MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

By Sigmund Freud (© 1939) (Excerpted for discussion at our “Freud Jahrzeit,” on November 23, 2014. Enjoy this challenging, sometimes radical material. Hang on tight for an ideological roller coaster ride!)

To deny a people the man it calls its greatest son is not to be undertaken lightly, especially by one of that people.

Moses, the man, liberator of his people, who gave them religion and laws, belonged to an age so remote that the threshold question arises, if he was historical or legendary. If he lived, it was in the thirteenth or fourteenth century B.C.; our only word of him is in the Holy Books and traditions of the Jews. Most historians think that Moses did live and the exodus he led from Egypt actually took place. It is reasonable that without this belief, the history of the Jews would be incomprehensible.

His name, written “Moshe” in Hebrew, first attracts our interest. Where does it come from? What does it mean? In Exodus, Chapter 11, we learn that the Egyptian princess who saved him from the waters of the Nile named him, explaining etymologically: because I drew him out of the water. “The biblical meaning of the name "He that was drawn out of the water," per an author of the Judisches Lexikon, is folk etymology; the active Hebrew form of the name (Moshe at best means “the drawer out”) cannot be reconciled with this solution.” Giving an Egyptian princess knowledge of Hebrew etymology is silly, and the water from which the child was drawn was probably not the Nile.

Many have suggested that the name Moses is Egyptian. I shall quote a passage from a recent work by Breasted, an author, whose History of Egypt is regarded as authoritative. "It is important... that his name, Moses, was Egyptian. It is simply the Egyptian word 'mose' meaning 'child' and is an abridgement of a fuller form of such names as 'Amen-mose' meaning 'Amon-a-child’ or 'Ptah-mose,' meaning ‘Ptah-a-child,’ these forms themselves being likewise abbreviations for the complete form ‘Amon-(has given)-a-child’ or ‘Ptah-(has given)-a-child.’ The abbreviation ‘child’ early became a convenient rapid form for the cumbrous full name, and the name Mose, ‘child,’ is not uncommon on Egyptian monuments. The father of Moses without doubt prefixed

1 Judisches Lexikon, founded by Herlitz und Kirschner, Bd. IV, 1930, Jüdischer Verlag, Berlin.
to his son’s name that of an Egyptian god like Amon or Ptah, and this divine name was gradually lost, till the boy was called ‘Mose.’ (The final s is an addition drawn from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is not in the Hebrew..., 'mosheh').” I am a little surprised that Breasted passed over analogous “god-based” names of Egyptian kings, such as Ah-mose, Thut-mose (Thothmes) and Ra-mose (Ramses).

Someone will have drawn the conclusion that the bearer of an Egyptian name was an Egyptian. Modernly, we are not afraid to draw such conclusions. We are not surprised that the poet Chamisso was of French extraction, Napoleon Buonaparte Italian, and Benjamin Disraeli an Italian Jew as his name would indicate. Such an inference from name to the race should be conclusive in respect to early times. Yet no historian has drawn this conclusion with Moses, not even one of those who, like Breasted, are ready to suppose that Moses "was cognizant of all the wisdom of the Egyptians."³

The recognition of the Egyptian name was never a factor in judging the origin of the man Moses. New thought must be welcome.

In 1909 Otto Rank, then under my influence, published a book entitled: The Myth of the Hero’s Birth.⁴ It posits "that almost all important civilized peoples have early on woven myths around and glorified in poetry their heroes, mythical kings and princes, founders of religions, of dynasties, empires and cities in short their national heroes. Especially the history of their birth and of their early years is furnished with fantastic traits; the amazing similarity, nay, literal identity, of those tales, even if they refer to different, completely independent peoples, sometimes geographically far removed from one another, is well known, and has struck many an investigator." After Rank, we rebuild an "average myth," and get this formula:

"The hero is the son of parents of the highest station, most often a king.

"His conception is fraught with parental difficulties, such as abstinence or temporary sterility; or his parents have intercourse in secret because of prohibitions or outside obstacles. During the pregnancy or before, an oracle or dream

⁴ Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde, Fr. Deuticke, Wien. Heft 5. I do not depreciate the value of Rank's thinking.
warns the father that the child’s birth is dangerous to him. "Therefore, the father (or his representative) orders that the new-born be killed or exposed to extreme dangers; generally the babe is set adrift in a casket.

"The child is saved by animals or poor people, like shepherds, and suckled by a female animal or a woman of humble birth.

"As an adult, after many adventures he rediscovers his noble parents, avenges himself on his father and, praised by his people, attains fame and greatness." The earliest historical person to whom this myth attaches is Sargon of Agade, the founder of Babylon about 2800 B.C. Because it interests us here we reproduce the account ascribed to him:

"I am Sargon, the mighty, King of Agade. My mother was a Vestal; I knew my father not; my father's brother dwelt in the mountains. In my town, Azupirani, on the banks of Euphrates, my mother, the Vestal, conceived me. She bore me secretly. She laid me in a basket of sedge, closed the opening with pitch and lowered me into the river. The stream did not drown me, but carried me to Akki, the drawer of water, who, in the goodness of his heart lifted me out of the water. Akki, the drawer of water, brought me up as his son. Akki, the drawer of water, made me his gardener. While I was a gardener, Ishtar fell in love with me. I became king and for forty-five years I reigned."

The best known names beginning with Sargon of Agade, are Moses, Cyrus and Romulus. Rank tells of many other heroes to whom the same youthful story attaches in whole or in part: Oedipus, Kama, Paris, Telephos, Perseus, Heracles, Gilgamesh, Amphion, Zethos etc.

A hero stands up manfully against his father and after struggling, overcomes him. This myth traces the struggle back to the dawn of the hero's life, by having him born against his father's will and saved despite his father's evil intentions. The exposure in the basket is clearly a symbolic representation of birth; the basket is the womb, the stream, the water at birth. In dream, the child’s relation to the parents is represented by rescue from the water. When the imagination of a people attaches this myth to a hero, it is to indicate his recognition as a hero, by conforming his life to the mythical plan. The inner source of the myth is the "family romance" of the child, where the son reacts to the change in his relationship to his parents, especially to his father. The child's early years are governed by grandiose estimations of his
father; kings and queens in a dream or fairy tale always represent the parents. Later, under the influence of rivalry and real disappointments, a critical attitude towards the father sets in. Both families of the myth, noble and humble, are family images as they appear to the child in successive periods of his life.

These observations explain the similarity and the far-flung repetition of the birth of the hero myth. Interestingly, the myth of Moses' birth and exposure stands apart; in one essential point it even contradicts the others.

There are two families between which the child's fate is cast. Typically the first family, into which the child is born, is a noble one; the second, where the child grows up, is a humble one. Only in Oedipus is this difference obscured. The baby, which has been exposed by one kingly family, is brought up by another royal pair. It can hardly be an accident that in this example there is in the myth a glimmer of the original identity of the two families. We know the social contrast of the two families meant to stress the heroic nature of a great man, and gives the myth a second and especially significant function with historical personages. Cyrus can become an alien conqueror for the Medes; yet in the exposure myth he is the grandson of their king. Similarly, Romulus, if he ever lived, must have been an unknown adventurer, an upstart; yet the myth makes him descendant and heir to the royal house of Alba Longa.

Moses is a different case. His first family is modest. He is the child of Levites. His Hebrew family is replaced by the Egyptian Royal House. The princess raises him as her own son. This divergence strikes many researchers as strange. E. Meyer and his followers suppose the original form of the myth was different. Pharaoh had been warned in a prophetic dream\(^5\) that his daughter's son would be a danger to him and his kingdom. Therefore he has the child set out on the Nile shortly after his birth. The child is saved by Jewish people and brought up as their own. National motives, in Rank's terms,\(^6\) transformed the myth into the form now known by us.

The Egyptians had no motive to glorify Moses; he was not their hero. So the legend must have originated among the Jewish people. But it was unfitted to their purposes; what good is a legend that makes one's own hero into an alien?

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\(^5\) Also mentioned in Flavius Josephus's narration.

\(^6\) op. cit., p. 80, footnote.
Today’s Moses myth lags sadly behind its secret motives. If Moses is not a royal, and the legend can’t make him into a hero; if he stays a Jew, his status is unchanged. Yet one small part of the myth remains effective: the baby survived in spite of all forces to the contrary. This feature is repeated in the history of Jesus, where King Herod assumes the role of Pharaoh. So we have a right to assume that in a later and rather clumsy treatment of the legendary material, the adapter equipped his hero Moses with certain features common to the classical exposure myths of a hero, and yet unsuited to Moses because of special circumstances.

Yet, there is another more successful way of approaching the exposure myth.

Let us return to the two families. Psychoanalytically they are identical. Mythically they are distinguished as the noble and the humble family. Attached to an historical person, there is, however, a third level -- reality. One family is the real one, into which the great man was really born, and in which he was brought up. The other is a fiction. Generally, the real family is the humble one, the noble family fictitious. The first family, which exposes the babe to danger, is in all comparable cases the fictitious one; the second family, by which the hero is adopted and in which he grows up, is his real one. If we courageously accept this statement as a truth to which the Moses legend is subject, then we suddenly see our way.

Moses is an Egyptian of noble origin whom the myth transforms into a Jew. And that is our conclusion! The exposure in the water is in the right place; to fit the new conclusion, the intention had to be changed, not without violence. From a means of getting rid of the child it becomes a means of its salvation.

The divergence of the Moses legend from all others of its kind might be traced back to a special feature in the story of Moses’ life. Whereas in all other cases the hero rises above his humble beginnings as his life progresses, the heroic life of the man Moses is a descent from his eminence to the level of the children of Israel.

The first argument, his name, is not decisive. The analysis of

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7 Thus E. Meyer in Die Mosessagen und die Leviten, Berliner Sitzber. 1905: "The name Mose is probably the name Pinchas in the priest dynasty of Silo . . . without a doubt Egyptian. This does not prove however that these dynasties were of Egyptian origin, but it proves that they had
the exposure myth is not faring any better. A possible objection is that the origin and transformation of legends are too obscure to allow such a conclusion as the preceding one, and that all efforts to extract the historical truth must be doomed to failure in face of the incoherence and contradictions clustering around the heroic person of Moses and the unmistakable signs of tendentious distortion and stratification accumulated through many centuries. I do not share this negative attitude, but I cannot confute it.

If we make certain assumptions Moses’ guiding motives in the unusual undertaking can be understood; in close connection, the possible motivation of numerous characteristics and peculiarities of the legislation and religion he gave the Jewish people can be seen. It stimulates ideas of some moment concerning the origin of monotheistic religion in general. But these important positions cannot be based on psychological probabilities alone. If one were to accept as fact that Moses was Egyptian, we would want another fixed point to protect the many emerging possibilities from the reproach that they are products of imagination and are removed from reality. Therefore let us now suppress any inferences that might follow from our view that Moses was an Egyptian.

The People of Israel. If we reduce the severe demands made on an historical and psychological investigation, it might be possible to clear up some important problems, which force themselves again on our observation. We know that of all the ancient tribes in the Mediterranean basin, only the Jewish people probably still exists in name and in nature. With unequalled resistance it has defied misfortune and maltreatment, developed a special character and earned the hearty dislike of all other peoples. Where this resistance of the Jew originates, and how it is connected with his fate, we want to understand better.

We start from the character trait of the Jews, which governs their relationship to other people. Doubtless they have a very good opinion of themselves, think themselves nobler, on a higher level, superior to the others from whom they are also separated relations with Egypt." (p. 651.) One may well ask what kind of relations one is to imagine.
by many of their customs. In this they are animated by a special trust in life, bestowed by the secret possession of a precious gift of a kind of optimism, which religious people call "trust in God."

Believing they were God's chosen people, they feel especially near to Him, and this is what makes them proud and confident. According to trustworthy accounts in Hellenistic times they behaved as they do today. As the favorite of the dreaded father, one need not be surprised that the other brothers and sisters are jealous. This jealousy can lead to consequences is exquisitely shown in the Jewish legend of Joseph and his brothers. Later world history seemed to justify this Jewish arrogance, for when God later consented to send a Messiah, He again chose Him from among the Jewish people. The other peoples then could say: "Yes, they were right; they are God's chosen people." Instead of that, salvation through Jesus Christ brought on the Jews nothing but a stronger hatred, while the Jews themselves derived no advantage from this proof of favor, because they do not recognize a Redeemer.

Yet our previous remarks allow us to say that the man Moses stamped the Jewish people with this trait. He enhanced their self-confidence by assuring them that they were chosen of God; he declared them holy, and gave them the duty to remain apart. The self-confidence of the Jews became, through Moses, anchored in their religious belief. By the particularly close relationship to their God they acquired a part of His grandeur. One man, Moses, created the Jews. To him they owe their tenacity in supporting life; and to him they also owe much of the hostility, which they met and are meeting still.

3. The Great Man

How can one single man can develop the extraordinary effectiveness to create out of indifferent individuals and families one people, stamp them with a definite character and determine their fate in millenia to come? Is not such an assumption a step back to the kind of thought that produced creation myths and hero worship, to the time when historical writing exhausted itself with dates and life histories of great mean, kings or conquerors? In modern times we tend rather to

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8 The insult frequently hurled at them in ancient times that they were lepers (cf. Manetho) must be read as a projection: "They keep apart from us as if we were lepers."
trace back the events of human history to more hidden, general and impersonal factors, like the forcible influence of the economy, changes in food supply, progress using materials and tools, migrations caused by population increase and climate change. In these factors individuals play no other part than exponents or representatives of mass tendencies.

Our need for cause and effect is satisfied when we find one demonstrable cause for an effect. In nature this is hardly so; every event seems over-determined and is the effect of converging causes. Intimidated by countless complications of events, research plays one chain of events against another, stipulates contrasts that do not exist and creates them by tearing apart more complex relations.  

If, investigating one particular case demonstrates the inordinate influence of one human personality, conscience need not reproach us that by accepting this conclusion we take a swipe at the significance of the general, but impersonal factors. In point of fact there is room for both. Generating monotheism, we cannot point to any other external factor than those we have mentioned, that the development has to do with the establishing of closer connections among different nations and the existence of a great empire. We will hold a seat at the table for "the great man" in the chain, or network, of determining causes. Beauty and muscular strength, although we envy them, do not establish a claim to greatness. When we say, Goethe, Leonardo da Vinci and Beethoven were great men, something beyond the admiration of their grandiose creations must move us. If it were not for such examples one might think that the title "great man" is reserved for men of action: conquerors, generals and rulers; that it is intended as a recognition of the greatness of their deeds and the strength that emanated from them. Yet success is not a distinguishing feature of greatness, if one thinks of the vast number of great men who were not successful, and perished after being dogged by tragedy.

So it is probably not worthwhile to search for a real definition of the concept: a great man. We should simply stay close to the

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9 I would guard myself, however, against a possible misunderstanding. I do not mean to say that the world is so complicated that every assertion must hit the truth somewhere. No, our thinking has preserved the liberty of inventing dependencies and connections that have no equivalent in reality. It obviously prizes this gift very highly, since it makes such ample use of it inside as well as outside of science.
original meaning of the word "greatness." More important than the nature of the great man in arousing our interest, is the question by virtue of what qualities does he influence his contemporaries. So let's shorten this investigation.

Let's agree that the great man influences contemporaries in two ways: through his personality, and through his ideas. He may lay stress on an old group of wishes of the masses, define a new purpose for their wishes, or lure them by other means. Sometimes and this is surely primitive, his personality alone exerts an influence and his ideas play a subordinate role. Why the great man rises to significance gives us no doubt. We all long for the father of our childhood days, for the father whom the hero of legend boasts of having overcome. All the features with which we furnish the great man are traits of the father, and in that similarity lies the essence which so far has eluded us -- of the great man.

His decisiveness, strength of will, forcefulness in deeds, belong to his picture as father; above all, however, stands the self-reliance and independence of the great man: his conviction that he is doing the right thing, even when it turns into ruthlessness.

A tremendous father image in the person of Moses stooped to tell the poor Jewish laborers that they were his dear children. And the concept of a unique, eternal, omnipotent God could not have been less overwhelming for them; He who thought them worthy to bond with Him, promised to take care of them, if only they remained faithful to His worship. Probably they found it hard to separate the image of Moses from that of God, and their instinct was right insofar as Moses might have incorporated his own irascibility and implacability into the character of his God. When they killed this great man, they only repeated an evil deed, which in primeval times was a law directed against the divine king, which derives from a still older prototype.¹⁰

When, the figure of the great man has grown into a divine one, it is time to remember that the father also was once a child. The great religious idea for which the man Moses stood was not his own; he had taken it over from his King, Ikhnaton, whose greatness as a founder of religion is proved without a doubt. Perhaps he followed intimations, which through his foreign mother or by other ways had reached him from the near or the far East.

We cannot trace this network further. If our argument, however, is correct so far, the idea of monotheism must have returned in the fashion of a boomerang into the country of its origin. It appears fruitless to attempt to ascertain what merit in a new idea attaches to an individual. Many have taken part in its development and made contributions to it. Yet it would be wrong to break off the chain of causation with Moses, and to neglect what his successors, the Jewish prophets, achieved. Monotheism did not take root in Egypt. It might also have failed later, in Israel, after the people threw off the pretentious religion imposed on them. From the mass of Jewish people, however, there arose again and again men who lent new color to a fading tradition, renewed the threats and demands of Moses, and did not rest until the lost cause was once more regained. In the constant toil of centuries, and through two great reforms -- the one before, the other after the Babylonian exile, there took place the change of the popular God Jahve into the God whose worship Moses had forced upon the Jews. And it is the proof of a special psychic fitness in the mass, which had become the Jewish people, that it could bring forth so many who were ready to take upon themselves the burden of the Mosaic religion for the reward of believing that their people was chosen, and perhaps for other benefits of a similar order.

4. The Progress in Spirituality

To achieve lasting psychic effects in a people it is not sufficient to assure them that they were singled out by God. This assurance must be proved if they are to attach belief and draw conclusions from that belief. In the religion of Moses the exodus served as that proof: God, or Moses in his name, did not tire of citing this proof of favor. The Passover feast was established to keep this event in mind, or rather an old feast was endowed with this memory. Yet it was only a memory. The exodus belonged to a dim past. At the time the signs of God's favor were meager enough; the fate of the people of Israel would seem to indicate his disfavor. Primitive peoples used to punish of depose their gods if they did not grant them victory, fortune and comfort. Kings were often treated similarly to gods; the ancient identity of king and god, i.e. their common origin, thus became manifest. Modern people also are in the habit of getting rid of their monarchs if the splendor of their reign is dulled by defeats, loss of land or money. Why the people of Israel, however, stuck by their God all the more devotedly, the worse they were treated by Him, is a question, which we must leave
open for the moment.

It may stimulate us to ask if the religion of Moses gave the people anything other than an increase in self-confidence by assurances that they were "chosen." The new religion also gave the Jews a much more grandiose idea of their God, or expressed more soberly, the idea of an august God. Whoever believed in this God participated in his greatness, so to speak, and might feel uplifted. This may not be obvious to unbelievers, but it is illustrated by the example of the high confidence a Briton feels in a foreign land. The Briton counts on his Government to send a warship if a hair of his head is touched, and also counts on the rebels knowing this very well, whereas the small state does not even own a warship. The same may be true of the great God, and since one would hardly presume to assist God in his conduct of the world, pride in the greatness of God goes together with that of being "chosen."

One precept of Mosaic religion is the prohibition against making an image of God, and the compulsion to worship an invisible God, without a name or face. The prohibition was a new precaution against magic malpractice. The senses are subordinated to an idea; it is a triumph of spirituality over the senses; a precise renunciation\(^\text{11}\) of instinct with all its psychologically necessary consequences.

In children, adult neurotics and primitive people, we find the mental phenomenon called belief in the "omnipotence of thoughts." Magic, the forerunner of science, is founded on that premise. Magic incantations are at home here, as is the conviction of the power connected with the knowledge of, and pronouncing, a name. The new realm of spirituality where concepts, memories, and deductions became decisively important, in contrast to the lower psychical activity which concerned itself with the immediate perceptions of the sense organs, was one of the most important stages on the way to becoming human.

The patriarch replaced the matriarch. This was a revolution in existing law. An echo of this revolt can still be heard, I think, in the Oresteia of Aeschylus. Turning from the mother to the father, however, signifies above all, a victory of spirituality over the senses, i.e., maternity is proved by the senses, but paternity is based on a deduction and a premise -- a

\(^{11}\text{Renunciation (Triebverzicht) is an abbreviation for "renouncing the satisfaction of an instinctual urge."}
step charged with serious consequences.

Man was thus faced with the acceptance of "spiritual" forces, forces which cannot be perceived by the senses, particularly not by sight, which have undoubted, extremely strong, effects. The movement of the air provided the image of spirituality; the spirit borrows its name from the breath of wind (animus, spiritus; Hebrew: ruach = smoke). The idea of the soul was thus born as spirituality in the individual. Observation found the breath of air echoed in the human breath, which ceases at death; today we still talk of a dying man “breathing his last.” The realm of spirits had opened for man, and he was ready to endow everything real, with the soul he had found in himself.

Through Mosaic prohibition, God was raised to a higher level of spirituality; the door was opened to further changes in the idea of God of which we shall speak later. All progress in spirituality results in increasing self-confidence, in making people proud, so they feel superior to those who have remained in the bondage of the senses. Moses gave the Jews the proud feeling of being God's chosen people; by de-materializing God a new, valuable gift was made to the secret treasure of the people. The Jews preserved their inclination towards spiritual interests. The political misfortune of the nation taught them to appreciate the only possession they kept, their written records, at its true value. Immediately after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Titus, Rabbi Jochanaan ben Sakkai asked for permission to open at Yabneh the first school for the study of the Torah. From now on it was the Holy Book, and the study of it, that kept the scattered people together.

This whole development, so characteristic of the Jews, had been initiated by Moses' prohibition against worshipping God in a visible form. The preference, which through two thousand years the Jews have given to spiritual endeavor has, of course, had its effect; it has helped to build a dam against brutality and the inclination to violence, which are usually found where athletic development becomes the ideal of the people. In this conflict, the decision was made in favor of what is culturally more important.

5. Renunciation versus Gratification

It is not obvious why progress in spirituality, subordinating the senses, should raise the self-confidence of a person as well as of a nation. For an explanation we turn to an analogous case in the psychology of the individual, which we can easily
understand. When the Id makes an instinctual demand of an erotic or aggressive nature on a human being, the most simple and natural response for the Ego, which governs the apparatus for thinking and muscle excitement, is to satisfy this by an action. This satisfaction of the instinct is felt as pleasure by the Ego, just as not satisfying this instinct would become a source of discomfort. Now, the Ego fails to satisfy the instinct because of external obstacles, namely, when it realizes that the action in question would bring in its course serious danger to the Ego. Such a refraining from satisfaction, an "instinctual renunciation" because of external obstacles, in obedience to the reality principle, is never pleasurable. This instinctual renunciation may also be forced on us, by other motives, which we rightly call inner ones. In the course of individual development a part of the inhibiting forces in the outer world becomes internalized; a standard is created in the Ego, which opposes the other faculties by observation, criticism and prohibition. We call this new standard the superego. From now on the Ego, before undertaking to satisfy the instincts, has to consider not only the dangers of the outer world, but also the objections of the super-ego, and has therefore more occasion to refrain from satisfying the instinct, which brings, besides the inevitable pain, a gain in pleasure to the Ego, a substitute satisfaction. The Ego feels uplifted; it is proud of the renunciation as a valuable achievement. The super-ego is the successor and representative of the parents (and educator); it perpetuates their functions almost without a change. It keeps the Ego in lasting dependence, and exercises a steady pressure. When the Ego has made the sacrifice to the super-ego of renouncing an instinctual satisfaction, it expects to be rewarded by being loved all the more. The consciousness of deserving this love is felt as pride. A feeling of security and satisfaction results if out of love of one's parents one achieves an instinctual renunciation. This good feeling could acquire the peculiar narcissistic character of pride only after the authority itself had become a part of the Ego.

How does this explanation of gaining satisfaction through renunciation help us understand the processes we wish to study, namely, the increase of self-confidence that accompanies progress in spirituality? Apparently it helps very little, for the circumstances here are very different. There is no instinctual renunciation, and there is no second person or higher standard for whose benefit the sacrifice is made. The second statement will soon appear doubtful. One might say: the great man is the authority for whose sake the effort is made, and since the great man achieves this because he is a father
substitute we need not be surprised if he is allotted the role of super-ego in mass psychology. This would, therefore, hold good for the man Moses in his relationship to the Jewish people. In other points, however, there would seem to be no proper analogy. The progress in spirituality consists in deciding against the direct sense perception in favor of memories, reflection and deduction. An example of this would be the decision that paternity is more important than maternity, although the former cannot be proved by the senses as the latter can. This is why the child has to have the father's name and inherit after him. Another example would be: our God is the greatest and mightiest, although He is invisible like the wind and the soul. During the development of mankind the world of the senses becomes gradually mastered by spirituality, and man feels proud and uplifted by each such step in progress. Later it happens that spirituality itself is overpowered by the altogether mysterious emotional phenomenon of belief. This is the famous credo quia absurdum, and whoever has compassed this, regards it as the highest achievement. Perhaps something else is common to all these psychological situations. Perhaps man declares simply that higher achievement is more difficult to attain, and his pride in it is only narcissism augmented by his consciousness of having overcome a difficulty.

The religion that began with the prohibition against making an image of its God has developed in the course of centuries more and more into a religion of instinctual renunciation. Not that it demands sexual abstinence; it is content with a considerable restriction of sexual freedom. God, however, becomes completely withdrawn from sexuality and raised to an ideal of ethical perfection. Ethics, however, means restriction of instinctual gratification. The Prophets did not tire of maintaining that God demands nothing else from his people than a just and virtuous life. And even the exhortation to believe in God seems to recede in comparison with serious ethical demands.

Totemism, the first form of religion of which we know, contains as an indispensable part of its system a number of laws and prohibitions, which plainly mean nothing else but instinctual renunciation. There is the worship of the Totem, which contains the prohibition against killing or harming it; exogamy, that is to say, the renunciation of the passionately desired mothers and sisters of the horde; the granting of equal rights for all members of the brother horde, i.e. the forbidding of the impulse to settle rivalry by brute force. In these rules we have to discern the first beginnings of a moral and social order. We see that here two different motivations come into play. The first
two prohibitions work in the direction of what the murdered father would have wished; they, so to speak, perpetuate his will. The third law, the one giving equal rights to the brothers, ignores the father's wishes. Its sense lies in the need of preserving permanently the new order, which was established after the death of the father. Otherwise reversion to the former state would have been inevitable. Here social laws became separated from others, which as we might say originated directly from a religious context.

In the abbreviated development of the human individual the most important events of that process are echoed. Here also it is the parents' authority essentially that of the all-powerful father who wields the power of punishment that demands instinctual renunciation on the part of the child and determines what is allowed and what is forbidden. What the child calls "fun" or "naughty" becomes later, when society and super-ego take the place of the parents, "good," in the sense of moral, or "evil." But it is still instinctual renunciation through the presence of the authority, which replaced and augmented that of the father.

Our insight into these problems becomes further deepened when we investigate the strange conception of sanctity. On the one hand the connection between the sacred and the religious is unmistakable; it is so stressed as to be obvious. Everything connected with religion is sacred; it is the very core of sanctity. On the other hand our judgment is disturbed by the numerous attempts to lay claim to the character of holiness by so many other things, persons, institutions and procedures that have little to do with religion. The sacred is obviously something that must not be touched. A sacred prohibition has a very strong affective note, but has no rational motivation. Why should it be such an especially hideous crime to commit incest with a daughter or sister, more so than any other sexual relation? Seeking an explanation, we shall surely be told that all our feelings cry out against such a crime. The prohibition is so self-evident, that we do not know how to explain it.

What is reputed to offend our feelings was a sacred tradition in the ruling families of the Ancient Egyptians and other peoples. Each Pharaoh found his first and foremost wife in his sister, and the successors of the Pharaohs, the Greek Ptolemys, did not hesitate to follow this example. Incest in this case between brother and sister was a prerogative reserved for kings who represented the gods on earth. The world of the Greek and Germanic myths also took no exception to the incestuous relationship. The anxious concern for "family" in our higher
nobility is a remnant of that privilege, and we see, as a consequence of inbreeding, the crowned heads of Europe today consist of one family.

To point to the incest of gods, kings and heroes helps to dispose of another attempt at explanation, namely, the one that would explain the horror of incest biologically and reduce it to an instinctive knowledge of the harmfulness of inbreeding. It is not even certain, however, that there lies any danger in inbreeding; let alone that primitive races recognized it and guarded against it.

Our reconstruction of pre-history forces another explanation on us. The law of Exogamy, or negatively expressed, the fear of incest, was the will of the father and continued after his murder. Hence the strength of its affect and the impossibility of a rational motivation: in short its sacredness. What is sacred was originally nothing but the perpetuated will of the primeval father. This would also explain the ambivalence of the hitherto inexplicable word, expressing the idea of sacredness. Ambivalence governs the relationship to the father. "Sacer" means "sacred," "blessed," but also "accursed," "worthy of disgust," ("auri sacra fames").

We hear that according to "the will of the Father," Moses "sanctified" his people by introducing the custom of circumcision, and we now understand the deep-lying meaning of this pretension. Circumcision is the symbolical substitute of castration, a punishment, which the primeval father dealt his sons long ago out of absolute power; and whosoever accepted this symbol was ready to submit to the father's will, at the cost of a painful sacrifice.

Back to ethics: in conclusion, a part of its precepts is explained rationally by the necessity to mark off the rights of the community to the individual, those of the individual to the community, and those of individuals to one another. What appears mysterious, grandiose and mystically self-evident, owes its character and its origin to the will of the father.

6. The Truth in Religion

We of little belief, envy those who believe in the existence of a Supreme Power, for whom the world holds no problems because He has created all its institutions! How comprehensive, exhaustive and final are the doctrines of the believers compared with the
labored, poor and patchy attempts at explanation, which are the best we can produce. The Divine Spirit, or ethical perfection, has planted within the soul of men the knowledge and the urge to strive toward it. They feel instinctively the high and noble and the low and mean. The quality of their emotional life can be measured by their distance from the ideal life. They have high gratification when they are in perihelion, so to speak, nearer to it; and they are punished by severe distress when in aphelion they are farther away from it. All this is simple and unshakable. As if the world had not enough problems, we are confronted with the task of finding out how those who have faith in a Divine Being could have acquired it, and whence this belief acquires the enormous power that overpowers Reason and Science.\(^\text{12}\)

We set out to explain the peculiar character of the Jewish people, which in all probability is what has enabled it to survive until today. The man Moses created their character by giving them a religion, which heightened their self-confidence to such a degree, that they believed they were superior to all other peoples. They survived by keeping aloof from the others. Admixture of blood made little difference, since what kept them together was something ideal their common intellectual and emotional values. The Mosaic religion had this effect because (1) it allowed the people to share in the grandeur of its new conception of God, (2) maintained that the people had been "chosen" by this great God and was destined to enjoy the proofs of his special favor, and (3) because it forced upon the people a progress in spirituality which further opened the way to respect for intellectual work and instinctual renunciation.

This is our conclusion, but I can’t help feeling that it is not altogether agreeable. The cause does not accord with the result. The fact we are trying to explain seems to be unequal to our explanation. Perhaps all our investigations have discovered not the whole motivation, but only a superficial layer, and behind that lies hidden another very significant component! Considering how very complicated causation in life or history is, we should be prepared for something like that.

The path to that deeper motivation starts at a certain place in our discussion. Moses’ religion did not achieve its effect immediately, but indirectly. It took many centuries; that goes without saying, where the development of a people's character is

\(^{12}\) An allusion to the passage in Faust, "Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft;" ("despise only reason and science.")
concerned. The Jewish people shook off the religion of Moses after a certain time; whether completely, or whether they retained some precepts we cannot tell. Accepting that during the fight for Canaan, and the struggles with the peoples settled there, the Jahve religion did not substantially differ from the worship of the other Baalim, we stand on historical ground, in spite of others’ attempts to obscure this shameful state of affairs. The religion of Moses did not perish. Its memory survived, obscured and distorted, supported by individual members of the Priestly caste through the ancient scripts. The tradition of a great past continued to exert its effect from the background; it slowly attained more and more power over the minds of the people, and at last succeeded in changing the god Jahve into the God of Moses and bringing back to life the religion, now abandoned, which Moses instituted centuries earlier.

7. The Return of the Repressed

Similar processes have been opened to us through the analysis of mental life. Some are pathological; others are normal. Their boundaries are not strictly defined and their mechanisms are to an extent identical. If changes take place in the ego itself, they are normal; if they are confronted as alien, they become symptoms. Some cases concern the formation of character.

A young girl develops into the most decided contrast to her mother; she cultivates all the qualities she missed in her mother and avoids all those that reminded her of her mother. She formerly identified with her mother like any other female child, but now opposed this identification energetically. When she married and became a mother, she became more and more like her mother, until the rejected mother identification won the day. With boys, and even the great Goethe, who in his Sturm und Drang period did not respect his pedantic and stiff father, developed traits in old age identical to his father. This result stands out strikingly when the contrast between the two persons is pronounced. A young man, with a good-for-nothing father, develops in spite of the father into a capable, trustworthy and honorable man, but later his character changes, and from then on he behaves as if he were his father. From early childhood, identification with the father exists. This may be repudiated or overcompensated, but in the end it again comes to light.

The first five years of childhood exert a decisive influence on our life. This early experience resists all efforts of more mature years to modify it. The strongest obsessive influences
derive from those experiences, while the child's psychic apparatus is incompletely fitted for accepting them. The process may be compared to photography — an image can be developed after a short or long interval. E. T. A. Hoffmann explained the wealth of imaginative figures in his stories by citing the quickly changing pictures and impressions he had received during a several weeks' journey in a coach, while he was still a babe at his mother's breast. What a child has not understood by the time he has reached the age of two, he may only remember in his dreams. Only through psychoanalytic treatment will he become aware of those events. But in later years, they may burst into his life with obsessive impulsiveness, direct his actions, force him to like or dislike people, and often choose his love-object in a way that cannot be rationally defended. The two points that touch on our problem are unmistakable. First, the remoteness of time, the decisive factor, like, for instance, memories from childhood experiences, which we call "unconscious." In the mental, emotional life of a people we call this tradition. It was not easy to introduce the concept of the unconscious into mass psychology. Contributions to these phenomena can lead to neurosis. Decisive experiences of early childhood exert a lasting influence, pushing back time, and the reaction to it. Schematically expressed, as a consequence of an experience an instinctual demand arises, which needs satisfaction. The Ego forgoes satisfaction, either paralyzed by the excessive demand or because it fears a danger. Either instance ends in the avoidance of a danger. The Ego guards against the danger by repression. This does not bring the process to an end; either the instinct has remained strong, or it will be reawakened by a new situation. It renews its claim, and since the way to normal satisfaction is barred by the scar tissue of repression. It must gain new access to what now appears as a symptom, without the acquiescence or comprehension of the ego. All phenomena of symptom-formation can be fairly described as "the return of the repressed." The distinctive character of them however, lies in the extensive distortion the returning elements undergo, compared with their original form.

8. The Historical Truth

Our psychological digressions make it more credible that the religion of Moses, once it became a tradition, exercised

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13 Here also a poet may speak for us. To explain his attachment, he imagines, "Ach du warst in abgelebten Zeiten
Meine Schwester oder meine Frau."* Goethe's Works, Weimar Edition, Vol. IV, p. 97. *(Ah, you were in former times / My sister or my wife.)
influence on the Jewish people. Although it is only probable, let us say we have succeeded in proving it conclusively; even then, we have satisfied only the qualitative factor of our task, not the quantitative. In the creation of the Jewish religion there is something majestic, not yet covered by our explanations. There is some other element, with few analogies; it is unique and equal to what it has become; like religion itself.

Primitive man needed a God to create the world, as head of his tribe, and his caretaker. This God stands behind the dead fathers of tradition. The human prefers to remain infantile, needing protection, even when he is full-grown; he feels he cannot give up the support of his God. It is not so easily understood why there is only one God, why the journey from Henotheism to Monotheism acquires such an importance. We need not presuppose the power of a lone God: many peoples glorify their chief god because he ruled over a multitude of inferior gods; he was not less great because there were other gods. The intimate relationship was less if the God cared for all lands and peoples. A God was shared with strangers, yet one still believed that the one God favored him. In this way, an only God signifies a step forward in spirituality, however small.

The true believer fills in this motivational gap. He says an Only God has an overwhelming effect on mankind, because He is eternal truth, at last come to light providing Order as great as He, and success to all He influences.

I would like to accept this solution, but I have misgivings. The religious argument is optimistic and idealistic. Humanity has not otherwise shown itself endowed with a scent for, nor displayed a readiness to accept truth. The intellect errs easily, and nothing is more readily believed than what meets our wishes and illusions half way. I do not believe that one supreme great God "exists" today, but I do believe that in early times one person who, raised to the status of a deity, returned to the memory of men. Moses’ religion was discarded and partly forgotten; later, it forced itself into the traditions of the people. The concept of a lone God which Moses gave his people was not an entirely new idea; it re-animated primitive human experiences that had long since faded from mankind’s conscious memory. The experience produced or prepared far-reaching changes in human life, and left permanent traces of tradition in the human soul.

Psychoanalysis teaches us that the earliest impressions manifest
themselves obsessively later, although they are not consciously remembered. This is also true for early experiences of mankind, like the concept of one great God. It must be seen as a distorted memory, which has an obsessive quality; it must be believed. Its distortion may be called a delusion; yet it brings to light something from the past, which must be called truth. Delusion contains a particle of truth; a patient's belief issues from this and extends to a whole delusional reality.

From Darwin I borrowed the hypothesis that men originally lived in small hordes; each horde stood under the rule of an older male, who governed by brute force, appropriated all the females and belabored or killed all the young men, including his own sons. From Atkinson I received the suggestion that this patriarchal system came to an end through a rebellion of the sons, who united against the father, overpowered him and consumed his body. Following Robertson Smith's totem theory, I suggested that this horde, no longer ruled by the father, followed a totem bound brother clan. To live in peace with one another the victorious brothers renounced the women for whose sake they killed the father, and agreed to practice exogamy. The power of the father was broken and the families regulated by matriarchy. The ambivalence of the sons to the father remained in force during the whole further development. Instead of the father, a certain animal was declared the totem; it stood for their ancestor and protecting spirit, and no one was allowed to hurt or kill it. Yet, once a year, the clan assembled for a feast at which the otherwise revered totem was torn to pieces and eaten. No one was permitted to abstain from this feast; it was a repetition of the father-murder, in which social order, moral laws and religion had their beginnings. The parallel of totem feast and Christian Communion has struck many authors before me.

I still believe this sequence. More recent ethnologists have discarded Robertson Smith's theories and have replaced them with others. These alleged advances in science are well known to me. I am not convinced of their correctness or of Robertson Smith's errors. Contradiction is not always refutation; newness is not necessarily progress. I am not an ethnologist, but a psychoanalyst. The writings of Robertson Smith provide me with valuable points of contact with the psychological material of analysis. I cannot say the same of the work of his opponents.

9. The Historical Development

After brother clan, matriarchy, exogamy and totemism combine, a
slow "return of the repressed" began, or something past, vanished and overcome in the life of a people, which I equilibrate to repressed material in the mental life of the individual. I do not know in what psychological form the past existed during its time of darkness. The content of the unconscious is universal to mankind. The mental residue of primeval times has become a heritage, which, with each new generation, needs only be awakened, not re-acquired. We learn that our children in a number of significant relationships do not react as their experiences would lead us to expect, but instinctively, like animals; this is explained only by phylogenetic inheritance.

The repressed returns slowly. The father became again the head of the family, but he was no longer omnipotent as the father of the primeval horde had been. The god, in human form, still carried at first the head of an animal; later on he assumed the guise of the same animal. Still later the animal became sacred to him and his favorite companion or else he was reputed to have slain the animal, when he added its name to his own. Between the totem animal and the god, the hero made his appearance; often an early stage of deification. The idea of a Highest Being seems to have appeared early; at first it was shadowy and devoid of any connection with the daily interests of mankind. As with humans, the gods also became organized into families and hierarchies. Often one of them was elevated to be the Overlord. The next step, to worship only one God, was taken hesitatingly, and the decision was made to concede all power to one God only and not to suffer any other gods beside him. Only then was the grandeur of the primeval father restored; the emotions belonging to him could now be repeated.

The first effect of the reunion was overwhelming and just as the tradition of the lawgiving on Mount Sinai depicts it. With admiration, awe and gratitude the people found favor in His eyes: Moses’ religion knows only positive feelings towards the Father-God. His power was irresistible, the subjection to His will, absolute, the son of the father of the horde helpless. Infantile feelings are far more intense and inexhaustibly deep than are those of adults; only religious ecstasy can bring back that intensity. Devotion to God is the first response to the return of the Great Father.

The direction of this Father religion was fixed, but its continued development is ambivalent in the father-son relationship; in the course of time the hostility, which in ancient times had spurred the sons to slay their admired and
dreaded father had to stir. In Moses’ religion, there was no room for the murderous father-hate. Yet a powerful reaction to it could appear -- guilt because of that hostility, the bad conscience because one had sinned against God and continued to sin. Guilt, which the Prophets kept alive and which soon became an integral part of the religious system itself, had another, superficial, motivation veiling the origin of the feeling. In hard times, God-based hopes were slow to be fulfilled; it was hard to hold to the cherished illusion that they were God's chosen people. If they wished to keep happiness, then the consciousness of guilt because they themselves were such sinners, offered a welcome excuse for God's severity. They deserved to be punished by Him, because they did not observe the Law; satisfying this insatiable guilt, coming from a much deeper source, made their religious precepts more strict, more exacting, and more petty. The Jews imposed on themselves constantly increasing renunciations, reaching at least in doctrine and precepts, the ethical heights that had remained inaccessible to the other peoples of antiquity. Many Jews regard these aspirations as the second main characteristic, and great achievement of their religion. The origin of this ethics in feelings of guilt, due to the repressed hostility to God cannot be gainsaid.

Further development transcends Judaism, and could not be reconciled with the Mosaic religion. Guilt was no longer restricted to the Jews; it seized all Mediterranean peoples with an unreasoning premonition of misfortune. Modern history speaks of the aging of antique culture. In a Jew, Saul of Tarsus, who as a Roman citizen was called Paul, the perception dawned: “it is because we killed God the Father that we are so unhappy.” It is clear to us now why he could grasp this truth in no other form but in the delusional guise of the glad tidings: “we have been delivered from all guilt since one of us laid down his life to expiate our guilt.” A crime had to be expiated by a sacrifice, which could only have been murder. The connection between delusion and historical truth was established by the assurance that the sacrificial victim was the Son of God. In place of the enrapturing feeling of being the chosen ones there came now release through salvation. The unmentionable crime of parricide was replaced by the somewhat shadowy conception of original sin.

Original sin and salvation through sacrificial death became the basis of Paul’s new religion. After the Christian doctrine had burst the confines of Judaism, it absorbed constituents from many other sources, renounced many features of pure monotheism
and adopted in many particulars the ritual of the other Mediterranean peoples. It was as if Egypt had come to wreak vengeance on the heirs of Ikhnaton. Its main doctrine, to be sure, was the reconciliation with God the Father, the expiation of the crime committed against Him; but the other side of the relationship manifested itself in the Son who took the guilt on his shoulders becoming God himself beside the Father and in truth in place of the Father. Originating in a Father religion, Christianity became a Son religion. It could not escape the fate of displacing the Father.

Only part of the Jewish people accepted the new doctrine. Those who refused are still called Jews. This decision separated them even more sharply from the rest of the world than before. They suffered the reproach of the new religious community, including Egyptians, Greeks, Syrians, Romans and Teutons that they had murdered God. In its full form this reproach runs: “they will not admit that they killed God, but we do and are cleansed of the guilt of it.” Then it is easy to understand what truth lies behind this reproach. The Jews have been made to suffer severely for it.

I. If Moses was an Egyptian, then we have a tough new riddle. What could have induced a noble Egyptian to place himself at the head of a mob of culturally inferior immigrants, and to leave the country with them? The contempt of the Egyptians for foreigners makes that very unlikely. That’s why I think even the historians who recognize the name as Egyptian, and ascribe all the wisdom of Egypt to him, could not entertain the possibility that Moses was an Egyptian.

Moses was not only the political leader of the Jews in Egypt, he was also their lawgiver, educator and the man who forced them to adopt a new religion, which we still call Mosaic after him. Can one person create a new religion so easily? To influence another’s religion, isn’t it easier to convert him to one’s own? Jews in Egypt had some kind of religion, and if Moses gave them a new religion, wouldn’t it be Egyptian?

An obstacle: the contrast between Moses’ religion and the Egyptian one. The former is a grandiosely rigid monotheism. There is one God, unique, omnipotent, un-approachable. His face cannot be seen; one must not make an image of him, not even breathe his name. The Egyptian religion had a bewildering mass of deities of differing importance and provenance. Some are personifications of natural powers like heaven and earth, sun and moon. Then we find an abstraction such as Maat (Justice,
Truth) or a grotesque creature like the dwarfish Bes. Most are local gods from the time when the land was ruled as numerous provinces. Those gods are shaped like animals, having not yet overcome their origins in the old totem animals. They are not clearly differentiated, barely distinguished by their special functions. The hymns in praise of these gods say the same thing about each of them, cross-identifying them without misgivings to confuse us hopelessly. Their names are combined with one another, so that one becomes degraded almost to an epithet of the other. In the best period of the "New Kingdom" the main god of the city of Thebes is called Amon-Re a combination of the ram-headed city-god, and Re, the name of the hawk-headed Sun-God of On. Magic and ceremonial, amulets and formulas dominated both the service of these gods, and the daily life of the Egyptians.

Some differences come from the contrast in principle between a strict monotheism and an unlimited polytheism. Others are consequences of a difference in intellectual level; one religion is close to primitive, the other soars to the heights of sublime abstraction. These contradictions may give one the impression that the contrast between the Mosaic and the Egyptian religion is accentuated and intentional: one religion severely condemns the magic or sorcery which flourishes so abundantly in the other; or the insatiable zest of the Egyptian to make images of his gods in clay, stone and metal, to which our museums owe so much, contrasts with the blunt forbidding of making of the image of any living or visionary being.

These attempted explanations do not touch a key difference between the two religions. No other people of antiquity did so much to deny death, made such careful provision for an after-life; in accordance with this, the death-god Osiris, the ruler of that other world, was the most popular and indisputable of all Egyptian gods. The early Jewish religion, on the other hand, entirely relinquished immortality; the possibility of an existence after death was never mentioned; all the more remarkable since later a belief in a life beyond was reconciled with monotheism.

We had hoped suggesting that Moses was an Egyptian would prove enlightening and stimulating in many different respects. Yet our first deduction from the suggestion that the new religion he gave the Jews was his own, and was Egyptian, has foundered on the striking contrast between the two religions.

II. An odd fact in Egypt's history, seen and appraised relatively late, opens up another point of view. Possibly, the
religion Moses gave to his Jewish people was his own, and
Egyptian, though not the Egyptian one.

In the glorious Eighteenth Dynasty, about 1,375 B.C., when Egypt
was first a world power, a young Pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, named
after his father, ascended the throne, but later on changed more
than his name. He forced on his subjects a new religion, contrary
to their ancient mores and familiar habits. It was
strict monotheism, the first of its kind in the history of the
world as far as we know, and religious intolerance, foreign to
antiquity before this and for long after, was inevitably born
with the belief in one God. Amenhotep's reign lasted only
seventeen years; soon after his death in 1358 the new religion
was swept away and the memory of the heretic king proscribed.
From the ruins of his new capital, dedicated to his God, and
from the rock tomb inscriptions belonging to it, we derive the
little knowledge we possess of him. All we learn of this
remarkable, unique person is of great interest.14

Everything new has roots in the past. Egyptian monotheism can be
traced back a fair distance with some certainty.15 In the School
of the Priests in the Sun Temple at On (Heliopolis) tendencies
had for some time been at work developing the idea of an
universal God and stressing His ethical aspects. Maat, the
Goddess of truth, order and justice, was a daughter of the Sun
God Re. Already under Amenhotep III, the father and predecessor
of the reformer, the worship of the Sun God was in the
ascendant, probably in opposition to the worship of Amon of
Thebes, who had become over-prominent. An ancient name of the
Sun God – Aton -- or Atum was rediscovered, and in this Aton
religion the young king found a movement he had no need to
create, but one which he could join.

Political conditions in Egypt had begun to exert a lasting
influence on Egyptian religion. Through the military victories
of the great conqueror, Thothmes III, Egypt had become a world
power. Nubia in the south, Palestine, Syria and a part of
Mesopotamia in the north had been added to the Empire. This
imperialism was reflected in religion as Universality and
Monotheism. Since Pharaoh's solicitude now extended beyond Egypt
to Nubia and Syria, Deity itself had to give up its national
limitation and the new God of the Egyptians had to become, like
Pharaoh, the unique and unlimited sovereign of the world known

14 Breasted called him "the first individual in human history."
15 The account I give here follows closely J. H. Breasted's History of Egypt,
1906, and The Dawn of Conscience, 1936, and the corresponding sections in the
Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II.
to the Egyptians. Besides, it was natural that as the frontiers extended, Egypt should become accessible to foreign influences; some of the king's wives were Asiatic princesses, and possibly even direct encouragement of monotheism had penetrated from Syria.

Amenhotep never denied his accession to the Sun Cult of On. In the two hymns to Aton, which have been preserved to us through the inscriptions in the rock tombs and were probably composed by him, he praises the sun as the creator and preserver of all living beings in and outside Egypt with a fervor such as recurs many centuries after only in the psalms in honor of the Jewish god Jahve. But he did not stop at this astonishing anticipation of scientific knowledge concerning the effect of sunlight. There is no doubt that he went further: that he worshipped the sun not as a material object, but as a symbol of a Divine Being whose energy was manifested in his rays.

But we do scant justice if we see in him only the adherent and protector of a pre-existing Aton religion. His activity was much more energetic. He added something that turned into monotheism with the doctrine of an universal god — exclusivity. One of his hymns say so: "Oh, Thou only God! There is no other God than Thou." And to appraise the new doctrine we must not only know its positive content; nearly as important is what it repudiates. It would be a mistake to suppose that the new religion sprang to life ready, like Athena out of Zeus's forehead. Everything points to the idea that during Amenhotep's reign it was strengthened to attain clarity, consistency, harshness and intolerance. Probably this development took place under the influence of the violent opposition among the priests of Amon that opposed the reforms of the king. In the sixth year of Amenhotep's reign this enmity grew to such an extent that the king changed his name, eliminating the forbidden name of the god Amon. Now he called himself Ikhnaton. He eliminated that of the

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16 Perhaps even Amenhotep's beloved spouse Nofertete.
17 Breasted, History of Egypt, p. 360: "But however evident the Heliopolitan origin of the new state religion might be, it was not merely sun-worship; the word Aton was employed in the place of the old word for 'god' (nuter), and the god is clearly distinguished from the material sun." "It is evident that what the king was deifying was the force by which the Sun made itself felt on earth." (Dawn of Conscience, p. 279). Erman's opinion of a formula in honor of the god is similar: A. Erman (Die Ægyptische Religion, 1905). "There are... words which are meant to express in an abstract form the fact that not the star itself was worshipped, but the Being that manifested itself in it."
18 Idem, History of Egypt, p. 374.
19 I follow Breasted's (American) spelling in this name (the accepted English spelling is Akhenaten). The king's new name means approximately the same as
hated God from not only his name, but from all inscriptions and even from his father's name. Soon after, he left Thebes, which was under Amon's rule, and built a new capital called Akhetaton (Horizon of Aton). Its ruins are now called Tel-al-Amarna.  

Persecution was directed foremost against Amon, but not Amon alone. Everywhere, temples were closed, services forbidden, and ecclesiastical property was seized. The king was so zealous that he investigated the inscriptions on old monuments and effaced the word "Gods" in the plural. These orders, naturally produced a reaction of fanatical vengeance among the suppressed priests and the discontented people, which found free outlet after the king's death. The Aton religion had not appealed to the people; probably it was limited to a small imperial circle. Iknaton's end is wrapped in mystery. A few short-lived, shadowy successors followed from his family. His son-in-law Tutankaton was forced to return to Thebes and to substitute Amon in his name for the god Aton. Then there followed a period of anarchy, until General Horemheb succeeded in 1350 in restoring order. The glorious Eighteenth Dynasty was extinguished; at the same time their conquests in Nubia and Asia were lost. In this sad interregnum Egypt's old religions were reinstated. The Aton religion was at an end, Iknaton's capital lay destroyed and plundered, and his memory was scorned as that of a felon.

There were several negative characteristics of the Aton religion. All myth, magic and sorcery are excluded from it. The Sun God is represented no longer by a small pyramid and a falcon, but by a round disc from which emanate rays terminating in human hands. In spite of all the love for art in the Amarna period, not one personal representation of the Sun God Aton has been found, and, we may say with confidence, ever will be found.

his former one: God is satisfied. Compare our Godfrey and the German Gotthold.

22 This is where in 1887 the correspondence of the Egyptian kings with their friends and vassals in Asia was found, a correspondence, which proved so important for our knowledge of history.


22 Weigall (The Life and Times of Akhnaton, 1923, p. 121) says that Ikhnaton would not recognize a hell against the terrors of which one had to guard by innumerable magic spells. "Akhnaton flung all these formulas into the fire. Djins, bogies, spirits, monsters, demigods and Osiris himself with all his court, were swept into the blaze and reduced to ashes."

23 A. Weigall, i.e., p. 103, "Akhnaton did not permit any graven image to be made of the Aton. The true God, said the king, had no form; and he held to this opinion throughout his life."
Finally, there is a complete silence about the death god Osiris and the realm of the dead. Neither hymns nor inscriptions on graves know anything of what was perhaps nearest to the Egyptian's heart. The contrast with the popular religion cannot be expressed more vividly.²⁴

III. I draw the conclusion: if Moses was an Egyptian and transmitted to the Jews his own religion, then it was that of Ikhnaton, the Aton religion.

Comparing the Jewish with the Aton religion we expect to find an original identity, but this is no easy task. Of the Aton religion we do not know enough, thanks to the vengeful spirit of the Amon priests. The Mosaic religion we know only in its final form as fixed by Jewish priests in the time after the Exile about 800 years later. If, in spite of this, we find indications fitting in with our supposition then we may value them highly.

We could prove that the Mosaic religion is that of Aton, by confession of faith, by proclamation. But such a road is impracticable. The Jewish creed, as is well known, says: "Shema Yisroel Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echod." If the similarity of of the Egyptian “Aton” (or “Atum”) to the Hebrew word “Adonai” and the Syrian divinity “Adonis” is not an accident, but the result of a primeval unity in language and meaning, then one could translate the Jewish formula: “Hear, oh Israel, our god Aton (Adonai) is the only God.” I am, alas, entirely unqualified to answer this question and have been able to find very little about it in the literature concerned,²⁵ but probably we had better not make things so simple. Moreover, we shall have to come back to the problems of the divine name.

The points of similarity and difference in both religions are easily found, but do not tell us much. Both are forms of a strict monotheism, and we shall be inclined to reduce to this basic character what is similar in both of them. Jewish monotheism is in some points even more uncompromising than the Egyptian, for example, as it forbids all visual representation of God. The most basic difference, apart from the name of God,

²⁴ Erman, /.., p. 90: "Of Osiris and his realm no more was to be heard."
Breasted, Dawn of Conscience, p. 291: "Osiris is completely ignored. He is never mentioned in any record of Ikhnaton or in any of the tombs at Amarna."
²⁵ Only a few passages in Weigall, i.e., pp. 12, 19: "The god Aton, who described Re as the setting sun, was perhaps of the same origin as Aton, generally venerated in Northern Syria. A foreign Queen, as well as her suite, might therefore have been attracted to Heliopolis rather than to Thebes."
is that the Jewish religion entirely relinquishes worship of the sun, and the Egyptian does not. Comparing the Jewish with the Egyptian folk religion we notice that, besides the contrast in principle, in the difference between the two religions there are purposeful contradictions. When in our comparison we replace the Jewish religion with Aton, we notice the Jewish religion does not speak of anything beyond the grave, for monotheism does not prohibit such a doctrine. Looking at the Aton religion we surmise that this feature was taken over from the latter, because it was necessary in fighting the popular religion’s death god, Osiris, who played a greater part than any god of the upper regions. The agreement of the Jewish religion with that of Aton is the first strong argument in favor of our thesis. It is not the only one. Moses gave the Jews not only a new religion; it is equally certain that he introduced the custom of circumcision. This has a decisive importance for our problem and it has hardly ever been weighed.

The Biblical account, it is true, contradicts it. On the one hand, it dates the custom back to the time of the patriarchs as a sign of the covenant concluded between God and Abraham. On the other, the text mentions in a specially obscure passage that God was wroth with Moses because he had neglected this holy usage and proposed to slay him as a punishment; Moses' wife, a Midianite, saved her husband from the wrath of God by speedily performing the operation. These are distortions, however, which should not lead us astray; we shall explore their motives presently. The fact remains that the question concerning the origin of circumcision has only one answer: it comes from Egypt.

Herodotus, "the Father of History," tells us that the custom of circumcision had long been practiced in Egypt, a statement confirmed by the examination of mummies and drawings on the walls of tombs. No other people of the Eastern Mediterranean have as far as we know followed this custom; with certainty the Semites, Babylonians and Sumerians were not circumcised. Biblical history itself says as much of the inhabitants of Canaan; it is presupposed in the story of the adventure between Jacob’s daughter and the Prince of Shechem.26 The possibility

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26 When I use Biblical tradition here in such an autocratic and arbitrary way, draw on it for confirmation whenever it is convenient and dismiss its evidence without scruple when it contradicts my conclusions, I know full well that I am exposing myself to severe criticism concerning my method and that I weaken the force of my proofs. But this is the only way in which to treat material whose trustworthiness as we know for certain was seriously damaged by the influence of distorting tendencies. Some justification will be forthcoming later, it is hoped, when we have unearthed those secret motives. Certainty is not to be gained in any case, and, moreover, we may say that all
that the Jews in Egypt adopted the usage of circumcision in any other way may be rejected as quite untenable. Now let us bear in mind that circumcision was practiced in Egypt by the people as a general custom, and let us adopt for the moment the usual assumption that Moses was a Jew who wanted to free his compatriots from the service of an Egyptian overlord, and lead them out of the country to develop an independent and self-confident existence a feat he actually achieved. What sense could there be in his forcing upon them at the same time a burdensome custom which, so to speak, made them into Egyptians and was bound to keep awake their memory of Egypt, whereas his intention could only have had the opposite aim, namely, that his people should become strangers to the country of bondage and overcome the longing for the "fleshpots of Egypt?" No, the fact we started from and the suggestion we added to it are so incompatible with each other that we venture to draw the following conclusion: If Moses gave the Jews not only a new religion, but also the law of circumcision, he was no Jew but an Egyptian, and then the Mosaic religion was probably an Egyptian one, namely because of its contrast to the popular religion that of Aton with which the Jewish one shows agreement in some remarkable points.

As I remarked earlier, my hypothesis that Moses was not a Jew but an Egyptian creates a new enigma. What he did, if easily understandable as a Jew, becomes unintelligible in an Egyptian. But if we place Moses in Ikhnaton's period and associate him with that Pharaoh, then the enigma is resolved and a possible motive presents itself, answering all our questions. Let us assume that Moses was a noble and distinguished man: perhaps indeed a member of the royal house, as the myth has it. He must have been conscious of his great abilities, ambitious and energetic; perhaps he saw himself in a dim future as the leader of his people, the governor of the Empire. In close contact with Pharaoh he was a convinced adherent of the new religion, whose basic principles he fully understood and had made his own. With the king's death and the subsequent reaction he saw all his hopes and prospects destroyed. If he was not to recant the convictions so dear to him then Egypt had no more to give him; he had lost his native country. In this hour of need he found an unusual solution.

The dreamer Ikhnaton had estranged himself from his people, had let his world empire crumble. Moses' active nature conceived the plan of founding a new empire, of finding a new people, to whom other authors have acted likewise.
he could give the religion that Egypt disdained. It was, as we perceive, an heroic attempt to struggle against his fate, to find compensation in two directions for the losses he had suffered through Ikhnaton's catastrophe. Perhaps he was at the time governor of that border province (Gosen) in which perhaps already in "the Hyksos period" certain Semitic tribes had settled. These he chose to be his new people. A historical decision.\textsuperscript{27}

He established relations with them, placed himself at their head and directed the Exodus "by strength of hand." In full contradiction to the Biblical tradition we may suppose this Exodus to have passed off peacefully and without pursuit. The authority of Moses made it possible, and there was then no central power that could have prevented it.

According to our construction the Exodus from Egypt would have taken place between 1358 and 1350, that is to say, after the death of Ikhnaton and before the restitution of the authority of the state by Horemheb.\textsuperscript{28} The goal of the wandering could only be Canaan. After the supremacy of Egypt had collapsed, hordes of war-like Arameans had flooded the country, conquering and pillaging, and thus had shown where a capable people could seize new land. We know these warriors from the letters, which were found in 1887 in the archives of the ruined city of Amarna. There they are called "Habiru," and the name was passed on no one knows how to the Jewish invaders, Hebrews, who came later and could not have been referred to in the letters of Amarna. The tribes who were the most nearly related to the Jews now leaving Egypt also lived south of Palestine in Canaan.

The motivation we have surmised for the Exodus as a whole, covers also the institution of circumcision. We know in what manner human beings both peoples and individuals react to this ancient custom, scarcely any longer understood. Those who do not practice it regard it as very odd and find it rather abhorrent; but those who have adopted circumcision are proud of the custom.

\textsuperscript{27} If Moses were a high official we can understand his being fitted for the role of leader he assumed with the Jews. If he were a priest the thought of giving his people a new religion must have been near to his heart. In both cases he would have continued his former profession. A prince of royal lineage might easily have been both: governor and priest. In the report of Flavius Josephus (Antiqu. jud.), who accepts the exposure myth, but seems to know other traditions than the Biblical one, Moses appears as an Egyptian field marshal in a victorious campaign in Ethiopia.

\textsuperscript{28} This would be about a century earlier than most historians assume, who place it in the Nineteenth Dynasty under Merneptah: or perhaps a little less, for official records seem to include the interregnum in Horemheb's reign.
They feel superior, ennobled, and look down with contempt at the others, who appear to them unclean. Even today the Turk hurls abuse at the Christian by calling him "an uncircumcised dog." It is credible that Moses, who as an Egyptian was himself circumcised, shared this attitude. The Jews with whom he left his native country were to be a better substitute for the Egyptians he left behind. In no circumstances must they be inferior to them. He wished to make of them a "Holy People" so it is explicitly stated in the Biblical text and as a sign of their dedication he introduced the custom that made them at least the equals of the Egyptians. It would, further, be welcome to him if such a custom isolated them and prevented them from mingling with the other foreign peoples they would meet during their wanderings, just as the Egyptians had kept apart from all foreigners.  

To admit that circumcision was an Egyptian custom introduced by Moses would be almost to recognize that the religion handed down to them from Moses was also Egyptian; therefore the truth about circumcision had also to be contradicted.

IV. At this point I expect to hear the reproach that I have built up my construction -- which places Moses the Egyptian in Ikhnaton's era, derives from the political state the country was in at that time his decision to protect the Jewish people, and recognizes as the Aton religion the religion he gave to his people or with which he burdened them, which had just been abolished in Egypt itself -- with too great a certainty.

Some of my own critical observations may continue the

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29 Herodotus, who visited Egypt about 450 B.C., gives in the account of his travels a characteristic of the Egyptians which shows an astounding similarity with well-known features of the later Jewish people. "They are in all respects much more pious than other peoples, they are also distinguished from them by many of their customs, such as circumcision, which for reasons of cleanliness they introduced before others; further, by their horror of swine, doubtless connected with the fact that Set wounded Horus when in the guise of a black hog; and, lastly, most of all by their reverence for cows, which they would never eat or sacrifice because they would thereby offend the cow-horned Isis. Therefore no Egyptian man or woman would ever kiss a Greek or use his knife, his spit or his cooking vessel, or eat of the meat of an (otherwise) clean ox that had been cut with a Greek knife. . . . In haughty narrowness they looked down on the other peoples who were unclean and not so near to the gods as they were." (After Erman, The Egyptian Religion, p. 181, etc.) Naturally we do not forget here the parallels from the life of India. Whatever gave, by the way, the Jewish poet Heine in the nineteenth century the idea of complaining about his religion as "the plague trailing along from the valley of the Nile, the sickly beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians?"
discussion. The kernel of our thesis, the dependence of Jewish monotheism on the monotheistic episode in Egyptian history, has been guessed and hinted at by several workers. Even if, as I suggest, it is bound up with the individuality of Moses, we shall have to weigh other possibilities. It is not to be supposed that the overthrow of the official Aton religion completely put an end to the monotheistic trend in Egypt. The School of Priests at On, from which it emanated, survived the catastrophe and might have drawn whole generations after Ikhnaton into the orbit of their religious thought. That Moses knew of it is quite thinkable, even if he did not live in Ikhnaton's time and had not come under his personal influence, even if he were simply an adherent or merely a member of the school of On. This postpones the date of the Exodus bringing it nearer to the time usually assumed, the thirteenth century. The kings of the Nineteenth Dynasty following Ikhnaton ruled the country with a strong hand. All conditions favoring the Exodus coincide only in the period immediately after the death of the heretic king.

The Jews possess a rich extra-biblical literature where the myths and superstitions are to be found which in the course of centuries were woven around the gigantic figure of their first leader and the founder of their religion and which have both hallowed and obscured that figure. One of these legends describes how the ambition of the man Moses had already displayed itself in his childhood. When Pharaoh took him into his arms and playfully tossed him high, the three-year-old snatched the crown from Pharaoh's head and placed it on his own. The king was startled at this omen and took care to consult his sages. Then, again, we are told of victorious battles he fought as an Egyptian captain in Ethiopia and, that he fled the country because he had reason to fear a faction at court or even Pharaoh himself. The Biblical story itself lends Moses certain features in which one is inclined to believe. It describes him as choleric, hot-tempered as when in his indignation he kills the brutal overseer who ill-treated a Jewish workman, or when in his resentment at the defection of his people he smashes the tables he has been given on Mount Sinai. God himself punished him for an impatient deed, but we are not told what it was. Since this trait is not admirable, it may be historical truth. Nor can we reject the possibility that many character traits the Jews incorporated into their early conception of God when they made

30 The same anecdote, slightly altered, is to be found in Josephus.
him jealous, stern and implacable, were taken au fond from the memory of Moses, for it was not an invisible god, but Moses, who led them out of Egypt.

Another trait deserves our special interest. Moses was said to have been "slow of speech;" he must have had a speech impediment so that he had to call on Aaron (who is called his brother) for assistance. This again may be historical truth. It may have another and more important significance. It may recall that Moses spoke another language and was not able to communicate with his Semitic Neo-Egyptians without the help of an interpreter at the beginning of the dealing. Confirmation of the thesis: Moses was an Egyptian.

It looks now as if the train of thought has come to an end. From the surmise that Moses was an Egyptian, nothing more can be deduced for the moment. No historian can regard the Biblical account of Moses and the Exodus as other than a pious myth, dealing with a remote tradition. How the story ran originally we do not know. What the distorting factors were we should like to guess, but we are ignorant of the historical events. Our reconstruction leaves no room for spectacular features in the Biblical text: ten plagues, passage through the Red Sea, solemn lawgiving on Mount Sinai. But we cannot remain indifferent on finding ourselves in opposition to other historical researches.

These modern historians, well represented by E. Meyer\(^{31}\) follow the Biblical text, concurring that the Jewish tribes, later the people of Israel, accepted a new religion. But this event did not take place in Egypt nor at the foot of a mount in the Sinai Peninsula, but in a place called Meribat-Qades, an oasis distinguished by its springs and wells in the country south of Palestine between the eastern end of the Sinai and the western end of Arabia. There they began the worship of a god Jahve, probably from the Arabic tribe of Midianites who lived near-by. Presumably other neighbors were followers of that god.

Jahve was a volcano god, but Egypt has no volcanoes and the mountains of the Sinai have never been volcanic; on the other hand, volcanoes which may have then been active on the western border of Arabia. One of these mountains must have been the Sinai-Horeb, which was Jahve’s abode.\(^ {32}\) In spite of all the transformations the Biblical text has suffered, we are able to reconstruct according to E. Meyer the original character of the

\(^{31}\) E. Meyer: Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämmen, 1906.

\(^{32}\) The Biblical text retains certain passages telling us that Jahve descended from Sinai to Meribat-Qades.
god: an uncanny, bloodthirsty demon walking by night and shunning the light of day.\textsuperscript{33}

Between people and god at this birth of a religion was Moses, the son-in-law of the Midianite priest Jethro, tending his flocks when he received the divine summons. Jethro visited him in Qades to give him instructions.

E. Meyer says that he never doubted there was a kernel of historical truth in the story of the bondage in Egypt and the catastrophe of the Egyptians,\textsuperscript{34} but he does not know where that fact belongs and what to do with it. Only the custom of circumcision is he willing to derive from the Egyptians. He adds to our earlier discussion by two important suggestions. First, that Joshua asked the people to accept circumcision "to roll away the reproach of Egypt"; and, second, by the quotation from Herodotus that the Phoenicians (probably meaning the Jews) and the Syrians in Palestine admitted having learned the custom of circumcision from the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{35} But an Egyptian Moses does not appeal to him. The Moses we know was the ancestor of the priests of Qades; he stood in relation to the cult, as a figure of the genealogical myth and not an historical person. So not one of those who has treated him as an historical person, except those who accept tradition wholesale, has succeeded in describing him as a concrete personality; they have had nothing to tell us about what he achieved or about his mission in history.\textsuperscript{36}

Yet Meyer never wearies of Moses' relation to Qades and Midian. "Moses is so closely bound up with Midian and the holy places in the desert..."\textsuperscript{37} "Moses is inextricably associated with Qades (Massa and Meriba); the relationship with a Midianite priest by marriage completes the picture. The connection with the Exodus, and the story of his youth are absolutely secondary; mere consequences of Moses having to fit into a connected, continuous story."\textsuperscript{38} He also observes that all the characteristics contained in the story of Moses' youth were later omitted. "Moses in Midian is no longer an Egyptian and Pharaoh's grandson, but a shepherd to whom Jahve reveals himself. In the story of the ten plagues his former relationships are no longer mentioned, although they could have been used very effectively, and the order to kill the Israelite first-born is entirely forgotten. In

\textsuperscript{33} op.cit, pp. 38, 58.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{35} ibid, p. 449.
\textsuperscript{36} ibid, p. 451.
\textsuperscript{37} ibid, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, p. 72.
the Exodus and the perishing of the Egyptians Moses has no part at all; he is not even mentioned. The characteristics of a hero, which the childhood story presupposes, are entirely absent in the later Moses; he is only the man of God, a performer of miracles, provided with supernatural powers by Jahve."

We cannot escape the impression that this Moses of Qades and Midian, is quite a different person from the Egyptian we had deduced, who disclosed to his people a religion in which all magic and sorcery were most strictly abhorred. Our Egyptian Moses differs perhaps from the Midian Moses as the universal god Aton differed from the demon Jahve on his divine mountain. Conceding any measure of truth to the information furnished by modern historians, we must admit that the thread we wished to draw from Moses as an Egyptian has broken off for the second time; this time, so it seems, without any hope of being re-tied.

V A way unexpectedly presents itself out of this difficulty. Seeing in Moses a figure transcending the priest of Qades, and confirming the renown with which tradition had invested him, were continued after E. Meyer by Gressmann and others. In 1922 E. Sellin made a discovery of decisive importance. He found, in the book of the prophet Hosea, (second half of the eighth century) traces of a tradition that the founder of their religion (Moses) met a violent end in a rebellion of his stubborn and refractory people. The religion he had instituted was at the same time abandoned. This tradition is not restricted to Hosea: it recurs in the writings of most of the later prophets; indeed, according to Sellin, it was the basis of all the later expectations of the Messiah. At the end of the Babylonian exile the hope arose among the Jews that the man they had so callously murdered would return from the dead to lead his contrite people into the land of eternal bliss. These connections to the destiny of the Founder of a later religion do not lie in our course.

I am not in a position to decide whether Sellin has rightly interpreted the passages in the prophets. If he is right, we may regard as credible the tradition he recognized: for there is no tangible motive for inventing such things. And if they really happened, the wish to forget them is easily understood. We need not accept every bit of the tradition. Sellin thinks that Shittim east of the Jordan is the scene of the violent deed. The

39 Ibid, p. 47.
40 E. Sellin, Mose und seine Bedeutung fuer die israelitisch-juedische Religionsgeschichte, 1922.
choice of that locality does not accord with our argument.

Let us adopt from Sellin the surmise that the Egyptian Moses was killed by the Jews and the religion he instituted was abandoned. We can spin our thread further without contradicting the results of historical research. But we are independent of the historians in other respects. The Exodus from Egypt remains our starting-point. A considerable number left the country with Moses; a small crowd would not have been worth the while of that ambitious man. The immigrants had probably been in the country long enough to develop into a numerous people. If we suppose that only a part of those who later became the Jewish people had undergone the fate of bondage in Egypt, the tribe returning from Egypt would combine later in the country between Egypt and Canaan with other related tribes that had been settled there for some time. There, the people of Israel expressed itself in the adoption of a new religion, common to all the tribes: the religion of Jahve; according to E. Meyer, this came about in Qades under the influence of the Midianites. Then the people felt strong enough to undertake the invasion of Canaan. It does not fit in with this course of events that the catastrophe to Moses and his religion took place in the land east of the Jordan; it must have happened a long time before the union.

Many very diverse elements contributed to the building up of the Jewish people, but the greatest difference among them depended on whether they had experienced the sojourn in Egypt and what followed it. We may say that the nation was the union of two constituents, and it accords with the fact that, after a short period of political unity, it broke into two parts: Israel and Judah. History loves such restorations, in which later fusions are re-dissolved and former separations become once more apparent. The most impressive example, a very well-known one, was provided by the Reformation, when, after an interval of more than a thousand years, it brought to light again the frontier between the Germania that had been Roman and the part that had always remained independent. With the Jewish people we cannot verify such a faithful reproduction of the former state of affairs. Our knowledge of those times is too uncertain to permit the assumption that the northern Kingdom had absorbed the original settlers, the southern those returning from Egypt; but the later dissolution, in this case also, could not have been unconnected with the earlier union. The former Egyptians were probably fewer than the others, but they proved to be on a higher level culturally. They were a great influence on the development of the people for the tradition the others lacked.
Perhaps they brought something more tangible than a tradition. A riddle of Jewish prehistoric times is the antecedents of the Levites. They are said to have come from one of the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi, but no tradition ever ventured to pronounce on where they originally lived or where in conquered Canaan they were allotted. They occupied the most important priestly positions, but they were not priests. A Levite is not the name of a caste. It is not credible that a great gentleman like the Egyptian Moses approached a people strange to him without an escort. He must have brought his retinue with him, his nearest adherents, his scribes, his servants. These were the original Levites. Moses was a Levite. This seems a transparent distortion of the actual state of affairs: the Levites were Moses’ people. In later times we find Egyptian names only among the Levites.\textsuperscript{41} A fair number of these Moses people escaped the fate that overtook him and his religion. They increased in the following generations and fused with the people among whom they lived, but they remained faithful to their master, honored his memory and retaining his teaching. At the time of the union with the followers of Jahve they formed a culturally superior minority.

I suggest, that between the downfall of Moses and the founding of a religion at Qades perhaps even a century elapsed. I do not see my way to determine whether the Neo-Egyptians as I should like to call those who returned from Egypt, in distinction to the other Jews, met with their relations before or after they accepted the Jahve religion. Perhaps the latter is more likely. What happened at Qades was a compromise, in which the part taken by the Moses tribe is unmistakable.

Here the custom of circumcision, a kind of "Leitfossil" has rendered us important services. This custom also became the law in the Jahve religion, and since it is inextricably connected with Egypt its adoption must signify a concession to the people of Moses. The Levites would not forgo this sign of their consecration. The price of saving much of their old religion, was to recognize the new deity and all that the Midian priests had to say about him. Possibly they managed to obtain still other concessions. We have already mentioned the ritual economy in the use of the name of God. Instead of Jahve they had to say Adonai. It is tempting to fit the surmise of this commandment into our argument. The prohibition of uttering the name of God is a primeval taboo. Why it was renewed in the Jewish

\textsuperscript{41} This assumption fits in well with what Yahuda says about the Egyptian influence on early Jewish writings. See A. S. Yahuda, \textit{Die Sprache des Pentateuch in ihren Beziehungen zum Aegyptischen}, 1929.
commandments is not clear; it is not out of the question that it happened under a new influence. There is no reason to suppose that the commandment was consistently followed; “Jahve” was used in the formation of personal names, i.e. in combinations such as Jochanan, Jehu or Joshua. Yet there is something odd about this name. Biblical exegesis recognizes two sources of the Hexateuch. They are called J and E because the one uses the name Jahve, the other Elohim, not Adonai. One writer surmised the different names are a distinct sign of originally different gods.42

We admitted circumcision as evidence that at Qades a compromise had taken place. We learn about it from both J and E; the two accounts coincide and must therefore go back to a common source. The guiding purpose was to prove the power of the new god Jahve. Since the Mosaics attached importance to their Exodus from Egypt, freeing them had to be ascribed to Jahve; it had to be proved by the terrific grandeur of the volcano god, with the pillar of smoke, which changed to one of fire by night, or the parting of the waters, and drowning of the pursuers. Exodus and the new religion were brought close together in time. The Ten Commandments, too, was said to have taken place, not at Qades, but at the foot of the Holy Mountain amidst the signs of a volcanic eruption. This description did a serious wrong to the memory of Moses; for he, not the volcano god, had freed his people from Egypt. Compensation was due him, so Moses was transposed to Qades or mount Sinai-Horeb and put him in the place of the Midianite priest. We shall explain how this solution satisfied another, irresistibly urgent, tendency. In this way, a balance was established: Jahve extended his reach to Egypt from the mountain in Midia, and Moses was transferred to Qades, east of the Jordan. This is how he became one with the son-in-law of the Midianite Jethro, the man to whom he lent his name Moses. We know nothing about this other Moses. He is entirely obscured by the Egyptian Moses except possibly from clues provided by contradictions found in the Bible in the characterization of Moses. He is often described as masterful, hot-tempered, even violent, yet it is said of him that he was the most patient and sweet-tempered of men. Clearly, the latter qualities were useless to the Egyptian Moses who planned such great and difficult projects for his people. They belonged to the other, the Midianite. I think we are justified in separating the two from each other and assuming that the Egyptian Moses never was in Qades and never heard the name of Jahve, and the Midianite Moses never set foot in Egypt and knew nothing of

42 Grossmann, Mose und Seine Zeit, Göttingen 1913, p.54.
Aton. To make the two people into one, tradition or legend had to bring the Egyptian Moses to Midian; more than one explanation was given for it.

VI. You may reproach me for reconstructing the early history of Israel with certitude. This criticism echoes my judgment. I know this reconstruction has weak spots, but it has strong ones, too. The arguments for continuing this work prevail. The Biblical record contains invaluable, historical proofs. It has been distorted by tendentious influences and woven by poetical invention. We have been able to divine one of these distorting tendencies. This discovery shall guide us. It is a hint to uncover other distorting influences. If we find distortions produced by them, then we can bring to light more of the true course of events.

Critical research work on the Bible tells of the Hexateuch the five Books of Moses and the Book of Joshua, for they alone are of interest to us, came to be written. The oldest source is J, the Jahvistic, in which modern research workers think they recognize the priest Ebjatar, in the time of King David. It is not known how much later, the so-called Elohist comes, from the northern kingdom. After the destruction of this kingdom, in 722 B.C., a Jewish priest combined portions of J and E, adding his own writing. His work is called JE. In the seventh century, Deuteronomy, the fifth book, was added, with allegations that it had been found in the Temple. The priestly code was written after the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C., during the Exile and after the return. The fifth century saw revisions; since then, it has not been materially altered.

The history of King David and his time was probably contemporaneously written. It is real history, five hundred years before Herodotus, the "Father of History." One appreciates

\[44\] See Auerbach, Wüste und Gelobtes Land, 1932.
\[45\] Astruc in 1753 was the first to distinguish between Jahvist and Elohist.
\[46\] It is historically certain that the Jewish type was definitely fixed as a result of the reforms by Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C., therefore after the Exile, during the reign of the friendly Persians. According to our reckoning approximately 900 years had then passed since the appearance of Moses. By these reforms the regulations aiming at the consecration of the chosen people were taken seriously: the separation from the other tribes were put into force by forbidding mixed marriages; the Pentateuch, the real compilation of the law, was codified in its definitive form; the re-writing known as the Priestly Code was finished. It seems certain, however, that the reform did not adopt any new tendencies, but simply took over and consolidated former suggestions.
this achievement if one assumes, as in my hypothesis, Egyptian influence. The suggestion has even been made that early Israelites, the scribes of Moses, had a hand in the invention of the first alphabet. How far the accounts of former times are based on earlier sources or on oral tradition, and what interval elapsed between an event and its fixation by writing, we do not know. But the text, as we find it today tells us about its own history. Two distinct, opposed forces, have left their traces on it. On the one hand, certain transformations got to work on it, falsifying the text in accord with secret tendencies, maiming and extending it until it was turned into its opposite. On the other hand, an indulgent piety reigned over it, anxious to keep all as it stood, indifferent to whether the details fitted together or nullified one another. Thus almost everywhere one finds striking omissions, disturbing repetitions, palpable contradictions, a sign of unintended communications. The distortion of a text is like a murder. The execution of the deed is easy, but doing away with clues is hard. The double meanings of the word "distortion" are appropriate: not only "to change the appearance of," but "to wrench apart" or "put in another place." In many textual distortions we may count on finding suppressed and abnegated material hidden away, though in an altered shape and torn out of the original connection. It is not always easy to recognize it.

The distorting tendencies we detect must have influenced traditions before they were included. We have already discovered perhaps the most egregious. When the new god Jahve in Qades was instituted, he had to be glorified, or more accurately, established, made room for; but traces of former beliefs had first to be destroyed. The religion of the settled tribes did this successfully; no more was heard of it. But for the returning tribes the task was not so easy; they did not want to be deprived of the Exodus from Egypt, the man Moses and the custom of circumcision. They had been in Egypt, but they had left it, and thereafter, every trace of Egyptian influence was to be denied. Moses was disposed of, by displacing him to Midian and Qades, and making him into the same person as the priest who founded the Jahve religion. Circumcision, the most compromising sign of the dependence on Egypt, had to be retained, but, every effort was made to divorce this custom from Egypt. The passage in Exodus, written in an almost incomprehensible style, saying that God had been wroth with Moses for neglecting circumcision

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47 Cf. Yahuda, op.cit., pg. 142.
48 If they were bound by the prohibition against making images they had even a motive for forsaking the hieroglyphic picture writing when they adapted their written signs for the expression of a new language.
and that his Midianite wife saved his life by a speedy operation, can be interpreted only as a deliberate contradiction of the significant truth. Another invention for the purpose of invalidating a piece of inconvenient evidence also emerges.

It is hardly a new tendency -- only the continuation of the same one -- to find an effort to deny that Jahve was a new god, alien to the Jews. For that purpose the myths of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are used. Jahve says He had been the God of those patriarchs; it is true and He has to admit that they did not worship Him under this name.49

He does not add other names with which he was worshipped. The opportunity was taken to deal a decisive blow to the Egyptian origin of circumcision. Now Jahve was said to have demanded it of Abraham, to institute it as sign of the covenant with and Abraham's descendants. This, however, was a clumsy invention. To use a sign to distinguish someone from other people, one would choose something that the others didn't have -- certainly not something that millions could show. An Israelite, finding himself in Egypt, would have had to recognize all Egyptians as brothers, bound by the same bond, brothers in Jahve.

That circumcision was native to the Egyptians could not possibly have been unknown to the Israelites who created the text of the Bible. The passage from Joshua quoted by E. Meyer freely admits this; but nevertheless the fact had at all costs to be denied. We cannot expect religious myths to pay attention to logical connections. Otherwise the feeling of the people might have taken exception -- justifiably so to the behavior of a deity who makes a covenant with his patriarchs containing mutual obligations, and then ignores his human partners for centuries until it suddenly occurs to him to reveal himself again to their descendants.

Still more astonishing is the concept of a god "choosing" a people, making it "his," and him its god. It is unique in the history of religions. Others call people and their god inseparable; they are one from the beginning. Sometimes people adopt a new god, but a god never chooses a people. Perhaps we understand how unique this is when we think of the connection between Moses and the Jewish people. Moses stooped to the Jews, and made them his people; he made them his "chosen people."50

49 The restrictions in the use of the new name do not become any more comprehensible through this, though much more suspect.
50 Jahve was undoubtedly a volcano god. There was no reason for the inhabitants of Egypt to worship him. I am certainly not the first to be
There was another reason to bring the patriarchs into the Jahve religion. They lived in Canaan; their memory was connected with the geography of Canaan. Perhaps they had been Canaanite heroes or local divinities, adopted by the immigrating Israelites early in their history. Evoking them proved that one was born and bred in the country, denying the odium that clings to alien conquerors. It was clever: Jahve gave them only what their ancestors had once possessed.

Later the Bible avoids mentioning Qades, which becomes the divine mountain Sinai-Horeb. Perhaps those Hebrews did not want to be reminded of Midian. But all the later distortions, especially the Priestly Code, serve an attempt to backdate laws and institutions to early times, to claim the force of Mosaic law and claim holiness and force of law. Although this is a falsification, there is a psychological justification. 800 years elapsed between Exodus and the canonized Biblical text of Ezra and Nehemiah; the Jahve religion fused (perhaps losing the identity) with the religion of the original Moses. The outcome: the religious history of the Jews.

VII. Of all the events of Jewish prehistory that later people wanted to twist, one stands out -- the necessary, idealistic suppression -- the murder of the great leader and liberator

struck by the similarity of the name Jahve to the root of the name of another god: Jupiter, Jovis. The composite name Jochanaan, made up in part from the Hebrew word Jahve and having a rather similar meaning to that of Godfrey or its Punic equivalent Hannibal, has become one of the most popular names of European Christendom in the forms of Johann, John, Jean, Juan. When the Italians reproduce it in the shape of Giovanni and then call one day of the week Giovedi they bring to light again a similarity, which perhaps means nothing or possibly means very much. Far-reaching possibilities, though very insecure ones, open out here. In those dark centuries which historical research is only beginning to explore, the countries around the eastern basin of the Mediterranean were apparently the scene of frequent and violent volcanic eruptions which were bound to make the deepest impression on the inhabitants. Evans supposes that the final destruction of the palace of Minos at Knossos was also the result of an earthquake. In Crete, as probably everywhere in the Aegean world, the great Mother Goddess was then worshipped. The observation that she was unable to guard her house against the attack of a stronger power might have contributed to her having to cede her place to a male deity, whereupon the volcano god had the first right to replace her. Zeus still bears the name of "Earth-shaker." There is hardly a doubt, that in those obscure times mother deities were replaced by male gods. (perhaps originally their sons) Specially impressive is the fate of Pallas Athene, who was no doubt the local form of the mother deity; through the religious revolution she was reduced to a daughter, robbed of her own mother, and eternally debarred from motherhood by the taboo of virginity.
Moses, which Sellin divined from the Prophets. Sellin’s presumption is not fanciful; it is probable. Moses, trained in Ikhnaton's school, used the king’s methods; he commanded, forcing his religion on the people. Moses’ may have been more uncompromising than his Master; he didn’t need to retain a connection with the Sun God as the school of On had no importance to his people. Moses met with the same fate as Ikhnaton, that of all enlightened despots. Moses’ Jews were as unable to find in a highly spiritualized religion, the satisfaction they needed, like the 18th Dynasty Egyptians. The same thing happened to both: those in tutelage, or the dispossessed, revolted and threw off the burden of an enforced religion. The tame Egyptians waited until fate removed their sacred Pharaoh, but the savage Semites took destiny into their own hands and murdered their tyrant.

Our Bible prepares us for Moses’ end. "Wandering in the Wilderness," describes a series of revolts against Moses, which, by Jahve's command, were savagely suppressed. One of those revolts may have ended differently than the text admits. The falling away from the new religion, though as a mere episode, in the story of the golden calf, where by an adroit turn, the breaking of the tablets of the law -- to be understood symbolically (="he has broken the law") -- is ascribed to Moses himself and imputed to his angry indignation.

Later, at the coming together at Qades, the people regretted Moses’ murder and tried to forget it. Bringing the Exodus closer in time to the founding of their religion in the oasis, Moses, instead of the other founder, could satisfy the claims of the people, while denying the painful fact of his violent removal. It is unlikely that Moses could have participated in the events at Qades, even if his life had not been shortened.

Let us try to clear up this the order of events. The Exodus from Egypt occurs shortly after the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1350 B.C.), for the Egyptian chroniclers included the subsequent years of anarchy in the reign of Horemheb (the king who brought it to an end and who reigned until 1315 B.C.). Next we are aided by the stele of Merneptah (1225-1215 B.C.), extolling the victory over Isiraal (Israel) and the destruction

51 In those times any other form of influence would not have been possible.
52 It is truly remarkable how seldom we hear during the millenia of Egyptian history of violent depositions or assassinations of a Pharaoh. A comparison with Assyrian history, for example, must increase this astonishment. The reason may, of course, be that with the Egyptians historical recording served exclusively official purposes.
of their seeds (sic). Although its value is doubtful; it gives evidence that Israelite tribes were then living in Canaan.\[53\] E. Meyer rightly concludes from this stele that Merneptah could not have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Exodus must belong to an earlier period. Who was Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus seems an idle question, because there was no Pharaoh during the interregnum, when the Exodus happened. The Merneptah stele does not throw any light on the possible date of the fusion and the acceptance of the new religion in Qades. We know they took place between 1350 and 1215. We assume the Exodus was very near to the earlier date, and Qades not far from the second. The time between was the time between the two events. A fairly long cooling off time would have been needed by the returning tribes after Moses murder, for Moses’ Levites to influence the compromise in Qades. Two generations, or sixty years, might just suffice. The date inferred from the stele of Merneptah falls too early, and as one assumption rests on another; we must admit that this is a weak spot in the construction. But everything connected with the settling in Canaan is obscure and confused. We might say that the name on the “Israel” stele does not refer to the tribes whose fate we are trying to follow and who later on were united in the people of Israel. After all, the Amarna name of Habiru (= Hebrews) was passed on to this people.

Whenever the tribes united into a nation of the new religion might not have mattered in world history. The new religion might have disappeared in time, Jahve might have been numbered in the parade of past gods, which Flaubert visualized, and all twelve tribes would have been "lost," not just the ten for whom the Anglo-Saxons have so long been searching. Jahve, to whom the Midianite Moses led a new people, was probably nothing special. A rude, violent, narrow-minded, bloodthirsty local god, he promised his followers “a land flowing with milk and honey” and urged them to destroy the present residents of the land “with the sword’s edge.” It is startling, after so much revision of the Bible, that enough remains to recognize his original nature. Perhaps his religion was true monotheism, denying the character of god to other divinities. It was, perhaps, enough that this god was stronger than all strange gods. When events took another course than we would expect, there is only one reason. The Egyptian Moses gave the people a more spiritual concept of God, one God embracing the world, one, all loving and all powerful, who, without ceremony and magic, defined the highest aim as a life of truth and justice. Incomplete as our facts about the ethics of Aton’s religion may be, significantly, Ikhnaton

\[53\] E. Meyer, op.cit., p. 222.
described himself in his inscriptions as "living in Maat" (truth, justice).\textsuperscript{54} It matters not that the people, probably very quickly, removed and renounced Moses. The tradition remained; its influence, over centuries, reached the success that was denied to Moses. Jahve attained undeserved honor when, from Qades onward, Moses' deeds were credited to him. Yet the shadow of the god whose place he replaced was stronger than he; and the forgotten Mosaic God returned. Doubtless, it was only the idea of that other God that enabled the people of Israel to survive and to prevail.

We do not know what part the Levites played in the victory of the Mosaic God over Jahve. At the compromise of Qades, they voted for Moses, the Master, whose followers and countrymen they were, fresh in their memory. In the centuries since, the Levites became one with the people, or with the priesthood, and the main task of the priests turned to developing and supervising ritual, and caring for the and revising the holy texts in for practical use. But wasn't all this sacrifice and ceremony basically magic, a black art, which the doctrine of Moses had condemned? Out of the people arose an unending succession of men, not necessarily of Moses' own people, seized by the great and powerful tradition, which had grown in darkness. These men, prophets, carefully preached Mosaic doctrine: God without sacrifice and ceremony; God asking only faith, truth and justice (Maat). These prophets had enduring success; their re-established old beliefs became the permanent content of the Jewish religion. The Jewish people are honored by preserving such a tradition and producing men to give it voice although the impetus first came from a great stranger.

My certainty in this history is based on the judgment of other, expert researchers who see the importance of Moses to the Jewish religion, without recognizing his Egyptian origin. Sellin says,\textsuperscript{55} “We picture the true religion of Moses, the belief he proclaimed in one, ethical god, as in future, a matter of course, belonging to a small circle of people. We cannot find it in the official cults, the priests' religion, the general belief of the people. All we see here is a spark of belief flying up from the spiritual fire, preserving his ideas, quietly influencing beliefs and customs until, sooner or later, under the influence of events, or through a pervasive personality, breaking forth more strongly and gaining dominance with the

\textsuperscript{54} His hymns lay stress on not only the universality and oneness of God, but also His loving kindness for all creatures; they invite believers to enjoy nature and its beauties. Cf. Breasted: \textit{The Dawn of Conscience}.

\textsuperscript{55} Sellin, op. cit., p. 52.
masses. We see the early religious history of the Israelites from this vantage. If we rebuilt a Mosaic religion after the pattern laid down in the descriptions of the first five centuries in Canaan, we would create the worst chaos." Volz\textsuperscript{56} says "the soaring work of Moses was at first hardly understood and feebly carried out, until during the course of centuries it penetrated more and more into the spirit of the people, at last finding kindred souls in the great prophets who continued the work of the lonely Founder."

I come to the end of fitting an Egyptian Moses into the framework of Jewish history. Two peoples fuse into one nation, two kingdoms divide the nation, -- two names for the Deity and two new names: both Moses, whom we have separated from each other. These dyads are necessary: one people was traumatized; the other was spared. What power resides in this tradition! Who would deny the influence of great men on human history, who would profane the grandiose diversity of human life by recognizing material needs as the only motive from which ideas, especially religious ones, draw the power to subjugate individuals and peoples; to study all this as it relates to Jewish history would be an alluring task. But I hardly trust my powers any further.

\textsuperscript{56} Paul Volz: Mose, Tübingen 1907, p. 64.