

Moses

flourished 14th–13th century BC

Hebrew **Moshe** Hebrew prophet, teacher, and leader who, in the 13th century BCE (before the Common Era, or BC), delivered his people from Egyptian slavery. In the [Covenant ceremony at Mt. Sinai](#), where the Ten Commandments were promulgated, he founded the religious community known as Israel. As the interpreter of these Covenant stipulations, he was the organizer of the community's religious and civil traditions. In the [Judaic](#) tradition, he is revered as the greatest prophet and teacher, and Judaism has sometimes loosely been called Mosaism, or the Mosaic faith, in Western Christendom. His influence continues to be felt in the religious life, moral concerns, and social ethics of Western civilization, and therein lies his undying significance.



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## The historical problem

### Historical views of Moses

Few historical figures have engendered such disparate interpretations as has Moses. Early Jewish and Christian traditions considered him the author of the [Torah](#) ("Law," or "Teaching"), also called the Pentateuch ("Five Books"), comprising the first five books of the Bible, and some conservative groups still believe in Mosaic authorship.

Opposing this is the theory of the German scholar [Martin Noth](#), who, while granting that Moses may have had something to do with the preparations for the conquest of Canaan, was very skeptical of the roles attributed to him by tradition. Although recognizing a historical core beneath the Exodus and Sinai traditions, Noth believed that two different groups experienced these events and transmitted the stories independently of each other. He contended that the biblical story tracing the Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan resulted from an editor's weaving separate themes and traditions around a main character Moses, actually an obscure person from Moab.

This article, following the lead of the biblical archaeologist and historian [W.F. Albright](#), presents a point of view that falls somewhere between these two extremes. While the essence of the biblical story (narrated between Exodus 1:8 and Deuteronomy 34:12) is accepted, it is recognized that, during the centuries of oral and written transmission, the account acquired layers of accretions. The reconstruction of the documentary sources of the Pentateuch by literary critics is considered valid, but the sources are viewed as varying versions of one series of events (see [biblical literature : The Torah \[Law, Pentateuch, or Five Books of Moses\]](#)). Other critical methods (studying the biblical text from the standpoint of literary form, oral tradition, style, redaction, and archaeology) are equally valid. The most accurate answer to a critical problem is therefore likely to come from the convergence of various lines of evidence. The aid of critical scholarship notwithstanding, the sources are so sketchy that the man Moses can be portrayed only in broad outline.



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## The date of Moses

According to the biblical account, Moses' parents were from the tribe of Levi, one of the groups in Egypt called Hebrews. Originally the term Hebrew had nothing to do with race or ethnic origin. It derived from Habiru, a variant spelling of [apiru](#) (Apiru), a designation of a class of people who made their living by hiring themselves out for various services. The biblical Hebrews had been in Egypt for generations, but apparently they became a threat, so one of the pharaohs enslaved them. Unfortunately, the personal name of the king is not given, and scholars have disagreed as to his identity and, hence, as to the date of the events of the narrative of Moses. One theory takes literally the statement in I Kings 6:1 that the Exodus from Egypt occurred 480 years before Solomon began building the Temple in Jerusalem. This occurred in the fourth year of his reign, about 960 BCE; therefore, the Exodus would date about 1440 BCE.

This conclusion, however, is at variance with most of the biblical and archaeological evidence. The storage cities [Pit\\_om](#) and Rameses, built for the pharaoh by the Hebrews, were located in the northeastern part of the Egyptian delta, not far from Goshen, the district in which the Hebrews lived. It is implicit in the whole story that the pharaoh's palace and capital were in the area, but [Thutmose\\_III](#) (the pharaoh in 1440) had his capital at Thebes, far to the south, and never conducted major building operations in the delta region. Moreover, Edom and Moab, petty kingdoms in Transjordan that forced Moses to circle east of them, were not yet settled and organized. Finally, as excavations have shown, the destruction of the cities the Hebrews claimed to have captured occurred about 1250, not 1400.

Inasmuch as tradition figured about 12 generations from Moses to Solomon, the reference to 480 years is most likely an editorial comment allowing 40 years for each generation. Since an actual generation was nearer 25 years, the most probable date for the Exodus is about 1290 BCE. If this is true, then the oppressive pharaoh noted in Exodus (1:2–2:23) was [Seti\\_I](#) (reigned 1318–04), and the pharaoh during the Exodus was Ramses II (c. 1304–c. 1237). In short, Moses was probably born in the late 14th century BCE.

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## Years and deeds

### The formative years

One of the measures taken by the Egyptians to restrict the growth of the Hebrews was to order the death of all newborn Hebrew males. According to tradition, Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed (whose other children were Aaron and Miriam), hid him for three months and then set him afloat on the Nile in a reed basket daubed with pitch. The child, found by the pharaoh's daughter while bathing, was reared in the Egyptian court. While many doubt the authenticity of this tradition, the name Moses (Hebrew Moshe) is derived from Egyptian *mose* ("is born") and is found in such names as Thutmose ([The God] Thoth Is Born). Originally, it is inferred, Moses' name was longer, but the deity's name was dropped. This could have happened when Moses returned to his people or possibly even earlier, because the shortened form Mose was very popular at that time.

Moses' years in the court are passed over in silence, but it is evident from his accomplishments later that he had instruction in religious, civil, and military matters. Since Egypt controlled Canaan (Palestine) and part of Syria and had contacts with other nations of the Fertile Crescent, Moses undoubtedly had general knowledge of life in the ancient Near East. During his education he learned somehow that he was a Hebrew, and his sense of concern and curiosity impelled him to visit his people. According to the biblical narrative, Moses lived 120 years and was 80 when he confronted Pharaoh, but there is no indication how old he was when he went to see the Hebrews. Later Jewish and Christian tradition assumed 40-year periods for his stay in the Egyptian court, his sojourn in Midian, and his wilderness wanderings.

Most likely Moses was about 25 when he took the inspection tour among his people. There he saw the oppressive measures under which they laboured. When he found an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew, probably to death, he could control his sense of justice no longer. After checking to make sure that no one was in sight, he killed the tough Egyptian overlord. As a prince in the court, Moses was probably in excellent physical condition, and apparently he knew the latest methods of combat.

The flush of victory pulled Moses back the next day. He had removed one threat to his people and was determined to assist them again. This time, however, he found two Hebrews fighting. After parting them, he questioned the offender in an attempt to mediate the disagreement. Two questions jolted him: "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" The confidence of the self-appointed deliverer turned into fear. One of his own knew his "secret" and soon Pharaoh would, too. Realizing that he would have to flee, he went to Midian (mainly in northwest Arabia).

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## Moses in Midian

In noting the flight to Midian the narrative says nothing of the difficulties involved. Like Sinuhe, the Egyptian court official whose flight in about 1960 BCE was narrated in a famous story, Moses undoubtedly had to filter through the "Wall of the Ruler," a series of forts at the eastern border, approximately where the Suez Canal is now located. From there he made his way southeast through very desolate country. Unfortunately, the Bible does not specify the part of Midian in which Moses resided. Midian proper was east of the Gulf of Aqaba, in the northern section of Hejaz in Arabia, but there is evidence that some of the Midianite clans crossed over the Arabah (the great valley south of the Dead Sea) and settled in the eastern and southern sections of the Sinai Peninsula.

While Moses was resting at a well, according to the biblical account, seven daughters of the Midianite priest [Jethro](#) came to water their father's flocks. Other shepherds arrived and drove the girls away in order to water their own flocks. Again Moses showed his courage and prowess as a warrior because he took on the shepherds (perhaps with the girls' help) and routed them. Moses stayed on with Jethro and eventually married Zipporah, one of the daughters. In assuming the responsibility for Jethro's flocks, Moses roamed the wilderness looking for pasture.

One day at the base of a mountain, his attention was attracted by a flaming bush, but, oddly, it was not consumed. He had seen bushes brilliant with flamelike blossoms, but this phenomenon was different, and so he turned aside to investigate it. Before he could do so, he was warned to come no closer. Then he was ordered to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground.

Regardless of how one interprets the burning bush, the important fact is that Moses was conscious of an encounter with Deity. This God, who claimed to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was calling him to deliver the Hebrews from Egypt. Although on his own he had previously been zealous to help his own people, now that he was being commissioned to deliver them he expressed doubt concerning his qualifications. The underlying reason was probably fear—he had fled from Seti I, and he did not relish confrontation with Ramses II. God reassured Moses that in the future he and the Hebrews would worship at this mountain. Then Moses asked to know the name of the Deity commissioning him. The God of the fathers had been known mostly as El Elyon (God Most High) or El Shaddai (God of the Mountain or Almighty God), but he identified himself to Moses as [Yahweh](#) and gave instructions that he was to be called by his new name from then on. As the causative form of the verb "to be," Yahweh means He Who Creates (Brings Into Being). This revelation enabled Moses to understand the God of the Hebrews as the sovereign Lord over nature and the nations of the world.

Even after further assurances , Moses was still reluctant to accept Yahweh's call ; therefore , he pleaded for release because he was a stammerer . Yahweh acknowledged the defect but promised to help him express himself . Awed by his assignment , Moses made a final desperate plea , “Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person .” Although angry at Moses, Yahweh would not yield . Moses would still be Yahweh 's representative , but his golden -tongued brother [Aaron](#) would be the spokesman . Apparently Moses was ready to play the role of God to Pharaoh providing Aaron would serve as his prophet . He returned to Jethro and requested permission to visit his people in Egypt, but he did not disclose that he had been commissioned by Yahweh .

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## Moses and Pharaoh

Ramses II became king as a teenager and reigned for 67 years. He aspired to defeat the Hittites and control all of Syria, but in the fifth year of his reign Ramses walked into a Hittite trap laid for him at [Kadesh](#), on the Orontes River in Syria. By sheer determination he fought his way out, but in the light of his purpose the battle was an utter failure. Yet Ramses, like all the pharaohs, claimed to be [divine](#); therefore, the defeat had to be interpreted as a marvellous victory in which he alone subdued the Hittites. His wounded ego expressed itself in massive building operations throughout Egypt, and before his reign ended the boast of his success literally filled acres of wall space.

It was probably only a few years after the Kadesh incident that Moses and Aaron confronted Ramses with their demand, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go.'" As a god in human form Ramses was not accustomed to taking orders from lesser gods, let alone an unknown like Yahweh. "Who is the Lord," he inquired, "that I should heed his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go." Thus the stage was set for a long struggle between a distrustful ruler with an outsize ego and a prophet with a new understanding of Yahweh and his power.

Ramses increased the oppression of the Hebrews by the fiendish plan of requiring them to gather the straw binder for the bricks and still produce the same quota each day. Some of the Hebrews rebuffed Moses, and in frustration he asked Yahweh, "Why didst thou ever send me?" Moses' doubt was allayed by Yahweh's promise to take action against Pharaoh. Scholars differ widely concerning the narrative about the plagues. Some claim that three sources have been combined, but more recent scholarship finds only the two traditions. While granting that some of the plagues had a core of historicity, older critics tended to discount the present accounts as fantastic stories with pious decorations. A recent school of research suggests that, notwithstanding some later additions, all the plagues probably had a historical core.

The basic cause, according to one interpretation, was an unusually high flooding of the [Nile](#). The White Nile originates in the lake region of east central Africa, known today as Uganda. The flow is fairly even throughout the year because of consistent equatorial rains. The Blue Nile, on the other hand, originates in the headwaters of the Ethiopian highlands, and it varies from a small stream to a raging torrent. At the time Moses was bargaining with Ramses, excessively heavy summer rains in Ethiopia washed powdery, carmine-red soil from the slopes of the hills. Around the Lake Tana region the blood-red torrent picked up bright red algae (known as flagellates) and their bacteria. Since there were no dams at that time, the Nile flowed blood-red all the way to the Mediterranean. It probably reached the delta region in August.

Thus, this rare natural event, it is held, set in motion a series of conditions that continued until the following March.

During these months Moses used the plagues of the frogs, gnats, mosquitoes, cattle murrain, boils, hail, locusts, and thick darkness to increase the pressure on Ramses. At first the King was adamant. The Hebrews were not the only disgruntled slaves, and, if he agreed to let them go, then other groups would want the same privilege. To protect his building program, he had to suppress the slave rebellion at its outset. Yet he could not discount the effect of the plagues, and grudgingly he began to acknowledge Yahweh's power. As an expedient attempt to restore order, he offered to let the Hebrews sacrifice in Goshen. When this failed, he suggested that they make offerings to Yahweh at the edge of the Egyptian border. Moses, however, insisted on a three-day journey into the wilderness. Pharaoh countered by allowing the Hebrew men to make the journey, but this, too, was rejected. As his final offer Pharaoh agreed to let the people go. He would keep the livestock, however, as the guarantee of their return. Moses spurned the condition, and in anger Pharaoh drove him out. After nine rounds with Pharaoh it appeared that the deliverance of the Hebrews was no nearer, but, in contrast to his earlier periods of doubt and frustration, Moses showed no despair. Apparently he had an inner assurance that Pharaoh would not have the last word.

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## From Goshen to Sinai

Chapters 11–14 of [Exodus](#) comprise an exceedingly complex section, and at times the traditions have contradictory statements. The drama is more blurred than usual, and scholars vary tremendously in their interpretation of the material. One tradition notes that Pharaoh was shaken when death took his son and that he ordered the Hebrews to leave. Another source indicates that Moses used the period of mourning for the first-born son as the occasion for fleeing secretly from the country. In either case, it is clear that Pharaoh finally had his forces pursue the Hebrews. Although tradition interpreted the Hebrew text to claim that about 2,000,000 people left Egypt, interpretation by critical methods reduces the number to 15,000 or so.

The Egyptian army cornered them at the Sea of Reeds (papyrus), which barred their exit to the east. Later Jewish tradition understood the body of water to be the [Red Sea](#), and this erroneous interpretation persists today, even in some of the most recent English translations of the Bible. Scholars disagree as to the precise location of the Reed Sea, but, since papyrus grows only in freshwater, it was most probably a shallow lake in the far northeastern corner of Egypt.

Hemmed in by the Egyptians, the people vented their complaints on Moses. According to one tradition, Moses shared their uneasiness, and he called to Yahweh for help. Another account claims that Moses confidently challenged them to be calm and watch for Yahweh's deliverance. A strong east wind blew all night, creating a dry corridor through the lake and permitting the Hebrews to cross. The pursuing Egyptians were destroyed when the waters returned. The timing of this natural event gave the final answer to Pharaoh's arrogant question, "Who is Yahweh?" Safely on the other side, Moses and his sister Miriam led the people in a victory song of praise to Yahweh (Ex. 15:1–21). The style of the poetry is similar to that of 14th-century Canaanite literature, and there is every reason to believe that the poem virtually preserves the original form of the song, with its refrain, "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."

The route of the Hebrews is contested by scholars, but the most likely possibility is the southern route to Jabal Mūsā, the traditional location of Mt. Sinai (Horeb), in the granite range at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The journey there traversed some very desolate country, and Moses had to contend with bitter complaints about the lack of water and food. Finally, however, he brought the people to "the mountain of God," where Yahweh had appeared to him in the burning bush.



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## The Covenant at Sinai

During the 14th century BCE the Hittites of Asia Minor made a number of treaties with neighbouring rulers who came under their control. The agreement was not between equals, but between the Hittite king (the suzerain) and a subordinate ruler (the vassal). In the prologue the Hittite ruler described himself as "the great king," the one granting the treaty. Then followed a historical survey of relationships between the Hittite suzerain and his vassal. Special attention to the kindnesses shown the underling by the overlord was intended to remind the vassal of his obligation to abide by the treaty stipulations. The basic requirement was an oath of loyalty. Since Egypt was involved with the Hittites in the international politics of the time, Moses probably learned about the Hittite treaty form during his years in the Egyptian court.

The appearance of Yahweh in a terrific storm at Mt. Sinai, narrated in chapters 19 and 20 of Exodus, was a revelatory experience for Moses, just as the burning bush had been. Somehow he realized that the Hittite treaty was an accurate analogy of the relationship between Yahweh and the Hebrews. Yahweh had a claim upon them because he had delivered them. The only proper response to his love and care would be a pledge of obedience to his will. Scholars have tended to date the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue (contained in the revelation at Sinai), after the conquest of Canaan, but there is absolutely nothing in these guidelines to indicate their origin in an agricultural context. More likely they were the stipulations in the covenant ceremony at Mt. Sinai.

Because Yahweh was proclaimed the only true God, one of the first commands was appropriately a ban against all other gods. Authorities have debated whether or not this understanding was interpreted as monotheism. Most certainly it was not the philosophical monotheism of later periods, but it was a practical monotheism in that any gods recognized by other nations were under Yahweh's control. Inasmuch as he had brought them into being and authorized their presence in his council, he was Lord over all gods and nations.

Another early command has been taken to mean a ban on making images of other gods, but originally the prohibition applied to representations of Yahweh himself. Worship in the ancient world was unthinkable without some idol or image; therefore, the uniqueness of Moses' restriction is all the more evident. Yahweh is the unimageable Deity who cannot be represented in material forms. Since Yahweh had revealed the meaning of his name to Moses, it was fitting that the Decalogue should also prohibit any magical or unethical use of his name. Undoubtedly the ideas underlying the other commands came from the religious culture of his day, but they were raised to a significantly higher level because of the holy, righteous character of Yahweh. Moses realized that, if the Covenant people were to have a stable, just society, they would have to

emulate their God. Concern for his creatures would mean respect for them as persons. Murder, adultery, theft, lying, and covetousness would never be legitimate because they lead to chaos and breakdown of the community. Moreover, inasmuch as Yahweh had been concerned to protect the powerless Hebrews in Egypt, they in turn would have to guarantee justice for the orphans, widows, resident aliens, and any other disadvantaged persons under their jurisdiction.

On confirmation of the Covenant, Moses and the people faced the task of living by the stipulations. This called for interpretations of the commands, and so Moses began issuing ordinances for specific situations. Many of these he drew from the case law of his day, but insight as to their selection and application probably came in the "tent of meeting" (a simple sanctuary tent pitched outside the camp), where Yahweh spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Breaches of the Covenant necessitated means of atonement, which in turn meant provision of a priesthood to function at sacrifices and in worship. In short, the rudiments of the whole Hebrew cult, according to tradition, originated at Sinai. At Jethro's suggestion Moses instituted a system of judges and hearings to regulate the civil aspects of the community. It was at Sinai, perhaps, where the people were organized into 12 tribes.

One of Moses' most remarkable characteristics was his concern for the Hebrews, in spite of their stubborn, rebellious ways. When they reverted to worshipping a golden calf, Yahweh was ready to disown them and begin anew with Moses and his descendants. Moses rejected the offer, however, and later, when pleading for the forgiveness of the people, he even asked to have his own name blotted out of Yahweh's book of remembrance if the Lord would not forgive them.

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## From Sinai to Transjordan

After leaving Mt. Sinai, Moses faced increasing resistance and frustration, according to the narrative in the book of [Numbers](#). Apparently his virility did not diminish during these years because he took a Cushite woman as his second wife. But Miriam, with the support of Aaron, opposed the marriage. At Kadesh-barnea the pessimistic majority report of the spies who had been sent out to reconnoitre thwarted Moses' desire to march north and conquer the land of Canaan. When he urged the people to reconsider their action they almost stoned him. But here again, according to tradition, Moses interceded for the people with Yahweh, who threatened to destroy them and raise up another and greater nation. In one instance, however, tradition recalled that Moses' anger overrode his compassion. At Meribah, probably in the area of Kadesh-barnea, Moses addressed the complaining people as rebels and struck a rock twice in anger, whereupon water flowed forth for the thirsty people. He had been angry before in defense of Yahweh's name, honour, and cause, but this time his anger stemmed from utter frustration with his contentious people. Although tradition interpreted this lapse as the reason why Yahweh would not permit Moses to enter Canaan, the remarkable fact is that Moses was able to bear up under such continuous pressure.

In Transjordan the new states of Edom and Moab, vassals of the Midianites, rejected Moses' request for passage. He wisely circled east of them and moved north to conquer Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. Moses permitted some of the tribes to settle in Transjordan, a decision that evoked opposition from the [Moabites](#) and their Midianite overlords. They hired the Syrian diviner [Balaam](#) to put a curse on the Hebrews, but instead he pronounced a blessing. Some scholars interpret this as proof that Balaam was a convert to Yahwism. If this was indeed the case, he must have reverted later on, because the biblical tradition implies that Balaam incited his former employers to weaken the Hebrews by religious seduction. Moses responded to the enmity of the Midianites with a successful holy war against them not long before his death.

As his last official act Moses renewed the [Sinai Covenant](#) with those who had survived the wilderness wanderings. From his camp in the [Jordan Valley](#), Moses climbed to a vantage point on Mt. Pisgah. There he viewed the land of promise. The Hebrews never saw him again, and the circumstances of his death and burial remain shrouded in mystery. Tradition claimed that Yahweh buried him in the valley opposite Beth-peor, the shrine of the people's apostasy.

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## Moses the man

Although time undoubtedly enhanced the portrait of Moses, a basic picture emerges from the sources. Five times the narratives claim that Moses kept written records (Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27–28; Num. 33:2; and Deut. 31:9, 24–26). Even with a generous interpretation of the extent of these writings, they do not amount to more than a fifth of the total Pentateuch; therefore, the traditional claim of Mosaic authorship of the whole Pentateuch is untenable. Moses formulated the Decalogue, mediated the Covenant, and began the process of rendering and codifying supplemental interpretations of the Covenant stipulations. Undoubtedly he kept some records, and they served as the core of the growing corpus of law and tradition. In a general sense, therefore, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible can be described as Mosaic. Without him there would have been no Israel and no collection known as Torah.

Moses was a gifted, well-trained person, but his true greatness was probably due to his personal experience of and relationship with Yahweh. This former stammering murderer understood his preservation and destiny as coming from the grace of a merciful Lord who had given him another chance. Moses had an understanding spirit and a forgiving heart because he knew how much Yahweh had forgiven him. He was truly humble because he recognized that his gifts and strength came from Yahweh.

Because of the uniqueness of his situation, Moses had to function in a number of roles. As [Yahweh's](#) agent in the deliverance of the Hebrews, he was their prophet and leader. As mediator of the Covenant, he was the founder of the community. As interpreter of the Covenant, he was an organizer and legislator. As intercessor for the people, he was their priest. Moses had a special combination of gifts and graces that made it impossible to replace him. Although his successor, Joshua, and the priest Eleazar, the son of Aaron, tried to do so, together they did not measure up to him. Later prophets were great men who spoke out of the spirit that Moses had, but they were not called to function in so many roles. As tradition claimed, he was indeed the greatest of the prophets, and, as history shows, few of mankind's great personalities outrank him in influence.

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and in the larger historical context include William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed. with a new introduction (1957, reissued 1967), pp. 11–17, 200–272, a classic synthesis of Israel's history and religion in the setting of the ancient Middle East, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (1963), pp. 1–23, a popular historical survey, and *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1968, reissued 1990), pp. 64–109, 153–182, a technical analysis contrasting Israelite and Canaanite religion; Elias Auerbach, *Moses* (1975; originally published in German, 1953), a search for the historic Moses; Albrecht Alt, "The God of the Fathers," in his *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (1966, reissued 1989; originally published in German, 1953–59), pp. 1–86, a classic article; Dewey M. Beegle, *Moses, the Servant of Yahweh* (1972), a wide-ranging account both for the general reader and for students; Walter Beyerlin, *Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions* (1965; originally published in German, 1961), a technical study of biblical sources in Exodus 19–20, 24, 32–34; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (1981), a standard work mediating scholarly extremes; Martin Buber, *Moses* (1946, reissued as *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*, 1988), a sympathetic treatment with philosophical emphasis but weak in details of the ancient Middle East; Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Images of Moses* (1982), an examination of literary, artistic, and historical treatments of Moses; George W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness* (1968), a detailed critical study of the murmuring motif in the wilderness traditions; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., "Yahweh and the God of Patriarchs," *Harvard Theological Review*, 55:225–259 (1962), a scholarly treatment of issues raised by Alt's classic article cited above; Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (1969), an excellent popular study; Greta Hort, "The Plagues of Egypt," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 69:84–103 (1957) and 70:48–59 (1958), the historical basis of the plagues; Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (1960, reissued 1972; originally published in Hebrew, 8 vol. in 4, 1938–52), which considers Moses to be the founder of Israel and its religion but doubts details of the historical tradition and neglects much modern archaeological and linguistic research; George E. Mendenhall, "The Mask of Yahweh," in his *The Tenth Generation: Essays in Early Biblical History* (1972); Murray Lee Newmann, *The People of the Covenant* (1962), pp. 13–101, a popular study of Israel from Moses to the monarchy; Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (1960; originally published in German, 1950), pp. 110–138, a basic study but with radical treatment of Hebrew history prior to the conquest, and *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (1972, reprinted 1981; originally published in German, 1948), pp. 156–188, a technical study of the biblical sources in the Pentateuch that doubts its accuracy; Harold H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua* (1950, reissued 1964), an attempt to relate the data of biblical traditions to the findings of archaeology; Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (1979), a study of how Christology has influenced the interpretation of Moses; Johann J. Stamm and M.E. Andrew, *The Ten*

Commandments in Recent Research , 2nd ed. rev. and enlarged (1967; originally published in German, 1958); Aaron Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father : Moses as a Political Leader* (1984), exploring Moses' role as leader; Dorothy F. Zeligs, *Moses : A Psychodynamic Study* (1986), interpreting the influence of Moses' important relationships on his activity as a religious figure; and George W. Coats, *Moses : Heroic Man , Man of God* (1988), a discussion of the life of Moses. [Dewey M. Beegle](#)

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