MOSES IN THE PROPHETS AND THE WRITINGS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

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After the Pentateuch, Moses fades as a central character in the Hebrew Bible. Only about 8% of the approximately 770 mentions of Moses in the Hebrew Bible are outside of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, the first book of the Prophets. Moses is the essential figure of the Exodus, wilderness, and law-giving narratives of the Pentateuch, and Joshua’s conquest of Canaan is, to some degree, the fulfillment of those narratives. However, since the Exodus, wilderness wanderings, and Law are frequently referenced in the rest of the Hebrew Bible, one wonders why Moses himself almost disappears after the initial books. For instance, he is mentioned only five times in the fifteen books of the writing prophets (the Latter Prophets), and not at all in the wisdom literature or festival scrolls in the Writings section of the Bible. He does appear, however, in strategic places in the Former Prophets besides Joshua (16 times); in the Psalms (8 times); in the Persian-era books of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles (31 times altogether); and twice in Daniel. Nevertheless, as has been noticed, “these numbers do not suggest a particularly high esteem for Moses: David is mentioned much more frequently.”

While the slighting of Moses in these texts must mean something, the implications of this disregard are much debated. Why does citing Moses

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1 The Hebrew Bible is arranged into three sections: the Pentateuch or Law (Torah); the Prophets (Nevi'im, which includes the historical books or Former Prophets as well as the fifteen books named after prophets, the so-called Latter Prophets); and the Writings (Ketuvim, the miscellaneous books of wisdom, poetry, and some history). There are approximately 650 mentions of Moses in the Torah; 79 in the Prophets (Joshua alone has 58 mentions in the Hebrew text); and 41 in the Writings. All English translations in this essay are those of the author.

2 Note, for instance, Hosea 12:3-10, 13; 13:4; Amos 2:10-11; 3:2; Micah 6:3-4; Isaiah 11:16; Jeremiah 2:6-7; Ezekiel 2:5; Haggai 2:5. In these passages, God’s revelation to Israel in Egypt is mentioned, or his bringing them up out of that country. The word tôrah (“law”) is found 36 times in the Psalms, and 44 times in prophetic literature, twenty of which are in the phrase tôrat-Yhwh/Elohim, “the law of Yahweh/God.”

or his authority seem necessary to some biblical authors in the Prophets and the Writings, but not to others? Are there particular cultural, religious, or other variables at work? To answer these questions and to analyze the ways in which the figure of Moses is used within the Prophets and the Writings, this essay will survey these books divided into four categories of texts: the Deuteronomistic History, the prophetic literature, the Psalter, and the Persian- and Hellenistic-era literature.

We must note in advance that, while the Penteuch contains the main narratives that have framed the Moses legend for his interpreters, this does not necessarily mean its materials predate that of the latter two sections of the Hebrew Bible, in spite of the fact that the Pentateuch was placed first, before the Prophets and the Writings. (All three sections of the Hebrew Bible have a complicated history of composition and redaction throughout the first millennium BCE, even if the development of some books can be traced more easily than others.) Indeed, the nineteenth-century scholar Julius Wellhausen in his Prolegomena to the History of Israel famously claimed that the Prophets came before Moses and the Law in ancient Israel's religious history. Some references to Moses in the Prophets and the Writings are dependent on the Pentateuch while others may not be influenced by it at all—e.g., perhaps Hosea 12:14; Jer. 15:7; and some genealogical notices (Jud. 1:6; 4:11; 18:30; 1 Chron. 23:14–15). Therefore, the effort in the present essay is not to search for alterations in Moses's image as it developed from an earliest original form found in the Pentateuch, but to look for how Moses was understood and translated for different purposes in different settings outside the Pentateuch, whose main aim was to present Israel's founding legal texts.

Moses in the Deuteronomistic History or Former Prophets

The “Deuteronomistic History” (DtrH) is a term that refers to the dominant source in the books of Joshua through 2 Kings (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings; that is, the Former Prophets), not including Ruth, which in the Hebrew order is placed in the Writings, the third and final section of the Hebrew Bible. The books of DtrH, which together with Deuteronomy had a common redactional process even if their various parts can be dated to

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