of the innocents of Bethlehem was like the slaughter of babes under Pharaoh, the difference being that whereas Egypt was once the witness of execution, it later became the safe haven from it. Note also that, for Ephrem, the name of Jesus' father was associated with the patriarch whose story opens Exodus (cf. p. 156).

Ephrem's interpretation does not stand alone. On p. 104 I have already quoted some words of Aphraates which I here cite again:

Moses also was persecuted, as Jesus was persecuted. When Moses was born, they concealed him that he might not be slain by his persecutors. When Jesus was born they carried him off in flight into Egypt that Herod, his persecutor, might not slay him. In the days when Moses was born, children were drowned in the river; and at the birth of Jesus the children of Bethlehem and in its border were slain. To Moses God said: 'The men are dead who were seeking thy life'; and to Joseph the angel said in Egypt: 'Arise, take up the child, and go into the land of Egypt, for they are dead who were seeking the life of the child to take it away.'

Commentary would be superfluous.

Ephrem and Aphraates are literary witnesses. But art history offers the same testimony: Christians recognized the parallels between Matthew 1-2 and the traditions about Moses. In the depictions of the flight of the holy family to Egypt, Joseph often has a staff, and Mary and her child are typically on an ass.⁴⁵ The donkey and the staff almost certainly come from Exod. 4:20: "So Moses took his wife and his sons

⁴⁴Cf. K. E. McVey, in his translation of Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 193.

⁴⁵See G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphics Society, 1968), vol. 1, plates 312-333.

and set them on an ass, and went back to the land of Egypt; and in his hand Moses took the rod of God." The words, as we have learned, lie behind Matthew's account of Jesus' descent into Egypt. What evidently happened, then, was this: the assimilation of one story to the other was noticed and the assimilation then extended: just as Moses went to Egypt with staff in hand and his wife on an ass, so too later did Joseph, with staff in hand and his wife on an ass, go down to Egypt.⁴⁶

Another example of possible assimilation in post-New Testament times concerns the belief that Mary, in giving birth to Jesus, had no labor pains. John Damascus, *De fid.* 4:14, wrote:

It was a birth that surpassed the established order of birthgiving, as it was without pain; for, where pleasure had not preceded, pain did not follow. And just as at his conception he had kept her who conceived him virgin, so also at his birth did he maintain her virginity intact, because he alone passed through her and kept her shut.

Belief in a painless delivery is attested much earlier—in Hesychios (PG 93:1469—fifth century) and Gregory of Nyssa (PG 45:492—fourth century). It is in fact implicit in the *Protevangelium James*, which was written sometime in the second century.⁴⁷ Here Mary remains a virgin even during birth (the traditional phrase is *virginitas in partu*) and the delivery is described in this fashion: "A great light shone in the cave, so that the eyes could not bear it. And in a little that light gradually decreased, until the infant appeared" (19-20; cf. *Asc. Isa.* 11:2-16; *Od. Sol.* 19:6-10). Now we have already seen that Josephus, in narrating the circumstances of Moses' birth, purported that Jochebed had no pain; and later sources reiterate this belief: doubtless it was well known. So one may ask: did the church transfer the motif of a painless delivery from Moses to Jesus? I see no way to be sure. The notion that Mary was spared suffering could have had an independent, exegetical origin: because Christ undid the fall, his birth must have been free of the curse pronounced in Gen. 3:16 (so later Christian reflection). Or maybe meditation upon belief in Mary's perpetual virginity was the decisive catalyst. But given that Christians in other respects modelled their

⁴⁶Note also that many depictions of the flight to Egypt include one of Joseph's sons from a previous marriage. This too as it happens increases the parallels with Moses: the latter was commanded to take his children. Cf. *Gospel of Ps.-Matthew* 18. This apocryphal gospel also explicitly states that the holy family went "by way of the desert" (17) and has Jesus miraculously supply water (20).

⁴⁷For additional early sources see J. C. Plumpe, "Some Little-Known Early Witnesses to Mary's *Virginitas in Partu*," *TS* 9 (1948):567-77.

savior on Moses, the possibility that the story of Jochebed's easy labor stimulated belief in Mary's exemption from pain must be seriously entertained.

A possible objection. *Sefer ha-Yašar* relates that the wicked king Nimrod learned, by astrology, of Abraham's advent and of his destiny to destroy false religion; that Nimrod sent for his princes and governors to ask advice; that they told him to have the midwives kill all male Hebrew infants; that Nimrod enacted their evil counsel, so that thousands of innocents were slaughtered; that Abraham's mother, Terah, saved her infant by depositing him in a cave, which he filled with light; and that Abraham, who matured at an incredible pace, was miraculously cared for by the angels. According to P. Nepper-Christensen, these traditions about Abraham confound proponents of a Moses typology in Matthew, for they show that the resemblances between Matthew 1-2 and the Moses traditions do not establish such a typology: certain motifs were just transferred from hero to hero.⁴⁸

Does this touch the truth? I think not. Nepper-Christensen has committed two sins of omission. First, although *Sefer ha-Yašar* may be as late as the eleventh century (its date is uncertain), the book appears to be our earliest witness to the pertinent legends about Abraham; yet it must be centuries younger than the earliest sources, such as Philo and Josephus, for the comparable tales about Moses.⁴⁹ Beyond this, one can, in the second place, document a firm tendency in Jewish tradition to assimilate the patriarch to the lawgiver (see p. 91, n. 209). So very near to hand is the thought that the story of Abraham's infancy was modelled upon the story of Moses. In other words, *Sefer ha-Yašar* offers a Moses typology: the Father of Israel anticipated the liberator. If so, what Nepper-Christensen fallaciously forwards as an objection is in truth commendation: the Abraham parallels demonstrate not the unattached nature of certain motifs but instead show us that the transference to Jesus of Mosaic infancy items was not a unique procedure. Rather, Jewish tradition undertook to honor father Abraham in the very same way.

Eschatology. Jewish tradition strongly hints that, at some point in time, the traditions about Moses' infancy were thought to foreshadow

⁴⁸*Matthäusevangelium*, 167-68

⁴⁹Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Studia Post-Biblica; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 90-95, establishes, by comparative method, that the author of *Sefer ha-Yašar* used traditional materials, motifs, and literary patterns; but he does not prove the antiquity of the Abraham traditions themselves.

messianic events. In *Sefer ha-Yašar* Pharaoh's dream is interpreted to mean this: "a great evil will befall Egypt at the end of days." This same loaded, eschatological phrase, "the end of days," also occurs, in similar contexts, in *Sefer ha-Zikronot* and *Yalqut Sim'oni* on Exod. 1:15. Additionally noteworthy is the introduction of Balaam in *Sefer ha-Yašar*: he was remembered as having prophesied the Messiah (Num. 24:17; cf. CD 7:18-26; T. Judah 18:3; and the LXX and targumim for Num. 24:17). And indeed his prophesy of a victorious warrior—"a son will be born to Israel who will devastate all of Egypt and exterminate her people"—is reminiscent of Num. 24:17, where it is foretold that the star to rise in Israel will crush God's enemies.

Whether there are other messianic resonances in some of the infancy traditions—what of the use of *gōel* in *Exod. Rab.* 1:18? or of "son" in Pseudo-Jonathan on Exod. 1:15 and *Sefer ha-Yašar*?—is not clear. But the evidence does suffice to support Renée Bloch: messianic elements are found in some of the materials; so for some Jews the circumstances surrounding Moses' birth were prototypical, prophetic of messianic circumstances.⁵⁰ It cannot, however, be proven that such a generalization holds for Matthew's age: for that the evidence, because much too late, falls far short. Bloch's judgement, that the messianic associations of the Moses infancy stories "explain in an obvious way" the migration of Mosaic motifs to the story of Jesus, is not established. Beyond that, the reader of chapters 2 and 3 herein knows full well that Mosaic features were often adopted without any messianic or eschatological implication. Still, the employment of the Moses traditions in later Judaism does at least supply an analogy to what transpired in early Christianity. Both Jews and Christians found it appropriate to perceive in the haggadic traditions about Moses' advent a foreshadowing of the Messiah's coming.

Tradition and redaction. One last observation. It is extremely difficult to determine which, if any, of the Mosaic elements in Matthew 1-2 should be assigned to the redactor. Elsewhere I have argued that there were three main stages in the tradition-history of 1:18-2:23, the first stage of which was Mosaic.⁵¹ Subsequent investigation has not moved me in that judgement. The result is that I must assign to tradition most of the Mosaic elements now found in Matthew's infancy narrative. We

⁵⁰A Methodological Note for the Study of Rabbinic Literature," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William Scott Green (Chico: Scholars Press, 1978), 66-67.

⁵¹Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:190-95.

can, however, be confident that Matthew both recognized those elements he reproduced for what they were, namely, Mosaic, and that he added to their number. This follows from our analysis of the formula quotation in 2:15: "Out of Egypt have I called me son." If, with the other formula quotations, this is thought to be redactional, as probably most now think, then Matthew "helped to underline the analogy between Moses and Jesus that was crucial in the pre-Matthean story."⁵² Moreover, one can also urge, as has Raymond Brown, that Matthew's appreciation of this parallelism [between Jesus and Moses] explains why he has chosen an infancy narrative which fills out the parallelism more perfectly. Just as there is an infancy narrative in the Book of Exodus showing God's hand in his career even before he began his ministry of redeeming Israel from Egypt and of mediating a covenant between God and His people, so Matthew has given us an infancy narrative of Jesus before he begins his ministry of redemption and of the new covenant.⁵³

THE TEMPTATION STORY (4:1-11)

As a comparison of Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 shows, Q contained a temptation narrative in which Jesus recapitulated the experience of Israel in the desert. LXX Deut. 8:3 ("And he afflicted you, and he made you famished, and he fed you with manna, which your fathers knew not, in order to teach you that man shall not live by bread alone, but that man shall live by everything that proceeds from the mouth of God") is quoted in Matt. 4:4 = Luke 4:3, Deut. 6:16 ("You shall not tempt the Lord your God, as you tempted him in the temptation [at Massah]") in 4:7 = Luke 4:12, and Deut. 6:13 ("You shall fear the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve") in Matt. 4:10 = Luke 4:7. Clearly Q told a haggadic tale much informed by Scripture: as Israel entered the desert to suffer a time of testing, so too Jesus, whose forty days was the typological equivalent of Israel's forty years of wandering. And just as Israel was tempted by hunger (Exod. 16:2-8), was

⁵²Brown, *Birth*, 118.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 112-13. He continues in a footnote: "Although chapter divisions are a later precision, it is noteworthy that there are two chapters of 'early Moses' material in Exodus before Moses is solemnly called by the voice of God in the burning bush episode of ch. 3, just as there are two chapters of 'early Jesus' material in Matthew before Jesus is solemnly designated by the voice of God in the baptism episode of ch. 3."

tempted to put God to the test (Exod. 17:1-3; cf. Deut. 6:16), and was tempted to idolatry (Exodus 32), so too Jesus.⁵⁴

Given his knowledge of Scripture, Matthew, we may be sure, perceived Q's typological equation of Israel's wilderness temptations with those of Jesus. The presumption is commended by the evangelist's own work in 2:15, where he introduced the typological equation: Jesus = Son = Israel (see p. 142). But if in Matthew 2 the evangelist glossed the traditional Moses typology with an Israel typology, in Matthew 4 just the opposite occurred: the evangelist overlaid the existing Israel typology with specifically Mosaic motifs.⁵⁵ The proof of this is in the phrase, "fasted forty days and forty nights." The last three words, not found in Luke 4 or Mark 1:12-13, are redactional. Why were they added? Most commentators, finding explanation in the lengthy fasts of Moses and Elijah, both of which were for "forty days and forty nights" (Exod. 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8), suggest that Matthew wished to assimilate Jesus to those two saints. Calvin, in a polemical discussion of lenten fasting, wrote:

The nature of his [Jesus'] fast is not different from that which Moses observed when he received the law at the hand of the Lord (Exod. 24:18; 34:28). For, seeing that the miracle was performed in Moses to establish the law, it behoved not to be omitted in Christ, lest the gospel should seem inferior to the law. But from that day, it never occurred to any one, under pretence of imitating Moses, to set up a similar form of fasting among the Israelites. Nor did any of the holy prophets and fathers follow it, though they had inclination and zeal enough for all pious exercises; for though it is said of Elijah that he passed forty days without meat and drink (1 Kings 19:8), this was merely in order that the people might recognize that he was raised up to maintain the law... (Inst. 4:12.20).

To judge from the commentaries, few careful and biblically literate readers of Matt. 4:2 have not been moved to think of Elijah and especially Moses (cf. already Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5:21:2).⁵⁶ But did the

⁵⁴See further B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son (Matt 4:1-11 & Par.)* (CB, NT 2/1; Lund: Gleerup, 1966). Note also the popular yet instructive work of Austin Farrer, *The Triple Victory: Christ's Temptation according to St. Matthew* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley, 1990).

⁵⁵Cf. Teeple, *Prophet*, 76-77, arguing that the redactional *anechthe* (4:1) and *oros hypselon lian* (4:8) were drawn from the Mount Nebo tradition (cf. LXX Deut. 34:1-2: *kai anebe Mouses... epi to oros... kai edeixen auto*). According to Gerhardsson, *Testing*, 44, in Matthew 4 Jesus is "the typological equivalent to Israel, God's son, not Moses, the deliverer." The antithesis, as we shall see, is false.

⁵⁶Note also Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 3:2; Chrysostom, *Hom. on Matt.* 13:2; Augustine, *Serm.* 252:11; *Ep.* 55:28; Julian, *frag.* 2; and for modern commentators Allen, *Matthew*, 30-31; F. W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 108; Gnlika,

evangelist himself intend to provoke such thought? Despite the doubts of some,⁵⁷ a long list of considerations procures our assent.

(1) Moses' fast of forty days and forty nights was not forgotten: it was, on the contrary, a much celebrated achievement, one which stuck in the memory; see Philo, *De som.* 1:36; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:99; *1 Clem.* 53:2; *Barn.* 4:7; 14:2; Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 3:2; Epiphanius, *Haer.* 77:16; *Sipre Deut.* § 131b—all of which refer to "forty days and forty nights": clearly the expression was as fixed as the fact.⁵⁸

(2) The addition of "and forty nights" distracts from the parallelism between Jesus and Israel: unlike days, years are not divided into two parts.⁵⁹ So the insertion must serve some purpose other than promotion of the Israel typology. Observe further that Matthew, in contrast to Luke, has temptation come to Jesus *after* forty days and forty nights. This also differentiates Jesus from Israel, for Israel's temptations came *during* her forty year sojourn.

(3) Matt. 12:40 has this: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Comparison with Mark 8:12 and Luke 11:30 (= Q) demonstrates a redactional genesis and reveals Matthew's interest in a precise chronological correspondence between certain circumstances of Jesus and certain circumstances of Jonah, his biblical model in 12:40. Neither Mark 8:12 nor Luke 11:30 offers that the sign of Jonah refers to such a correspondence: only Matt. 12:40 makes that plain. Hence 12:40 shows us that Matthew saw significance in at least one durational coincidence between Jesus and an ancient worthy, and also that he rewrote his sources in order that others might perceive the same significance. That he was similarly moved when producing 4:2 is not at all unlikely.

(4) In the Hebrew Bible forty is "a symbolic and sacred number," and, as the Church Fathers well knew, it occurs often "as a round number to designate a fairly long period of time in terms of human existence or endurance."⁶⁰ But the conventionality of the number does

Matthäusevangelium, 1:86; Goldberg, *Jews and Christians*, 152; Gundry, *Matthew*, 54-55; Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (3rd ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1948), 100; also n.2 on p. 293.

⁵⁷Such as Davies, *Setting*, 45-48. Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:186.

⁵⁸*Jub.* 1:4; *LAB* 11:15; and *Deut. Rab.* 11:10 also have "forty days and forty nights" of Moses on Sinai, but they do not mention the fasting. Contrast Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2:25 ("forty days"), although here Josephus was summarizing Apion.

⁵⁹Thus, in Num. 14:34 and Ezek. 4:5-6, where the period of forty days stands for forty years, the word "nights" finds no place.

⁶⁰M. H. Pope, *IDB* 3:565, s.v., "Number."

not vitiate its ability to carry a quite specific connotation in the right context, and this is so in the present case, for two reasons. (a) Matt. 4:2 refers specifically to *fasting* for forty days and nights. This is crucial. Only two figures in the Jewish Bible fast for forty days and forty nights: Moses and Elijah; and on pp. 39-45 we saw that Elijah's fast is typological: the prophet's abstention was in imitation of Moses. Surely this is suggestive. (b) While "forty days" appears with some frequency in Scripture, "forty days and forty nights" does not. In fact, in the Jewish Bible the phrase is descriptive of only these circumstances—Noah's flood (Gen. 7:4), Moses' retirements on Sinai (Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 28, 25; 10:10), and Elijah's abstinence (1 Kgs. 19:8). Now of these circumstances, the last is imitative, and those associated with Moses are much emphasized through repetition (five times in Deut. 9:9-10:10).

(5) Outside of 1 Kings 19 we find other texts which employ "forty days (and forty nights)" as part of a strategy to recall the lawgiver. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12, for instance, Abraham eats no bread and drinks no water for forty days and forty nights, and this is only one of several features which make the patriarch very much like the Moses of Jewish lore (see p. 91, n. 209). Another pertinent passage is 4 *Ezra* 14, already examined (pp. 62-65). Here the Moses typology is developed and explicit, and while there is no fasting, we do read of people sitting and writing for forty days and forty nights (14:42-45). Slightly different is 2 *Baruch* 76, where Baruch's universal vision is to "happen after forty days." Here, although there is neither fast nor mountain, the Moses typology is plain enough (cf. pp. 65-68). Recall that there may also be a Moses typology in *Protevangelium James* 1-4. This tells us that the father of Mary, by name Joachim, a shepherd who "betook himself to the wilderness," had a wife who miraculously conceived a child; and Joachim himself is said to have fasted forty days and forty nights.⁶¹ The upshot, then, is that if Matthew hoped that "forty days and forty nights" would remind readers of Moses, he was in the company of other ancient authors who shared the same expectation.

(6) In the synoptics Jesus' fast belongs to a temptation narrative. There may be a parallel of sorts in Deuteronomy, for according to Deut. 9:18 and 25, Moses' fasting was occasioned by Israel's lapse into

⁶¹When Adam fasts in LAE 6, the phrase is, notably, "forty days": nights are not mentioned, and there is no Moses typology; cf. 3 *Bar* 4:14; *T. Isaac* 4:4. It goes without saying that the same is true of Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. Pyth.* 21, according to which Pythagoras died of self-inflicted starvation "after forty days."

sin: the refusal to eat and drink was a penitential act of the one for the many. The parallel is, obviously, inexact; but the Pentateuch does link the fast on Sinai to an episode of temptation.

(7) The cryptic notice, in Matt. 4:11, that angels "ministered" (*diēkonoun*) to Jesus, probably implies that he was fed by them.⁶² This of course enhances the similitude between Jesus and Israel, because in the wilderness Israel was given manna, the food of angels.⁶³ But there might also be a parallel with Moses. Josephus, in *Ant.* 3:99, wrote that, on the mountain, Moses ate "no foods for men." The implication seems to be that he ate some other kind of food, and just such a notion is explicit in Samaritan sources: on Sinai Moses sat at the table of angels and ate their bread (*Memar Marqah* 4:6). If such a tradition had been known to Matthew, he could well have thought that just as Moses declined bread and water but was then fed by angels, in like manner the Messiah's great fast was broken by the gift of angelic bread.

(8) We find this in *Exod. Rab.* 43:1. R. Berekah said in the name of R. Judah the Prince:

When Israel made the golden calf, Satan stood within [before God] accusing them, while Moses remained without. What then did Moses do? He arose and thrust Satan away and placed himself in his stead, as it says, "Had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach" (Ps. 106:23), that is, he put himself in the place of him who was causing the breach.

Unfortunately we do not know the date at which this tale saw the light of day. But it is remarkable, given the other parallels we have noticed, that Jewish tradition came to hold that Moses bested Satan "when Israel made the golden calf," that is, during the forty days and forty nights on Sinai.⁶⁴

If the ramifications of the addition of "and forty nights" in Matt. 4:2 seem rather obvious, a second verse in Matthew's temptation narrative has also sometimes been thought to promote the Gospel's Moses typology: "Again the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" (4:8).

⁶²Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:374.

⁶³Ps. 78:25; LAE 2-4; 2 *Esd.* 1:19; *b. Sanh.* 59b; *ARN* 1.

⁶⁴According to Davies, *SSM*, 48, n. 1, citing David Daube, *Studies on Biblical Law* (Cambridge: University Press, 1947), 24ff., there is "no suggestion" of "a temptation of Moses... on Sinai." Is this not a bit misleading? Maybe we find no temptation story like that belonging to the New Testament; but there certainly was a tradition of encounter with the evil one. Note also *b. Sabb.* 89a, where Moses, after descending Sinai, meets Satan, who asks him where the Torah is.

Is this a reminiscence of the story that Moses went to the top of Pisgah, looked in all directions, and saw the land he would not enter (Num. 27:12-14; Deut. 3:27; 32:48-52; 34:1-4)?⁶⁵ Several considerations induce us to think that very likely it is.

(1) Matthew 4 and the Nebo traditions share a common theme: a supernatural figure (God/Satan) shows to a hero (Moses/Jesus) the entirety of a realm (all the land of Israel/all the kingdoms of the world) but the hero does not then enter or inherit it.

(2) There are verbal parallels between Matt. 4:8-9 and Deut. 34:1-4:

Matthew	Deuteronomy
<i>kai deiknysin autō</i>	<i>kai edeixen autō</i>
<i>pasas tas basileias</i>	<i>pasan tēn gēn</i>
<i>tauta panta dōsō</i>	<i>dōsō autēn</i>

(3) "To a very high mountain" is without parallel in Luke and may be assigned to Matthew's hand.⁶⁶ Further, I shall contend that all the other redactional insertions of *oros* are probably related to Matthew's new Moses theme.⁶⁷

(4) If *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12 commences by moving Sinai motifs to the life of Abraham (see p. 91, n. 209), the chapter closes with an event recollective of Moses' experience on Nebo, as this was recounted by later legend: Abraham's angelic guide and interpreter promises the patriarch a universal vision: "I will ascend on the wings of the birds to show you what is in the heavens, on the earth and in the sea, in the abyss, and in the lower depths, in the garden of Eden and in its rivers, in the fullness of the universe."⁶⁸ It would appear then that *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12 combines features of the Sinai and Nebo traditions, which is precisely what many have detected in Matthew 4. Not only this, but in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13 Azazel (= Satan), in the form of a bird, tempts Abraham: "What are you doing, Abraham, on the holy heights, where no one eats or drinks, nor is there upon them food for men. But these all [your offerings] will be consumed by fire and they will burn you up. Leave the man who is with you [Isaac] and flee." I do not wish to discount the many differences between this and

⁶⁵So, among others, Donaldson, *Mountain*, 93; Gfrörer, *Heils*, 385-86; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 57; Barnabas Lindars, "The Image of Moses in the Synoptic Gospels," *Theology* 58 (1955):130; W. Wilkens, "Die Versuchung Jesu nach Matthäus," *NTS* 28 (1982):485.

⁶⁶Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:369-70; contrast Donaldson, *Mountain*, 87-88.

⁶⁷See below, pp. 172-80, 238-42, 262-66.

⁶⁸For the comparable Moses traditions see below, pp. 223-25.

Matthew 4. At the same time, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, like Matthew 4, does plainly have its Mosaic hero undergo Satanic temptation in close connection with a Nebo-like experience. I should like to suggest that the resemblance may be more than coincidence. There is an old tale that, at the end of his sojourn, a melancholy Moses encountered and rebuked the angel of death⁶⁹ or Samā'el⁷⁰, who had come to snatch his soul. *Sipre Deut.* § 305 contains a short version of this legend, *Deut. Rab.* 11:10a one much more protracted, in which Samā'el and Moses argue back and forth, and in which the latter finally rebukes the former ("Away, wicked one"—cf. Matt. 4:10) who then takes flight. That some form of this tradition was known by Matthew's day is guaranteed by the dependence upon it of the *Testament of Abraham*, a pseudepigraphon composed in the first or second century C.E.⁷¹ In view of this, our evangelist may well have formed the notion of a thematic connection between the temptation of Jesus and the traditions about Moses on Nebo.⁷²

(5) In Deuteronomy God shows Moses "all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar." The haggada greatly expanded this vision. *Sipre Deut.* § 357 tells us that Moses was granted a vision of "all the world," and further that he saw "all unto the last day" (cf. *Mek.* on 17:14-16). We shall later have occasion to explore in detail the many texts that turn Moses' survey on Nebo into a universal vision, one embracing all the cosmos and the past as well as the future. Here it suffices to observe that in Matt. 4:8 Jesus also is granted a universal vision: "and he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory."

(6) What Jesus gains from God the Father in Matt. 28:16-20, he earlier, in 4:8-10, refused to accept from the tempter. Thus the kingdoms of the world become his, but only in time, and only from God. It was, according to Philo, similar with Moses:

His office was bestowed upon him by God, the lover of virtue and nobility, as the reward due to him. For, when he gave up the lordship of Egypt, which he held as son to the daughter of the then reigning king, because the sight of the iniquities committed in the land and his own nobility of soul and magnanimity of spirit and inborn hatred of evil led

⁶⁹The angel of death = Satan in *b. B. Bat.* 16a.

⁷⁰Samā'el = "the chief of Satans," Jastrow, s.v.

⁷¹See p. 64, n. 143.

⁷²Again, Davies, *Setting*, 48, n. 15, is misleading, when, following Daube, he stipulates that there is "no suggestion" of a temptation of Moses on Nebo.

him to renounce completely his expected inheritance from the kinfolk of his adoption, He who presides over and takes charge of all things thought good to requite him with the kingship of a nation more populous and mightier... (*Mos.* 1:148-49).

As he abjured the accumulation of lucre, and the wealth whose influence is mighty among men, God rewarded him by giving him instead the greatest and most perfect wealth. That is the wealth of the whole earth and sea and rivers, and of all the other elements and the combinations which they form. For, since God judged him worthy to appear as a partner of His own possessions, He gave into his hands the whole world as a portion well fitted for His heir. Therefore each element obeyed him as its master, changed its natural properties and submitted to his command, and this perhaps is no wonder (*Mos.* 1:155-56).

That Philo's interpretation was based on tradition, or that it became known to others, is probably evidenced by Hebrews, which records something similar, albeit with a Christian twist:

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked for the reward (11:25-26; cf. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* 14:6).

Here too, as in Philo and Matthew 4, earthly kingship is renounced for the sake of a later and more divine reward.

Taken together, the preceding points constitute a forceful argument; and having considered them in the light of the evangelist's work in 4:2, where the redactional creation of parallelism between Jesus and Moses appears manifest, I am satisfied of the probability that the First Evangelist viewed 4:8-10 against the backdrop of Nebo and desired us, his readers, to do the same.

THE MOUNTAIN OF TEACHING (5:1-2)

"In this Sermon [on the Mount], Jesus, who is the new Moses, gives a commentary on the decalogue, the Law of the Covenant, thus giving it its definitive and fullest meanings."⁷³ These words, from an official publication of the Roman Catholic Church, are only a recent example of an old Christian proclivity to associate the speaker of Matthew 5-7

⁷³*Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, March 22, 1986 (Washington, D.C.: O.S. Catholic Conference), 36 (paragraph 62).

with Moses and Sinai. Already in the fourth century Eusebius, as proof of the proposition that "Moses and Jesus our Lord acted in closely similar ways," observed that 5:21-48 can be understood as Jesus' transformation of the Mosaic Torah (*Dem. ev.* 3:2).

The frequent association of Moses with the SM has commonly been coupled with a typological interpretation of Matthew's mountain: "And seeing the crowds he went up on the mountain; and when he sat down his disciples came to him and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying..." (5:1-2). In the nineteenth century Frederic Godet formed this judgment: "The mount where Jesus speaks is as the Sinai of the new covenant."⁷⁴ In the next century, our own, Harald Sahlin put it this way: "The Sermon on the Mount is the New Law given from the mountain by the New Moses."⁷⁵ Dozens of similar sentiments could be lifted from the literature on the the First Gospel, both popular and scholarly.⁷⁶

But it remains to ask: is this traditional interpretation correct, that is, does it correspond to the author's intention? Robert Banks, contending that it does not, has made these observations: (i) the mountain has been moved from Mark 3:13, (ii) "explicit indications of... parallelism are absent," and (iii) *to oros* is here not Sinai but "the place of 'revelation.'"⁷⁷ Such objections, however, are ineffectual and easily countered. Even if Matthew did borrow the mountain from Mark 3:13, the source-critical question is a red herring. We must still ask: why did he insert "the mountain" precisely where he did and replace the "plain" of Q?⁷⁸ Also, why did Matthew add a reference to sitting? The lack of explicitness is no more pertinent, and Banks' complaint hollow; for most of the typologies in the Hebrew Bible are implicit; and why

⁷⁴*Introduction to the New Testament: The Collection of the Four Gospels and the Gospel of St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 131.

⁷⁵"The New Exodus of Salvation according to St. Paul," in *The Root of the Vine*, by A. Fridrichsen et al. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953).

⁷⁶I cite only Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 1628 ("Christ preached this sermon, which is an exposition of the law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the law was given"); Teeple, *Prophet*, 78-82; J. Wilkens, *Der König Israels*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Furche, 1934), 82-83; and Frederick J. Murphy, *The Religious World of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 373-74. See also n. 3 on p. 293.

⁷⁷*Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 28 (Cambridge: University Press, 1975), 231.

⁷⁸See Luke 6:17. Similarly, the objection of Nepper-Christensen, *Matthäusevangelium*, 177, that the historical Jesus must have done much near mountains, is beside the point. Even if Jesus delivered all of Matthew 5-7 on a mountain, the question would remain: why did the evangelist bother to record the fact?

our evangelist could not have utilized the simple and common device of the implicit allusion, a device ubiquitous in ancient Jewish and Christian writings, not to mention all of world literature, is utterly baffling. As for the third remark, which draws an inexplicable dichotomy, it just begs the question.

No more persuasive are the comments of Donaldson. In addition to observing, what is wholly true but wholly irrelevant, that the parallelism could be greater—against what typology could this objection not be launched?—and that it is not explicit—who could ever have said that it was?—he affirms, first, that “wherever Moses typology is present in Matthew, it is not dominant, but is transcended and absorbed by a higher Son-christology,” secondly, that Jesus also sits on a mountain in 15:29-31, which has no Sinai background, and, thirdly, that 5:1-2 goes with 4:23-25, which is bereft of Mosaic motifs.⁷⁹ The first affirmation is problematic not only because one may doubt that Matthew’s Son of God Christology is as absorbent as often assumed (cf. pp. 311-19), but also because the SM, so far as I can see, has no *direct* connection with a Son of God Christology, so how could such absorption take place here? The second claim fails in view of the comments to be made below, on pp. 238-42: there is a Mosaic background to 15:29-31. As for the third point, it presupposes, without explanation, that if 5:1-2 contains Sinai motifs, 4:23-25 should also, to which two rebuttals may be returned: (i) why? and (ii) the assertion that 4:23-25 has no Mosaic associations can be queried, for Jewish tradition took Exod. 19:8 (“And all the people answered and said”) and 19:11 (“The Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people”) to entail that, at the foot of Sinai, none were dumb or blind, and that therefore all the people had been healed; so already *Mek.* on Exod. 19:11 and 20:18.⁸⁰ Consequently it is not impossible that our evangelist prefaced the SM with a healing summary because he wished the circumstances of Jesus’ inaugural address to mimic those of Sinai.

If the usual protests against perceiving a Sinai typology in Matt. 5:1-2 are empty of force, what may be said on the other side?⁸¹

(1) Jesus “goes up” on the mountain. The Greek is, *anebē eis to oros*. Now in the LXX, *anabainō + eis to oros* occurs twenty-four times. Of

⁷⁹Donaldson, *Mountain*, 113.

⁸⁰For later references see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:374; 3:78, 213; 6:176.

⁸¹The following carries forward arguments I first made in “Jesus and Moses (Mt 5:1-2),” *ExpT* 98 (1987):203-205.

these, a full eighteen belong to the Pentateuch, and most refer to Moses.⁸² Surely this statistic strengthens whatever association there might be between Matt. 5:1-2 and Moses’ reception of the Torah.

(2) Jesus “sits” on the mountain. Most commentators remark that the reference to posture emphasizes the speaker’s rôle as teacher, for rabbis and others sat when they taught.⁸³ But there is more, much more. In Deut. 9:9 (a text which might be alluded to in Matt. 4:2), Moses speaks these words: “When I went up the mountain to receive the tables of stone, the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.” The word translated “remained” is *wāʿēšēb*. BDB lists, as the second and third meanings of *yāšab*, “remain” and “dwell” respectively. But the first meaning given for the verb is “sit,” and in *b. Meg.* 21a we find this:

One verse says, “And I sat in the mountain” [Deut. 9:9], and another verse says, “And I stood in the mountain” [Deut. 10:10]. Rab says: He [Moses] stood when he learned and sat while he went over [what he had learned]. R. Hanina said: He was neither sitting nor standing, but stooping. R. Johanan said: “Sitting” here means only “staying,” as it says, “And you stayed in Kadesh many days” [Deut. 1:46]. Rabba said: The easy things [he learned] standing and the hard ones sitting.

Can the tradition that Moses sat on Sinai be traced back to Matthew’s time or before? It is possible that the First Gospel itself holds the proof, in 23:2: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat.” Unfortunately, the precise meaning of “Moses’ seat” (cf. *Pesiq. R. Kah.* 1:7) is uncertain, and it would be unwise to infer anything more than a connection between Moses and sitting.⁸⁴ No more enlightening is *T. Mos.* 12:1-2: “And when he [Moses] had finished speaking these words, Joshua again fell at the feet of Moses. And Moses grasped his hand and raised him into the seat before him.” This, although certainly intriguing, is too cryptic to serve us. But matters are otherwise with

⁸²Exod. 19:3, 12, 13; 24:12, 13, 18; 34:1, 2, 4; Num. 27:12; Deut. 1:24, 41, 43; 5:5; 9:9; 10:1, 3; 32:49.

⁸³Ezek. 8:1; Matt. 23:2; Luke 4:20-27; Acts 16:13; *m. Abot* 1:4; 3:2, 6; *ARN* 6; Eusebius, *H.E.* 5:20. The Hebrew word for “school” (*yēšibā*) means “sitting” (cf. *Ecclus.* 51:23).

⁸⁴I think it too tenuous to equate “Moses’ seat” with “the throne of Torah,” the place where the synagogue elders sat (cf. W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein, *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975], 17, n. 59), and then to connect that with the tradition that God’s throne was on Sinai (see n. 86). For one thing, in the first century “Moses’ seat” was probably only a way of speaking; only later did synagogues have seats for teachers built into them; see I. Renov, “The Seat of Moses,” in *The Synagogue*, ed. J. Gutman (New York: KTAV, 1975), 233-38.

Philo. In *Sacr.* 8 we are informed: "There are still others, whom God has advanced even higher, and has caused them to sit beside himself (*hidruse de plēsion heautou*). Such is Moses to whom He says, 'stand here with Me.'" The text quoted is LXX Deut. 5:31, according to which the lawgiver stood beside God on Sinai. But Philo himself interpreted the verse to mean that Moses *sat* beside God.⁸⁵ Is this not evidence that the tradition found in *b. Meg.* 21a was in currency by the turn of the era?

Another clue turns up in 4 *Ezra* 14. We have already observed how, from beginning to end, this chapter, which recounts a second giving of the Torah, borrows elements from Exodus: there is an extensive typology here (pp. 62-65). It is therefore striking that the posture of those who, like Moses of old, write the divine commandments, is remarked upon: for forty days and forty nights they *sit* (v. 42). The time span certainly belongs to the Moses typology. The sitting, I strongly suspect, does also.

There is still additional evidence to be considered, evidence proving that the picture of Moses sitting on Sinai was familiar in Matthew's Jewish world. The Pentateuch does not disclose much about what Moses did when he was alone on Sinai, a prudent silence which pious imagination could not abide. Thus at some juncture there arose the supposition that, on the mountain, Moses underwent a heavenly ascent, complete with angelic encounters.⁸⁶ The antiquity of this idea, that to go to Sinai was to go to heaven, is, as we shall see, guaranteed by several things. It indisputably predates Matthew's time.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Cf. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:119, n. 215. —Should we compare Revelation's expression, "the throne of God and of the lamb"?

⁸⁶See e.g. *Sipre Deut.* § 306; *ARN A 2*; *b. Sanh.* 38b; *b. Šabb.* 88b-89a; 3 *En.* 15B; *Midr. Ps.* 8:2; *Cant. Rab.* 8:11; *Pesiq. R.* 20:4; 25:3; *Pirqe R. El.* 46. For later ascension texts in which Moses travels through the heavens to behold all see Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, vol. 1 (London: Maggs Brothers, 1925), 125-43 ("The Revelation of Moses A," "The Revelation of Moses B"). In both Targum Onkelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Exod. 24:10, the throne of God appears on Sinai (cf. the so-called *Prayer of Jacob* 8: "You who s[it] upon (the) mountain of h[oly] [S]inaios"; for God's throne on a mountain see *1 En.* 18:8; 24:3; 25:3; *T. Levi* 2:5ff.; 5:1; etc.). For a collection of texts which refer to or tell about Moses' ascension see the notes to Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:109-19. For critical discussion see K.-E. Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott!* (Bern: Herber Lang, 1976), 130-214; J. P. Schulz, "Angelic Opposition to the Ascension of Moses and the Revelation of the Law," *JQR* 61 (1971):282-307. Sometimes Moses himself ascends (on a cloud), sometimes Sinai itself goes to heaven.

⁸⁷Morton Smith, it is important to observe, has demonstrated that 4QMa, frag. II, col. 1, a pre-Christian, Palestinian text, which tells of an individual enthroned in heaven, is not likely to be about the archangel Michael (so M. Baillet); rather, the fragment relates the ascension and deification of a human figure. Unfortunately the individual's identity is unknown. Do we have here fragments of a lost Moses or Enoch pseudodepigraphon? See Morton Smith, "Ascent to the Heavens and Deification in 4QMa," in *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. L. H. Schiffmann (JSPSS 8; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 181-88.

Moses' ascent into heaven was sometimes portrayed as a coronation or enthronement. According to Samaritan legend, Moses "sat on a great throne and wrote what his Lord had taught him" (*Memar Marqah* 4:6).⁸⁸ Rabbinic tradition also presumably knew of this enthronement, as *Tanhuma*, *wā'era*! § 7 intimates (cf. *Exod. Rab.* 8:1; see SB 1:175). According to this, God has shared his glory with others, and in the case of Moses, the man was made "God" (*Exod.* 7:1), crowned with light (*Exod.* 34:29), given the royal sceptre (*Exod.* 4:17), and made "king in Jeshurun" (*Deut.* 33:5). Moses' enthronement on Sinai seems to be presupposed.⁸⁹

The same may be claimed for Philo, *Mos.* 1:155-58, part of which I quoted earlier. This purports that God shared his possessions with his friend Moses, who was "named God and king of the whole nation" when he entered "into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existent things." Here the climb to Sinai's peak is construed as an ascent into heaven, albeit a very Platonic heaven. Compare *Quaest. Exod.* 2:29, where *Exod.* 24:2 ("Moses alone shall come near to God") is interpreted to mean that Moses ascended to God and "became kin to God and truly divine." We are reminded of the rabbinic teaching that Moses was "a man when he ascended on high, a God when he descended below" (*Pesiq. R. Kah.*, supplement 1:9).

In Philo and Exodus Rabbah one has to read a bit between the lines. But it is otherwise with Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9:29.4-6, which preserves material from the lost work of Alexander Polyhistor, quoting the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel:

I [Moses] dreamt there was on the summit of mount Sinai a certain great throne extending up to heaven's cleft, on which there sat a certain noble man wearing a crown and holding a great sceptre in his left hand. With his right hand he beckoned to me, and I stood before the throne. He gave me the sceptre [cf. *Exod. Rab.* 15:15] and told me to sit on the great throne⁹⁰ [cf. Philo, *Sacr.* 8]. He gave me the royal crown [cf. *Exod. Rab.* 15:15] and he himself left the throne. I beheld the entire circled earth both beneath the earth and above the heaven, and a host of stars fell on its knees before me; I numbered them all. They passed before me like a squadron of soldiers. Then, seized with fear, I rose from my sleep.

⁸⁸For additional texts see Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 232-36.

⁸⁹See further Meeks, "Moses as God and King."

⁹⁰*eis thronon megan eipen kathēsthai*. "Although it is never said that the figure seated upon the throne is God, the fact that the throne reaches to the vaults of heaven... makes this probable." So C. R. Holladay, "The Portrait of Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1976 Seminar Papers*, ed. George MacRae (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 449. In view of the parallel texts about Moses' ascension, "probable" is too weak a word.