Which Moses? Jewish Background of Jesus' Transfiguration

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The importance of Mosaic traditions for understanding Jesus' transfiguration has long been noticed by many distinguished students of the New Testament. While the role of Mosaic motifs found in the Hebrew Bible has been duly acknowledged, these studies often neglect extra-biblical Mosaic developments that might also constitute a conceptual background of Jesus' metamorphosis on the mountain. The purpose of this paper is to explore early para-biblical traditions in which the son of Amram was understood not merely as a prophet, but also as a divine figure.

Mosaic Settings of the Transfiguration Story

The synoptic accounts of Jesus's transfiguration exhibit the features of a theophany. In analyzing the theophanic features, it is important to recognize a possible source of conceptual influences stemming from previous biblical and extra-biblical accounts. Memory of these influences is reflected not only in the special features of the crucial symbolic nexus of this theophany, the transfigured Jesus, but also in the distinctive actions and reactions of the beholders of this crucial vision, not to mention the peculiar spatial and temporal settings of the entire event. In this respect, the reactions of those present at the affair, along with the peculiar depictions of their appearance and behavior, may provide relevant information about the exact nature of the epiphany and its conceptual roots. Even a preliminary glance

at the transfiguration account reveals the unmistakable presence of motifs tied to Moses' encounters with the divine *Kavod* on Mount Sinai.

It is not a coincidence that early Christian authors relied on the memory of this paradigmatic theophanic event of the Hebrew Bible,[1] since the recollection of the Sinai apparition of the divine Glory and its prominent beholder, the son of Amram, became a theophanic blueprint for this Christological development. Many ancient and modern students of the transfiguration account have previously discerned explicit and implicit influences of the Mosaic theophanic patterns.[2] Ancient Christian exegetes — Irenaeus,[3] Eusebius of Caesa-

[1] Scholars have noticed that the transfiguration account draws on a panoply of biblical and extra-biblical theophanic conceptual streams, including Ezekielian, Danielic, and Enochic imagery. On this, see Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament,* Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 106.

[2] See William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew,* International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 2.686-7; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 47; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 34B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 34; Leroy A. Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 211; Simon S. Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration and the Believers' Transformation: A Study of the Transfiguration and Its Development in Early Christian Writings*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.265 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 17–22; M. David Litwa, *Iesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 123; Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 81–83; Candida Moss, "The Transfiguration: An Exercise in Markan Accommodation," *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004): 72–73; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 416-417; Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 131.

rea,[4] Ephrem the Syrian,[5] and many others entertained such connections.[6] In the context of modern history of biblical studies David Friedrich Strauss has already outlined the essential points of similarity between the transfiguration accounts in the synoptic gospels and Moses' ordeals on Sinai in the Old Testament, concentrating mainly

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[3] Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 4.20.9 reads: "And the Word spake to Moses, appearing before him, 'just as any one might speak to his friend.' But Moses desired to see Him openly who was speaking with him, and was thus addressed: 'Stand in the deep place of the rock, and with my hand I will cover thee. But when my splendour shall pass by, then thou shalt see my back parts, but my face thou shalt not see: for no man sees my face, and shall live.' Two facts are thus signified: that it is impossible for man to see God; and that, through the wisdom of God, man shall see Him in the last times, in the depth of a rock, that is, in His coming as a man. And for this reason did He [the Lord] confer with him face to face on the top of a mountain, Elias being also present, as the Gospel relates, He thus making good in the end the ancient promise." Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* in: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 5.446.

[4] In his *Proof of the Gospel* 3:2, Eusebius unveils the following tradition: "Again when Moses descended from the Mount, his face was seen full of glory: for it is written: 'And Moses descending from the Mount did not know that the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified while He spake to him. And Aaron and all the elders [of the children] of Israel saw Moses, and the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified.' In the same way only more grandly our Saviour led His disciples "to a very high mountain, and he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments were white like the light." William John, ed., *The Proof of the Gospel: Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Cæsarea* (2 vols.; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 1.107.

[5] Reflecting on Jesus' transfiguration, Ephrem in his *Hymns on the Church* 36:5-6 recounts: "the brightness which Moses put on was wrapped on him from without, and in that differed from the light of Christ, which shone from within in the womb, at the baptism, and on the mountain top." Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World of St. Ephrem* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 71.

[6] Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 243.

on the biblical traditions reflected in Exod 24:1-2, 9-18 and Exod 34:29-35.[7] Since Strauss' pioneering research, these parallels have been routinely reiterated and elaborated by various modern scholars.

The appropriation of the Mosaic theophanic motifs in Mark, Matthew, and Luke is a complex and multifaceted issue, since evolution of these traditions in the synoptic gospels remains a debated matter. Although some scholars argue that the Mosaic allusions appear to be present in their most articulated form in the Gospel of Matthew,[8] already in the Gospel of Mark one can detect the formative influence of the Mosaic blueprint. Mark, however, does not mention several of the Mosaic features found in Matthew and Luke, including the motif of Jesus' luminous face. Some scholars have suggested that Mark could be intentionally silencing Mosaic allusions,

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[7] Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 82; David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 544-545.

[8] Allison notes that "among the Matthean manipulations of Mark's text are the following: Moses has been given the honor of being named before Elijah; 'and his face shone like the sun' has been added; the cloud has been made 'bright' (*photeine*); 'in whom I am well pleased' has been inserted; and the order of *akouete autou* has been reversed. Various suggestions for these alterations can and have been made; but simplicity recommends one proposition to account for them all: Matthew rescripted Mark in order to push thoughts towards Moses. Thus the lawgiver now comes first, and no priority of significance is given to Elijah. 'Face' and 'sun' recall the extra-biblical tradition that Moses' face (cf. Exod 34:29) shone like the sun (Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2:70; 2 Cor 3:7-18; *LAB* 12:1; *Sipre Num.* §140; *b. B. Bat.* 75a; *Deut. Rab.*11 (207c); this is to be related to the idea that Moses on Sinai went to the place of the sun — *LAB* 12; cf. *2 Bar.* 59:11). *Photeine* alludes to the Shekinah, which accompanied Israel and Moses in the wilderness and tradition associated Moses' radiance with the glory of the Shekinah. The citation of Isa 42:1 ('in whom I am well pleased') makes Jesus the *ʿebed YHWH*, a figure with Mosaic associations (see pp. 68-71, 233-35). Finally, the change to *autou akouete* strengthens the allusion to LXX Deut 18:15 (*autou akousesthe*), which speaks of a prophet like Moses (cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4:22)." Allison, *New Moses*, 244.

battling early "prophetic Christology,"[9] which attempted to envision Jesus as a prophet like Moses.[10] Nevertheless, as William Davies and Dale Allison point out "although Mark ... does not appear to have stressed the Mosaic background of the transfiguration, the tradition

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[9] One of the proponents of this perspective, John McGuckin, suggests that "the fact that Mark deliberately omits reference to the Shekinah light on the face of Jesus, and chooses to speak instead of a thoroughgoing metamorphosis (a striking Hellenistic word, very rare in the NT, signifying radical spiritual transformation) argues that he wished to remove any overtly Sinaitic theme in his version of the narrative, and his main reason for doing this, I suggest, is to remove the Moses-Jesus analogy from centre stage, along with its inherently prophetic Christology." John A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1986), 15. In another part of his study McGuckin proposes that "by removing reference to the shining face Mark economically removes the Mosaic Christological typology from the narrative. It is his concern to obviate this type of prophetic Christology in the Transfiguration story, and although he retains a Sinai archetype as a structural form, he does not retain the original theological point of using such an archetype in the first place." McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 66-67.

[10] On this, see Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 36-37; Michael Goulder, "Elijah with Moses, or a Rift in the Pre-Markan Lute," in David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett, eds., *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 193-208; Tobias Hägerland, *Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins: An Aspect of His Prophetic Mission*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 150 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 217-218; Wolfgang Kraus, "Die Bedeutung von Dtn 18,15–18 für das Verständnis Jesu als Prophet," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 90 (1999): 153–76; John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.173 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 271–86; Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 45–6, 87–99; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 97.

he received was largely formulated with Sinai in mind."[11] Therefore, parallels between Mk 9:2-8 and Exod 24 and Exod 34 are rather abundant.[12]

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[11] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.686-7. In relation to these developments, Adela Yarbro Collins argues that "the account of the transfiguration evokes the Old Testament genre of the theophany and especially the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis. The affinity with biblical theophany is especially apparent in comparison with the account of the theophany on Mount Sinai ... Although it is used differently, both texts have the period of 'six days'; both have a cloud on a mountain signifying the presence of God; both have the presence of Moses on the mountain; and both report speech of God on the mountain. In Exodus, the speech of God is reported in 25:1-31:18. This speech concerns the construction of the 'tent' or 'tabernacle' in the wilderness, including its furniture and rituals." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 416-417.

[12] While reflecting on possible parallels between Exodus and Mark, they notice that "in both (i) the setting is the same: a high mountain (Exod 24.12, 15-18; 34.3; Mark 9.2); (ii) there is a cloud that descends and overshadows the mountain (Exod 24.15-18; 34.5; Mk 9.7); (iii) a voice comes from the cloud (Exod 24.16; Mark 9.7); (iv) the central figures, Jesus and Moses, become radiant (Exod 34.29-30, 35; Mark 9.2-3); (v) those who see the radiance of the central figure become afraid (Exod 34.30; Mark 9.6); (vi) the event takes place 'after six days' (Exod 24.16; Mark 9.2); and (vii) a select group of three people is mentioned (Exod 24.1; Mark 9.2)." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.686-7. Further commenting on Elijah and Moses' appearance in the transfiguration story, Davies and Allison note that these two characters both of whom "converse with the transfigured Jesus, are the only OT figures of whom it is related that they spoke with God on Mount Sinai. So their appearance on a mountain in the NT should probably evoke the thought of Mount Sinai." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.686-7. Some other scholars also registered the overwhelming presence of the Mosaic Sinai motifs by noting that "there are many features about the transfiguration that have led commentators to conclude that this episode is intended to have some sort of typological connection to Exod 24 and 33-34, passages that describe Moses' ascent up the mountain where he meets God and then descends with a shining face ... The following specific parallels between Mark's account (9:2-8) and Exodus are evident: (1) the reference to 'six days' (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:16), (2) the cloud that covers the mountain (Mark 9:7; Exod 24:16), (3) God's voice from the cloud (Mark 9:7; Exod 24:16), (4) three companions (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:1, 9), (5) a transformed appearance (Mark 9:3; Exod

The memory of Mosaic Sinai encounters is even more apparent in the Matthean version of the transfiguration.[13] In fact, the influx of Mosaic allusions has caused some scholars to suggest that Matthew attempts to portray Jesus as a "new Moses." One of the proponents of this idea, Dale Allison, argues that in Matthew "the major theme of the epiphany story would seem to be Jesus' status as a new Moses, and Exod 24 and 34 would seem to be important influences." Reflecting on the motif of Jesus' luminous face found in Matthew, Allison proposes "there is scarcely room for doubt that Matthew has modified Mark for the deliberate purpose of presenting Jesus after the manner of Moses."[14]

However, in the scholarly debates about Jesus as the new Moses it often remains uncertain which Mosaic developments are under consideration by scholars — traditions of the human Moses found in

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34:30), and (6) the reaction of fear (Mark 9:6; Exod 34:30)." Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 34.

[13] In his recent study, Leroy Huizenga reflects on these previous scholarly insights by noting that "reigning interpretation of the Matthean transfiguration in particular concerns the perceived foregrounding of Sinai motifs and the presentation of Jesus as a new Moses. Commentators point to a multitude of details for support. The phrase 'after six days' (Matt 17:1) seems reminiscent of Exod 24:15–18, which relates that the Shekinah covered Sinai for six days (Exod 24:16). Like the Matthean Jesus, Moses is accompanied by three named adherents (Matt 17:1; Exod 24:1, 9). The mountain of Matt 17:1 perhaps recalls Sinai. Like Moses, the Matthean Jesus becomes radiant (Matt 17:2; Exod 34:29–35). Jesus' radiance and Moses' radiance arouse fear (Matt 17:6; Exod 34:29–30). Moses and Elijah appear in Matt 17:3, both of whom conversed with God on Sinai (cf. 1 Kgs 19:8–19). The cloud of Matt 17:5 may concern Moses and Sinai (Exod 19:16; 24:15–18; 34:5), and a cloud was certainly a major feature of wilderness traditions (Exod 13:21–22; 33:7–11; 40:34–38; Num 9:15–23). Both Matt 17:5 and Exod 24:16 share the feature of a voice from a cloud. The word ἐπισκιάζω in Matt 17:5 is found also in Exod 40:35. Finally, the last two words of the heavenly voice in Matt 17:5, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, may allude to Deut 18:15, Moses' words concerning the coming eschatological prophet." Huizenga, *The New Isaac,* 211.

[14] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.685-686.

the biblical theophanic accounts or portrayals of the deified Moses attested in the *Exagoge* of the Ezekiel the Tragedian and the writings of Philo. In these extra-biblical renderings of Moses' story that precede Christianity, the prophet's visionary ordeals were often envisioned as his angelification or deification. Moreover, in the course of these encounters Moses himself often absorbs some divine features, including the attributes of the divine Glory (*Kavod*).[15]

Scholarly discussions which attempt to envision Jesus as the new Moses often ignore these extra-biblical testimonies, where Moses was portrayed not merely as a seer, but as an embodiment of the divine *Kavod*. Instead, contemporary theories about Jesus as the new Moses prefer to rely solely on the memory of biblical Mosaic tradi-

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[15] In this respect, Jarl Fossum argues that "although we would be right to see a Moses pattern behind the synoptic account of Jesus' 'transfiguration,' the usual citation of texts from Exodus cannot throw much light on Mark 9:2-8 and its parallels." Jarl Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis: The 'Transfiguration' of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels," in Jarl Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 30 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz; Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 76. For Moses' exaltation, see Richard Bauckham, "Moses as 'God' in Philo of Alexandria: A Precedent for Christology?" in I. Howard Marshall et al., eds., *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Max Turner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 246–65; George W. Coats, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 57 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 155–78; Donald A. Hagner, "The Vision of God in Philo and John: A Comparative Study," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 14 (1971): 81–93; Wendy Helleman, "Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God," *Studia Philonica Annual* 2 (1990): 51–71; Carl Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic-Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977); Larry Hurtado, *One Lord, One God: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 56–59; Lierman, *The New Testament Moses*; David Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 48–75; Ian W. Scott, "Is Philo's Moses a Divine Man?" *Studia Philonica Annual* 14 (2002): 87–111; Jan Willem van Henten, "Moses as Heavenly Messenger in Assumptio Mosis 10:2 and Qumran passages," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 54 (2003): 216–27.

tions, while the non-biblical allusions are largely ignored. Yet the complex and multifaceted nature of Mosaic influences on the transfiguration accounts should not lead us to simplified conclusions that the synoptic gospels' intention was merely to portray Jesus as a transformed visionary, similar to the biblical Moses.[16] Scholars have convincingly demonstrated that Jesus' transfiguration clearly supersedes the biblical patterns of the son of Amram's transformation. As we recall, in the Hebrew Bible the luminous face of the great Israelite prophet serves as a mere reflection of God's Glory.[17] However, in the transfiguration account, where God assumes the aural invisible profile, being depicted as formless divine Voice, some peculiar features of the missing divine *Kavod* are transferred to the new personalized nexus of the visual theophany — Jesus, now understood as a center of the theophany. In this respect one of the significant details underlying the difference between Jesus' luminous metamorphosis and the luminosity of Moses's face is the order of the deity's appearance in the respective visionary traditions. In the biblical accounts, Moses' face becomes luminous only *after* the prophet's encounter with God. The appearance of God's Form thus precedes the transformation of the seer's face, which in these theophanic currents is often understood as a mere mirror of the divine Glory. However, in the transfig-

[16] On Jesus as the new Moses, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.696; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary 33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 492-493; Marcus, *The Way of the Lord,* 80-93; François Refoulé, "Jésus, nouveau Moise, ou Pierre, nouveau Grand Prêtre? (Mt 17, 1-9; Mc 9, 2-10)," *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 24 (1993): 145-62.

[17] On the luminosity of Moses' face, see Menahem Haran, "The Shining of Moses's Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography [Exod 34:29–35; Ps 69:32; Hab 3:4]," in W. Boyd Barrick, John R. Spencer, eds., *In the Shelter of Elyon*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 31 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984), 159–73; Julian Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925): 1–27; William Propp, "The Skin of Moses' Face – Transfigured or Disfigured?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 375–386.

uration story, Jesus' luminous metamorphosis occurs *before* the apparition of the Divinity. This manifests a striking contrast to the biblical Exodus theophanies where the initial source of Moses' glorious face, or his glorious apotheosis, the divine Form, appears first.[18] Jesus himself thus became understood as a revelation of the divine Glory and not as its glorious "mirror." In relation to these developments, Adela Yarbro Collins notes that

> the connection with the text from Exodus, however does not explain the statement in v. 2 that Jesus was transfigured. A later passage in Exodus says that, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face "shone" or "had been glorified" because he had been talking with God. One could argue that, analogously, Jesus was transfigured because he was talking with two heavenly beings, the glorified Elijah and Moses. The text, however, seems to imply that Jesus' transfigured state is part of revelation, rather than a result of it.[19]

Furthermore, unlike in Exodus, where the deity is clearly conceived as the divine *Kavod* (and initial theophanic cause for Moses' facial luminosity), in the transfiguration story God is not fashioned as the anthropomorphic divine Glory, but instead as an aniconic aural manifestation. Some of these differences between the two metamorphoses, Moses and Jesus, have been discussed by scholars. Criticizing the hypothesis about Jesus as new Moses, Heil rightly observes that the fatal flaw of such an interpretation is that the transformation involves only the face of Moses and *follows* his speaking with God. Jesus' transfiguration involves not only his face but his clothing and *precedes* his encounter with the deity.[20]

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[18] Arthur Michael Ramsey highlights the difference, noting that whereas Moses' glory on Sinai was reflected, Jesus' glory was unborrowed. Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), 120.

[19] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 417.

[20] John Paul Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus: Narrative Meaning and Function of Mark 9:2-8, Matt 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36*, Analecta Biblica 144 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 78-79.

Keeping in mind a rich and multifaceted legacy of the Mosaic developments in the Second Temple Jewish environment, which included not only formative biblical accounts but also their extra-biblical elaborations, we now turn to some of these testimonies, as reflected in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, Philo, and the Qumran writings. Within these traditions Moses himself becomes envisioned as the nexus of theophany, often being understood as a celestial being, endowed with the distinctive ocularcentric attributes of the deity.

THE EXTRA-BIBLICAL MOSAIC DEVELOPMENTS

Joel Marcus draws attention to three dimensions of Mosaic developments in early Jewish extra-biblical lore which are for him significant for understanding Jesus' transfiguration. These include Moses' enthronement, his translation to heaven at his death, and his divinization.[21] With respect to this study, these dimensions are important precisely because in these extra-biblical elaborations Moses is often endowed with the attributes of the divine Glory.

Moses' Enthronement

The conceptual trajectory of Moses' enthronement is already present in the work of the second-century B.C.E. Jewish poet Ezekiel the Tragedian where Moses receives tokens of kingship from God on Mount Sinai.[22] Moses' enhanced profile in the *Exagoge* represents one of the most significant advancements, propelling the prophet's story into an entirely new theophanic dimension.

Preserved in fragmentary form by several ancient sources,[23] *Exagoge* 67–90 reads:

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[21] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 84.

[22] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 84.

[23] The Greek text of the passage was published in several editions, including: A.-M. Denis, *Fragmenta pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt graeca*, Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 210; Bruno Snell, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta I* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

> Moses: I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned to me with his right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens. A multitude of stars fell before my knees and I counted them all. They paraded past me like a battalion of men. Then I awoke from my sleep in fear.
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> Raguel: My friend, this is a good sign from God. May I live to see the day when these things are fulfilled. You will establish a great throne, become a judge and leader of men. As for your vision of the whole earth, the world below and that above the heavens – this signifies that you will see what is, what has been and what shall be.[24]

Given its quotation by Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 80–40 B.C.E.), this Mosaic account has been often taken as a witness to traditions of the second century B.C.E.[25] The text exhibits a tendency to adapt some Enochic motifs and themes into the framework of the Mosaic tradition.[26]

Ruprecht, 1971), 288-301; Howard Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 54; Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors,* 3 vols. Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations 30. Pseudepigrapha Series 12 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 2.362-66.

[24] Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54–55.

[25] Meeks, *The Prophet-King,* 149. See also Holladay, *Fragments*, 2.308–12.

[26] On the Enochic motifs in the *Exagoge*, see Pieter van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 34 (1983): 21–29; Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 262-268; Kristine Ruffatto, "Polemics with Enochic Traditions in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 15 (2006): 195-210; idem, "Raguel as Interpreter of Moses' Throne Vision: The Transcendent Identity of Raguel in the Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 17 (2008): 121-39.

With respect to the present study, the most salient feature of the account is the transfer of several distinctive theophanic attributes, including the attribute of the divine seat, to Moses. Notably, God himself appears to execute the transferal when he orders Moses to take the seat he previously occupied. The enthroned celestial figure then vacates his heavenly seat and hands his royal attributes to the son of Amram.

Marcus notices similarities of the *Exagoge* with Daniel 7, which royal features are now transferred into a distinctive Mosaic context. Marcus points out that in the *Exagoge,* "which has some striking similarities to the vision described in Dan 7:13-14, the ascent of Sinai ... is linked with Moses' reception of a kingly scepter and of a crown, and with his mounting of a throne."[27] Marcus notices that Jethro's interpretation of the dream also contains a reference to Moses' enthronement since it predicts that "Moses will 'cause a mighty throne to rise ... will rule and govern men' (lines 85-86), thus cementing the royal interpretation of the Sinai ascent."[28]

These developments attested in the *Exagoge* are significant for our investigation of the Mosaic traditions in the transfiguration story. As previously noted, in this early text Moses' story makes an important symbolic turn by upgrading the protagonist's status from a visionary to an object of vision. It is also notable that we can trace this transition in the *Exagoge*, since such a paradigm shift literally unfolds before the eyes of the account's readers. As one remembers, Moses first sees the *Kavod* and then he himself becomes its embodiment. The implicit postulation of the heavenly locale of Moses' ordeal is also significant. Commenting on the *Exagoge's* portrayal of Moses, Jarl Fossum notes that "although the author here speaks about ascending Mt. Sinai, it is clear that the locale described is a heavenly one. The throne of the 'noble Man' is enormous, reaching to the 'corners of heaven.' From its place Moses can see everything.

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[27] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 85
[28] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 85

The 'heavenly bodies,' which in Israelite-Jewish religion are identical with the angels, fall down and worship him."[29]

A significant detail of the *Exagoge* account, relevant to our study of the transfiguration story, is a designation of the celestial man, whose place is later taken by Moses as *phos*. The term φῶς/φώς was often used in the Jewish theophanic traditions to label the glorious manifestations of the deity as well as his anthropomorphic human "icons," who radiate the luminosity of their newly acquired celestial bodies. These traditions often play on the ambiguity of the term, which, depending on the context, can designate either "a man" (φώς) or "light" (φῶς), pointing to both the luminous and anthropomorphic nature of the divine or angelic manifestations.[30]

The *Exagoge*'s identification of the great Israelite prophet with a celestial form is not a unique occurrence. Scholars often point to some Samaritan materials suggestive of Moses' installation into the heavenly realm. Although these traditions survived in the later macroforms, they are similar to some early Jewish pseudepigraphical developments. Jarl Fossum draws attention to a text from the third century hymn cycle known as the *Defter,* where one finds the following tradition:

> Great God, whose like there is not! Great assembly [i.e. the angelic host] without compeer! Great Prophet the like of whom there has never arisen! ... Verily he was clothed with a garment with which no king can clothe himself. Verily he was covered by the cloud and his face was clothed with a ray of light, so all na-

[29] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 75.

[30] On the φως traditions, see Gilles Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 1–13 at 6–7; Jarl Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 280; idem, *Image of the Invisible God*, 16–17; Silviu N. Bunta, *Moses, Adam and the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel the Tragedian: On the Roots of a Merkabah Text* (Ph.D. diss.; Marquette University, 2005), 92ff.

> tions should know that Moses was the Servant of God and His Faithful One.[31]

Looking closely at these Samaritan developments, Fossum concludes that "there can be little doubt that this is a description of the installation of Moses as king in heaven."[32]

Moses' Glorification at His Death/His Translation to Heaven

Marcus calls attention to another important cluster of para-biblical developments which unveil a tradition about Moses' translation to heaven. For our study it is important to note that in some renderings of this story, Moses' earthly body undergoes a fiery or glorious transformation. These traditions, moreover, try to connect the metamorphosis of the prophet's face at Sinai with his final full glorification. This correspondence between the seer's proleptic partial and temporary glorification and his future full glorification at the point of his departure from the earthly realm is an important detail for our analysis of the transfiguration story, since Jesus' metamorphosis on the mountain is often understood as a proleptic glimpse into the eschatological role of Christ as the embodiment of the divine Glory. In relation to such an understanding, Joel Marcus observes that "in Mark the transfiguration narrative is not an end in itself; rather, it points beyond itself to an eschatological event, Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The royal Mosaic features of the transfiguration narrative, therefore, foreshadow the enthronement of Jesus that occurs at his resurrection."[33] Marcus further suggests that this association of enthronement with an after-death experience also has Mosaic precedent.[34]

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[31] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 73-74.
[32] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 74.
[33] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87.
[34] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87. Marcus further notes that "the linkage of the transfiguration narrative with the resurrection is established redactionally by its juxtaposition with 9:9-10 and is underlined in an intriguing manner by the larger context of the Old Testament passage cited in 9:7. In

The traditions of Moses' glorification at his death or his translation to heaven have very early conceptual roots in the pre-Christian Jewish lore. The motif of Moses's translation to heaven at the end of his life plays an important role already in Philo. In relation to these developments, Wayne Meeks observes that

> Philo takes for granted that Deuteronomy 34:6, "no man knows his grave," means that Moses was translated. Doubtless this view was traditional in Philo's circle, for he states matter-of-factly that Enoch, "the protoprophet (Moses)," and Elijah all obtained this reward.[35] The end of Moses' life was an "ascent,"[36] an "emigration to heaven," "abandoning the mortal life to be made[37] immortal."[38]

De Vita Mosis 2.288–91 portrays Moses' departure from the earthly realm as follows:

> Afterwards the time came when he had to make his pilgrimage from earth to heaven, and leave this mortal life for immortality, summoned thither by the Father who resolved his twofold nature of soul and body into a single unity, transforming his whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight ... for when he was already being exalted and stood at the very barrier, ready at the signal to direct his upward flight to heaven, the divine spirit fell upon him and he prophesied with discernment while still alive the story of his own death.[39]

9:9, which is a redactional verse, the Markan Jesus establishes a link between the transfiguration narrative and the resurrection by ordering the disciples not to tell anyone what they have seen on the mountain until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87-88.

[35] *QG* 1.86.

[36] *QG* 1.86.

[37] *Mos.* 2.288–292; *Virt.* 53, 72–79.

[38] Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 124.

[39] Francis Henry Colson and George Herbert Whitaker, eds., *Philo*, 10 vols. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–64), 6.593–5.

Analyzing this passage scholars often see within the statement that God transformed Moses' "whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight" an implicit reference to his glorification.[40] Similarly, Josephus also describes Moses in the same paradigm of otherworldly translation,[41] which vividly recalls the departures of Enoch and Elijah. *Ant.* 4.326[42] unveils the following tradition:

> And, while he [Moses] bade farewell to Eleazar and Joshua and was yet communing with them, a cloud all of a sudden descended upon him and he disappeared in a ravine. But he has written of himself in the sacred books that he died, for fear lest they should venture to say that by reason of his surpassing virtue he had gone back to the Deity.[43]

While Philo and Josephus only implicitly intimate Moses' glorification at the point of his transition to the upper realm, some testimonies found in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* explicitly express this possibility. Kristine Ruffatto argues that "Pseudo-Philo goes beyond the traditional narrative to ascribe luminosity to

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[40] Lierman, *The New Testament Moses*, 201.

[41] James D. Tabor, "'Returning to the Divinity': Josephus's Portrayal of the Disappearances of Enoch, Elijah, and Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 225–38; Christopher Begg, "'Josephus's Portrayal of the Disappearances of Enoch, Elijah, and Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 691–93.

[42] The motif of Moses' translation is also attested in *Ant.* 3.96–7: "There was a conflict of opinions: some said that he [Moses] had fallen a victim to wild beasts – it was principally those who were ill disposed towards him who voted for that view – others that he had been taken back to the divinity. But the sober-minded, who found no private satisfaction in either statement – who held that to die under the fangs of beasts was a human accident, and that he should be translated by God to Himself by reason of his inherent virtue was likely enough – were moved by these reflections to retain their composure." Henry S. J. Thackeray, ed., *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities,* Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: Heinemann, 1967), 3.363.

[43] Thackeray, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities*, 4.633.

Moses multiple times: on his first ascent of Sinai as well as his second, and just prior to his death on Nebo."[44] The assignment of luminosity to Moses before his death is crucial for our study of the Christian developments, in which the luminosity of Jesus' face is put in conspicuous parallel with the glory of his resurrection.

In *LAB,* Ruffatto notes that just prior to his death, when Moses ascends Abarim/Nebo, his "appearance became glorious; and he died in glory according to the word of the Lord" (*et mutata est effigies eius in gloria, et mortuus est in gloria secundum os Domini* – 19:16)."[45] Ruffatto points out that "this assertion of Moses' pre-death luminosity is not present in Deut 34."[46] She further suggests that the author of *LAB* evidently "saw Moses' radiance as an experience of actual transmutation into transcendent form."[47]

The lore about Moses' translation to heaven and his bodily metamorphosis during this transition receives further development in later midrashic materials. These accounts often speak about the glorious or fiery form of the prophet's body during his final translation. For example, *Deut. Rab.* 11:10 contains the following:

> When Moses saw that no creature could save him from the path of death ... He took a scroll and wrote down upon it the Ineffable Name, nor had the Book of Song been completely written down when the moment of Moses' death arrived. At that hour God said to Gabriel: "Gabriel, go forth and bring Moses' soul." He, however, replied: "Master of the Universe, how can I wit-

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[44] Kristine J. Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: Apocalyptic Motifs and the Growth of Visionary Moses Tradition* (Ph.D. diss.; Marquette University, 2010), 152.

[45] Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 168. Other scholars have also noticed these developments. Thus, John Lierman points out that "Pseudo-Philo writes that Moses at the very end of his life 'was filled with understanding and his appearance was changed to a state of glory; and he died in glory (*et mutata est effigies eius in gloria et mortuus est in gloria*; *LAB* 19:16),' words that recall Philo's description of the physical transformation and endowment with special insight that came upon Moses at his final prophecy." Lierman, *The New Testament Moses,* 204.

[46] Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 168.

[47] Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 170.

> ness the death of him who is equal to sixty myriads, and how can I behave harshly to one who possesses such qualities?" Then [God] said to Michael: "Go forth and bring Moses' soul." He, however, replied: "Master of the Universe, I was his teacher, and he my pupil, and I cannot therefore witness his death." [God] then said to Sammael the wicked: "Go forth and bring Moses' soul." Immediately he clothed himself with anger and girded on his sword and wrapped himself with ruthlessness and went forth to meet Moses. When Sammael saw Moses sitting and writing down the Ineffable Name, and how the radiance of his appearance was like unto the sun and he was like unto an angel of the Lord of hosts, he became afraid of Moses.

In *Midrash Gedullat Moshe*[48] the motif of Moses' translation to heaven coincides with the fiery transformation of his earthly form. In this text God commands the angel Metatron to bring Moses up to heaven. Metatron warns the deity that the prophet would not be able to withstand the vision of angels, "since the angels are princes of fire, while Moses is made from flesh and blood." God then commands Metatron to change the prophet's flesh into torches of fire.

While thoroughly considering the aforementioned traditions and their relevance for the transfiguration accounts, Joel Marcus notes that the parallelism between Sinai and Moses's translation often found in the extra-biblical interpretations "provides a plausible background for the redactional linkage made in Mark 9:2-10 between the events on the mountain and the reference to resurrection, since resurrection and ascension to heaven are related concepts, although admittedly they have different history-of-religions backgrounds."[49]

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[48] Solomon A. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1950-53), 1.27.
[49] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 88.

Moses' Angelification and Divinization

Another important aspect in the development of the para-biblical Mosaic lore are traditions of Moses' angelification and divinization. Moses' endowment with a unique celestial status and form often coincides in the extra-biblical Jewish materials with assigning to him attributes of the heavenly beings. For example, the *Animal Apocalypse*, an Enochic writing usually dated to the second century B.C.E.,[50] hints at an angelic status and form of the son of Amram in its enigmatic rendering of the Sinai encounter. *1 Enoch* 89:36 depicts Moses as the one who was transformed from a sheep into a man at Sinai. In the metaphorical language of the *Animal Apocalypse,* where angels are portrayed as anthropomorphic and humans as zoomorphic creatures, the transition from sheep to a man clearly indicates that the character has acquired an angelic form and status.

Crispin Fletcher-Louis draws attention to already mentioned developments in Pseudo-Philo which also seem to hint at Moses's angelic status. He notes that in *LAB* 12:1, "Moses ascends Mount Sinai where he is 'bathed with light that could not be gazed upon,' surpassing in splendor the light of the sun, moon and stars. Because of his glory the Israelites could not recognize him on his descent. The

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[50] In relation to the date of the text Daniel Olson notes that "fragments of the *An. Apoc.* from Qumran provide a *terminus ad quem* before 100 B.C.E., but greater precision is possible since the allegory appears to describe the ascendancy of Judas Maccabee (90:9), but says nothing about his death (90:12). Based on this, most scholars agree that the *An. Apoc.* was written between 165–160 B.C.E., and they further agree that the author was probably a member of or a sympathizer with the reform group described in 90:6–9 and a supporter of the Maccabean revolt when it broke out, expecting it to evolve into earth's final battle, God's direct intervention in history, and the inauguration of the eschatological age (90:9–20). If this is correct, one may suppose that one reason the *An. Apoc.* was published was to encourage readers to back the Maccabean revolt." Daniel Olson, *A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch: "All Nations Shall be Blessed"*, Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 24 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 85-86. See also Daniel Assefa, *L'Apocalypse des animaux (1Hen 85–90): une propagande militaire? Approches narrative, historico-critique, perspectives théologiques*, Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period Supplement Series 120 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 220–232.

failure of others to recognize the transformed mortal also appears in some Latin texts for the parallel episode in *Biblical Antiquities* 27:10, where Kenaz is assisted by an angel."[51] According to Fletcher-Louis, "the visual transformation of the mortal and, sometimes, their consequent unrecognizability, is a frequent motif in angelomorphic transformation texts with a close parallel in the deification of Moses in 4Q374."[52]

Fletcher-Louis' reference to 4Q374 brings us to the Qumran materials, which often feature Moses as an angelomorphic being. Fletcher-Louis suggests that in the Dead Sea Scrolls Moses' divine or angelomorphic identity is often associated with his ascent up Sinai and in the giving of the Torah.[53] To quote his words: "4Q374 frag. 2 and 4Q377 specifically locate events at Sinai, although it is true that they do not exclude some earlier angelomorphic identity for Moses and, of course, 4Q374 uses the statement that Moses became God to Pharaoh in Egypt (Exod 7:1)."[54] Furthermore, it is possible that the Dead Sea Scrolls entertain not only the possibility of Moses' angelification but also his divinization at Sinai. For example, 4Q374 alludes to the deification of the great prophet by saying: "he made him [Moses] like a god[55] over the powerful ones, and a cause of reel[ing] (?) for Pharaoh ... and then he let his face shine on them for healing,

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[51] Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 416-417.

[52] Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 416-417.

[53] Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 149.

[54] Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 149. See also Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3 (1996): 236–52.

[55] The Mosaic title "god" is already attested in Exod 7:1: "See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh." See also Philo's *Life of Moses* 1.155–58: "for he [Moses] was named god and king of the whole nation."

they strengthened [their] hearts again."[56] Another feature of this Qumran passage significant for our analysis is that the radiance of the glorified Moses' face, similar to the divine luminosity, appears to be able to transform human nature.

Yet another important cluster of Mosaic traditions which attests to the son of Amram's possession of angelic attributes are the stories regarding his miraculous features revealed at birth. Although these stories are preserved in their full scope only in later rabbinic materials,[57] these narrative currents appear to have early pre-Christian conceptual roots, since they parallel stories of Noah's miraculous birth found in Jewish pseudepigrapha and Qumran materials.[58] Some have persuasively argued that the stories of Moses' birth

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[56] 4Q374 2:6–8. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols. (Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill, 1997), 2.740–41.

[57] Fletcher-Louis points out that there is "no parallel to the birth of Noah for Moses among the Dead Sea Scrolls." Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 149.

[58] The traditions are discernible, for example, in Pseudo-Philo. Kristine Ruffatto notes that "*LAB* 9 contains a colorful introduction to Moses' birth and life, the vast majority of which is not present in the Hebrew Bible. Pseudo-Philo's considerable embellishment of the traditional canonical text of Exod 1-2 includes the proclamation by God to Amram that Moses will see God's 'house'/heavenly temple (9:8) and the statement that Moses was born circumcised (he was 'born in the covenant of God and the covenant of the flesh' – 9:13). The text goes on to proclaim that Moses was nursed 'and became glorious above all other men' (*et gloriosus factus est super omnes homines*), a declaration of Moses' singularity among humans and a likely reference to Moses' future luminosity." Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 154-55. Looking at *LAB*'s tradition that Moses was born circumcised, Ruffatto says that "the commentators note that this is, surprisingly, the only reference to circumcision in all of *LAB*. One may ask why only Moses is singled out as circumcised in the text, and why the author has stressed that the covenant mediator was born that way. It may well be a statement about Moses' unique angel-like identity as one who, like the angels, was born in this holy state. *LAB* knows *Jubilees*, and *Jub*. 15:27 links circumcision to the angels, who were born circumcised ('the nature of all the angels of the presence and all of the angels of sanctification was thus from the day of their creation')." Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 155.

influenced the Mosaic typology of Jesus' nativity stories found in the synoptic gospels, especially in Matthew. Later rabbinic stories reminiscent of the Noahic lore reflected in *1 Enoch* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* provide interesting details about the miraculous birth of the great prophet. According to *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 48, at birth Moses' body was like an angel of God. *b. Sotah* 12a recounts that at his birth the house was filled with light. According to *Deut. Rab.* 11:10, the young prophet who was only a day old was able to speak, and at four months, to prophesy.[59] These later rabbinic traditions echo previously discussed traditions within Qumran literature in which Moses is envisioned as a celestial being.

Another cluster of conceptual developments related to angelification and divinization of Moses is found in the works of Philo of Alexandria. Scholars who have engaged with these traditions are often perplexed by the motif of Moses' divinization as it relates to prevailing concepts of Jewish monotheism. Joel Marcus notes that in the *Life of Moses* 1.158[60] "Philo implies that the enthronement of Moses

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[59] See also *Exod. Rab.* 1:20 and *Zohar* II.11b.

[60] *De Vita Mosis* I.156-158 reads: "For if, as the proverb says, what belongs to friends is common, and the prophet is called the friend of God, it would follow that he shares also God's possessions, so far as it is serviceable. For God possesses all things, but needs nothing; while the good man, though he possesses nothing in the proper sense, not even himself, partakes of the precious things of God so far as he is capable. And that is but natural, for he is a world citizen, and therefore not on the roll of any city of men's habitation, rightly so because he has received no mere piece of land but the whole world as his portion. Again, was not the joy of his partnership with the Father and Maker of all magnified also by the honor of being deemed worthy to bear the same title? For he was named god and king of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it." Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 6.357-359.

on Sinai involved his becoming a god."[61] David Litwa recently offered a nuanced and insightful reassessment of Moses' divinization's motifs in Philo. He writes that

> in his *Questions on Exodus*, for instance, Philo says that Moses was "divinized" (2.40), "changed into the divine," and thus became "truly divine" (2.29). Moreover, ten times Philo calls Moses "(a) god" (θεός) in accordance with Exod 7:1: "I [God] have made you a god to Pharaoh." In *On the Sacrifices*, for instance, Philo says that God appointed Moses as god, "placing all the bodily region and the mind which rules it in subjection and slavery to him" (§9).[62]

Comparable to the *Exagoge* and Qumran materials, Philo's reflections on Moses' exaltation are often put in the context of Sinai traditions. According to Litwa, "Philo presents Moses's ascent on Sinai as a proleptic experience of deification."[63] The tendency to view Moses' encounter on the mountain as the proleptic experience that anticipates Moses' permanent deification after his death is important for our analysis of Jesus' transfiguration; like Moses, his acquisition of the divine Glory on the mountain also anticipates his future role as

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[61] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 90.

[62] M. David Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," *Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 1-27 at 1. For discussion on the concept of deification in Philo, see Ronald Cox, *By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 145 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 87–140; Roberto Radice, "Philo's Theology and Theory of Creation," in Adam Kamesar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 128–29; David T. Runia, "The Beginnings of the End: Philo of Alexandria and Hellenistic Theology," in Dorothea Frede and André Laks, eds., *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, Its Background and Aftermath*, Philosophia Antiqua 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 281–312 at 289–99; David Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," in Lenn E. Goodman, ed., *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 21-42 at 21–23.

[63] Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," 14-15.

the divine *Kavod* after his death and resurrection. Touching on Moses' final translation Litwa observes that

> Moses's translation was his final pilgrimage to the heavenly realm in which all the transformations he experienced at Sinai became permanent (*Mos.* 2.288). Just as in *Questions on Exodus* 2.29, the departing Moses is resolved "into the nature of unity" and "changed into the divine." His "migration" from this world was an "exaltation," in which he "noticed that he was gradually being disengaged from the [bodily] elements with which he had been mixed" (*Virt.* 76). When Moses shed his mortal encasing, God resolved Moses's body and soul into a single unity, "transforming [him] wholly and entirely into most sun-like νοῦς" (ὅλον δι' ὅλων μεθαρμοζόμενος εἰς νοῦν ἡλιοειδέστατον) (*Mos.* 2.288; cf. *Virt.* 72-79). It is important to note the brilliant light imagery here, since it connects Moses to divine Glory traditions. At Sinai, Moses saw the divine Glory (the Logos), and participated in it. Philo translated these scriptural ideas into philosophical terms. Moses, who once saw God's glorious Logos (or Mind), is now permanently transformed into the brilliant reality of νοῦς.[64]

Litwa points out an important connection between Moses' deification and Philo's attention to the visionary traditions, observing that

> perhaps the clearest indication of Moses's deification is his vision of (the second) God and its results … The Existent granted Moses's request. He did not, however, reveal his essence to Moses. Rather, he revealed his Image, the Logos. … By gazing at the Logos, the Existent's splendor reached Moses in order that through the secondary splendor, Moses beheld "the more splendid (splendor of the Existent). …. In Exodus, Moses descends Mt. Sinai with a radiant face (Exod 34:29-35). Philo interprets this radiance in terms of beauty: Moses was "far more beautiful

[64] Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," 20-21.

> (πολὺ καλλίων) with respect to his appearance [or face, ὄψιν] than when he had gone up [Mount Sinai]." Beauty was one of the trademarks of divinity. Diotima asks Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, "Don't you say that all the gods are ... beautiful (κάλους)?" (202c)? The historian Charax says of Io that she was considered a goddess on account of her beauty (θεός ἐνομίσθη δία τὸ κάλλος). Brilliance and beauty, furthermore, are often revealed in a divine epiphany.[65]

Other scholars have also reflected on the value of the Philonic portrayals of Moses' divinization and enthronement for our understanding of the transfiguration story. Commenting on the Philonic rendering of Moses' experience on Sinai, Joel Marcus notes that "Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai (his entry into the darkness where God was; cf. Exod 20:21) is interpreted as an enthronement ('he was named ... king')."[66] Marcus further suggests that

> the connection between Moses' transfiguring experience on Sinai and his reception of God's kingship is strikingly reminiscent of the fact that the account of Jesus' transfiguration immediately follows 8:38-9:1, in which the coming of the kingdom of God (9:1) is paralleled to Jesus' own coming as Son of Man (8:38).... Like Moses, then, Jesus ascends the mount and there is seen to be a king, a sovereign whose kingship partakes of God's own royal authority over the universe.[67]

According to Marcus, "in line with this royal context, the transfiguration of Jesus' clothing, like Moses' transfiguration in some Jewish traditions, is probably symbolic of a royal robing. For biblically literate readers, therefore, one of the chief functions of the Mosaic typology in the transfiguration narrative would be to drive home the association between Jesus' kingship and the coming of God's kingdom."[68] Marcus' suggestion that the tradition of Jesus' garment may

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[65] Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," 17-18.
[66] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 85.
[67] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 86.
[68] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87.

also have a Mosaic provenance is significant and will be explored later in our study.

The Afterlife of Biblical Mosaic Traditions in Other Second Temple Mediatorial Trends

Earlier, we mentioned that many who espouse "Mosaic typology" limit their comparison of Jesus and Moses to the Exodus account. Only a small number of experts dare to extend their reach to the extra-biblical Mosaic elaborations found at Qumran, in Philo, Pseudo-Philo, the *Exagoge* and other early Jewish accounts. Often, however, even they fail to recognize other dimensions which are crucial for understanding the transfiguration story, contained not inside the Mosaic lore but outside its symbolic fence. Frequently, these expansions do not bear Moses' name and are not explicitly related to his story, but unfold in the accounts of other biblical heroes, such as Enoch, Abraham, or Jacob. Within these mediatorial trends the imagery of Moses' incandescent face often receives its novel and complex afterlife.

One cluster of such traditions that reveals a panoply of distinctive Mosaic motifs, is present in *2 Enoch*, an early Jewish apocalypse written in the first century CE. Within the narrative of Enoch's metamorphosis into the supreme angel and the heavenly power, (which in later Jewish mysticism will be labeled as the Lesser YHWH), one finds familiar Mosaic motifs. Although the main protagonist of this text is not Moses, but instead the seventh antediluvian patriarch, Enoch's exalted profile is built on the foundation of the biblical and extra-biblical Mosaic traditions, similar to Jesus' exaltation in the transfiguration account. Here one can find an interesting specimen of a pre-Christian "Mosaic typology." Like in the synoptic gospels, the story of Moses' elevation is perpetuated through a biography of his conceptual rival, the seventh antediluvian hero, who became regarded as a new Moses. Several features of this novel "Mosaic" account are important for our future analysis of the transfiguration story. One such detail relevant for our study is *2 Enoch*'s tendency to designate God's anthropomorphic extent as His Face. This termino-

logical application, in fact, may provide crucial insights into the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face in some versions of the transfiguration story.

2 Enoch contains two theophanic portrayals involving the motif of the divine Face. The first occurs in *2 Enoch* 22 which portrays Enoch's encounter with the deity in the celestial realm. Later in chapter 39, the seventh patriarch recounts this theophanic experience to his sons, adding new details. Although both passages demonstrate a number of terminological affinities, the second explicitly connects the divine Face with God's anthropomorphic extent, the divine *Kavod*.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Mosaic traditions played a formative role in shaping the theophanic imagery of the divine *Panim* in *2 Enoch*.[69] It is not a coincidence that both the Bible and *2 Enoch* associate the divine extent with light and fire. In biblical theophanies smoke and fire often serve as a divine envelope, protecting mortals from the sight of the divine form. Thus it is easy to recognize *2 Enoch*'s appropriation of familiar theophanic imagery from the Exodus accounts.[70]

In *2 Enoch* 39:3–6, as in the Mosaic account from Exod 33, the Face is closely associated with the divine extent and seems to be understood not simply as a part of the deity's body (his face) but as a radiant *façade* of his anthropomorphic form.[71] This identification between the deity's Face and the deity's Form is reinforced by additional parallels in which Enoch's face is identified with Enoch's form:

> You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; but I am one who has seen the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot by a fire, emitting sparks.... And you see the form of my body, the same as your own: but I have seen

[69] See Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 254ff.

[70] See Exod 19:9; Exod 19:16–18; Exod 34:5.

[71] The Face terminology as relating to the entire extent of the deity was already known to the authors of the *Book of the Watchers*. It seems to apply also to the body of the transformed visionary, not only in *2 Enoch,* but in *Ascension of Isaiah* 7:25 as well, where the seer, describing his journey through the seven heavens, attests that his "face" was being transformed.

> the form (extent) of the Lord, without measure and without analogy, who has no end (*2 Enoch* 39:3–6, shorter recension).

This passage alludes to the biblical tradition from Exod 33:18–23. Similar to the biblical text, the divine *Panim* of *2 Enoch* connected to the glorious divine form – God's *Kavod*:

> Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence... but," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Here the impossibility of seeing the Lord's Face is understood not simply as the impossibility of seeing a particular part of the Lord but rather as the impossibility of seeing the full range of his glorious body. The logic of the whole passage, which employs such terms as God's "face" and God's "back," suggests that the word *Panim* refers here to the forefront of the divine form. The imagery of the divine Face found in the Psalms[72] also favors this motif of the identity between the face and the anthropomorphic form of the Lord. For example, in Ps 17:15 the Lord's Face is closely tied to his form or likeness: "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding your form."

The early Enochic accounts appear to follow these biblical parallels. Thus, the identification between the Face and the divine form also seems to be hinted at in the *Book of the Watchers*, where the

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[72] On the Face of God in the Psalms, see Samuel Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1983), 49–65; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 2.35–9; Michael Fishbane, "Form and Reformulation of the Biblical Priestly Blessing," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983): 115–21; Joseph Reindl, *Das Angesicht Gottes im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments*, Erfurter theologische Studien 25 (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1970), 236–7; Morton Smith, "'Seeing God' in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988): 171–83.

enthroned Glory is designated as the Face (*gaṣṣ*). *1 Enoch* 14:20–21 reads: "And no angel could enter, and at the appearance of the face (*gaṣṣ*) of him who is honored and praised no (creature of) flesh could look."[73]

It is possible that Exodus 33:18–23, Psalm 17:15, *1 Enoch* 14, and *2 Enoch* 39:3–6 represent a single conceptual stream in which the divine Face serves as the *terminus technicus* for the designation of the deity's anthropomorphic Form. It is also clear that all these accounts deal with the specific anthropomorphic manifestation known as God's *Kavod*.[74] The possibility of such identification is already hinted at in Exod 33; Moses, upon asking the Lord to show him his *Kavod,* hears that it is impossible for him to see the deity's Face.

Moreover, the anthropomorphic extent of the patriarch Enoch is also labeled in *2 Enoch* as the "face." According to *2 Enoch*, beholding the divine Face has dramatic consequences for Enoch's appearance: his body endures radical changes and is covered by divine light. Describing the patriarch's metamorphosis, *2 Enoch* 39 underlines peculiar parallels between the deity's face and the face of the transformed patriarch.[75] The description of Enoch's transformation pro-

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[73] Michael Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch. A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 2.99.

[74] *Contra* Walther Eichrodt, who insists that the *Panim* had no connection with the *Kavod*; he argues that the two concepts derived from different roots and were never linked with one another. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2.38.

[75] *2 Enoch* 39:3–6 reads "And now, my children it is not from my lips that I am reporting to you today, but from the lips of the Lord who has sent me to you. As for you, you hear my words, out of my lips, a human being created equal to yourselves; but I have heard the words from the fiery lips of the Lord. For the lips of the Lord are a furnace of fire, and his words are the fiery flames which come out. You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; I am one who has seen the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot by a fire, emitting sparks. For you gaze into (my) eyes, a human being created just like yourselves; but I have gazed into the eyes of the Lord, like the rays of the shining sun and terrifying the eyes of a human being. You, (my) children, you see my right hand beckoning you, a human being created identical to yourselves; but I have seen the

vides a series of analogies in which the earthly Enoch likens his face and parts of his body to the attributes of the Lord's Face and body. These comparisons manifest the connection between the divine corporeality and its prominent replica, the body of the seventh antediluvian hero. In light of this evidence, it is possible that the luminous face of Jesus in some versions of the transfiguration story serves more than just an allusion to biblical motif of Moses' luminous visage, but instead serves as a reference to the entirety of the patriarch's anthropomorphic extent, now envisioned as the divine *Kavod*. We will explore such possibility later in our study.

Furthermore, an important detail can be found in Enoch's radiant metamorphosis before the divine Countenance which further links Enoch's transformation with the Mosaic accounts. *2 Enoch* 37 includes information about an unusual procedure performed on Enoch's "face," at the final stage of his encounter with the deity. According to the text, the Lord called one of his senior angels to chill the face of Enoch. The angel was "terrifying and frightful," and appeared frozen; he was as white as snow, and his hands were as cold as ice. With these cold hands he then chilled the patriarch's face. Immediately following this chilling procedure, God informs Enoch that if his face had not been chilled here, no human being would have been able to look at him.[76] The dangerous radiance of Enoch's face parallels the incandescent countenance of Moses after the Sinai experience (Exod 34).

The appropriation of the Mosaic motif of the seer's radiant face is not confined in *2 Enoch* to the encounter with the "frozen" angel, but is also reflected in other sections of the book. According to the Slavonic apocalypse, despite the chilling procedure performed in

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right hand of the Lord, beckoning me, who fills heaven. You see the extent of my body, the same as your own; but I have seen the extent of the Lord, without measure and without analogy, who has no end." Francis Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983-85), 1.163.

[76] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.160.

heaven, Enoch's face retains its transformative power and is even capable of glorifying other human subjects. Thus, in *2 Enoch* 64:2 people ask the transformed Enoch for blessings so they can be glorified in front of his face.[77] This theme of the transforming power of the patriarch's visage may here be polemical; it recalls the Mosaic passage[78] preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls in which Moses' face is able to transform the hearts of the Israelites.

The aforementioned developments that shepherd familiar biblical Mosaic motifs into their novel conceptual existence are important for our investigation as they provide unique spectacles which enable us to discern additional facets of Mosaic imagery in the synoptic transfiguration accounts.

Mosaic Features of the Transfiguration Story

Keeping in mind the preceding biblical and extra-biblical testimonies, we now turn to analyze certain Mosaic features of the transfiguration accounts.

Timing of the Story

The transfiguration story in Mark begins by mentioning that Jesus took his disciples up the mountain after six days.[79] Scholars have noted that no other temporal statement in Mark outside the Passion Narrative is so precise.[80] Among several other possibilities,[81] this

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[77] See *2 Enoch* 64:4 (the longer recension): "And now bless your [sons], and all the people, so that we may be glorified in front of your face today." Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.190.

[78] *4Q374* 2:6–8: "and he made him like a God over the powerful ones, and a cause of reel[ing] (?) for Pharaoh … and then he let his face shine for them for healing, they strengthened [their] hearts again." García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2.740–41.

[79] Yarbro Collins notes that "although the epiphany of the Markan Jesus is depicted as real, rather than faked, it is staged in the sense that Jesus chooses the time and place. It thus may be seen as a device for authorizing Jesus and instructing the disciples." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 419.

[80] Joel Markus claims that "Mark's readers would have been immediately alerted to this Mosaic typology by the first four words of his account, 'and after six days,' which correspond to the six days mentioned in Exod 24:16;

chronological marker has often been interpreted as an allusion to Mosaic encounters at Sinai.[82] Reflecting on Mark 9:2 ("and after six days Jesus takes along Peter and James and John"), Craig Evans suggests that "the chronological notation 'after six days' recalls Exod 24:16."[83] In an attempt to elucidate the conceptual background of this numerical symbolism, Evans reminds us that "it was after six days that God spoke out of the cloud to Moses. No other event in Jewish salvation history was remembered with greater reverence."[84]

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the similarity is particularly impressive because time indications outside the passion narrative are rare and tend to be vague." Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 27 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 1114.

[81] Analyzing scholarly hypotheses regarding the transfiguration story, Yarbro Collins notes that "in keeping with his theory that the transfiguration was originally a resurrection story, Wellhausen suggested that the six days refer to the period between Jesus' death and his appearance in Galilee. Others have argued that they allude to the six days between the appearance of the cloud on Mount Sinai and God's calling Moses. Yet others that 'after six days' is equivalent to 'on the seventh day' and that therefore the allusion is to the Sabbath. Foster McCurley argued that 'after six days' is a Semitic idiom in which decisive action is then described on the seventh day." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 420.

[82] For criticism of this hypothesis, see McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 53.

[83] Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, 35. Exod 24:16 reads: "The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud."

[84] Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, 35. Similarly, A. D. A. Moses draws his attention to the unusually precise time reference in Mark 9:2 and Matt 17:1 which recall Exod 24:16-17, where for six days the cloud covered Mount Sinai, and on the seventh day Yahweh called Moses out of the midst of the cloud. A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 122 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 43-44.

Chosen companions

Another possible Mosaic feature also situated in the initial verse of the transfiguration account is the recognition that Jesus took with him *three* disciples. Scholars often see in this peculiar number of chosen companions an allusion to Moses' story. Clarifying connections with the Exodus encounter, A. D. A. Moses notes that "both accounts have the idea of chosen companions: in Exodus 24 Moses separates himself first from the people, taking with him the seventy elders and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Exod 24:1, 9)[85] and later, further up the mountain, takes only Joshua (Exod 24:13). This parallels (not in every detail) Mark 9:2-3 ... where Jesus takes with him the three disciples."[86] Morna Hooker also believes the peculiar number of Jesus' companions represents a Mosaic allusion, observing that "Moses was accompanied by Joshua, who later succeeded him; Jesus takes three of his disciples with him — those who, in Mark's account, are closest to him — and goes up a 'high mountain.'"[87]

A notable difference, however, is that while Moses and his companions are regarded as a group of seers, in the transfiguration account Jesus is not a part of the visionary cohort, but rather the vision's center. Because of this, Charles Cranfield concludes "it seems clear that what is related, whether visionary or factual, was directed toward the three disciples rather than toward Jesus ... If it was a vision and audition, then it was apparently shared by the three disciples."[88]

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[85] Exod 24:1: "then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance."

[86] Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 43-44.

[87] Morna D. Hooker, "'What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?' A Look at St Mark's Account of the Transfiguration," in Lincoln D. Hurst and Nicholas Thomas Wright, eds., *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 59-70 at 60.

[88] Charles E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 294.

Motif of the Mountain

Another important feature of the initial verses of each of the transfiguration stories is the reference to a mountain. This motif again brings to mind Moses' theophany. Thus, in Exod 24:12 the deity summons the prophet to the mountain by issuing the following command: "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." Several verses later in Exod 24:15-18 the motif of the mountain appears again:

> Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

The same theme is found in Exod 34:3: "No one shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain."

Scholars have suggested a connection between the mountain of Jesus' metamorphosis and Mount Sinai. According to Morna Hooker, "the traditional site of the transfiguration is Mount Tabor, which is hardly a high mountain, but the exact location is unimportant, for the mountain is the place of worship, the place of revelation, perhaps also the new Sinai of the messianic era."[89] Several other scholars also affirm this connection with the famous Mosaic locale by noting that in both stories (Exod 24:16 and Mk 9:2-8 and par.) the setting is a mountain.[90] For our study it is also important that the high place in the transfiguration story can be understood not simply as a geo-

[89] Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.
[90] Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 43-44.

graphical space, but also as a mythological one, with the latter referring to the mountain of *Kavod*. In her reflection on the mountain of the transfiguration, Adela Yarbro Collins entertains its broader mythological significance, noting that

> if the account is pre-Markan, the mountain was apparently unspecified at that stage of the tradition. Even though it is unlikely to have been Mount Sinai itself, the generic character of the mountain would allow that association to be made. Furthermore, "a high mountain" would, in Mark's cultural context, call to mind the mythic notion of the cosmic mountain or the mountain as the dwelling place of a god or of the gods.[91]

It has also been suggested that the mountain can be understood as a heavenly or para-heavenly location. Weighting in on this option, Simon Gathercole observes that "a number of commentators interpret the mountain as something of a 'suburb of heaven,' or a 'halfway house between earth and heaven.'"[92]

Mountain as the Throne of the Divine Glory

Separating the transfiguration story from some previously explored Jewish extra-biblical accounts is a lack of explicit reference to Jesus' possession of the divine throne — the theme which features prominently in the *Book of the Similitudes* and the *Exagoge*, and is possibly hinted at in the Book of Daniel. Yet such enthronement motif can still be implied by the reference to the mountain on which Jesus' transfiguration takes place. In this respect, it is instructive that in some pre-Christian Jewish accounts the mountain itself is envisioned as the throne of the deity.

Recall that Exod 24:16-18, a formative passage with regard to the transfiguration account, describes the theophany of the divine *Kavod* on the mountain. Similar to the transfiguration story, Exod 24 does not provide any reference to the attribute of the divine seat, a crucial feature of the *Kavod* symbolic complex. This leaves the impression

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[91] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 421.

[92] Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 48.

that the mountain may itself fulfil this function, being conceptualized as the divine Throne.[93]

Although in the Exodus account the role of the mountain as the divine Seat remains hidden, in the *Book of the Watchers* this possibility becomes explicit. In this early Enochic composition, the mountain of God's presence is repeatedly labeled as the deity's throne. From *1 Enoch* 18:6-8 we learn the following: "And I went towards the south – and it was burning day and night – where (there were) seven mountains of precious stones.... And the middle one reached to heaven, like the throne of the Lord, of stibium, and the top of the throne (was) of sapphire."[94] In this passage an enigmatic mountain is compared with God's Throne and described as being fashioned from the material (sapphire) often mentioned in the prophetic and apocalyptic depiction of the *Kavod*.[95] Analyzing the mountain motif pre-

[93] On the mountain as a throne of a deity, see Ronald E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 52-54; Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 57-79; Kelley Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: "No One Has Seen What I Have Seen,"* Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period. Supplement Series 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 120-25; Robert L. Cohn, "The Mountains and Mount Zion," *Judaism* 26 (1977): 97–115 at 98; Terence L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 8 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 74-75; Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, The Library of New Testament Studies 487 (London: T&T Clark, 2014) 29, 245; Ángel Manuel Rodriguez, "Sanctuary Theology in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986): 127–45.

[94] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.104.

[95] Reflecting on these connections, Kelley Coblentz-Bautch notes that "the reference to sapphire/lapis lazuli and the suggestion that this mountain is in some way like a seat for God call to mind several of the theophanies in the

sent in this text, George Nickelsburg notes that "its apex, to the northwest, is the throne of God, and its two sides, comprising three mountains each, lie on west-east and north-south axes."[96] Experts, furthermore, have argued for similarities between the mountain throne in *1 Enoch* 18 and the Sinai imagery. According to Kelley Coblentz Bautch "it appears quite plausible that *1 Enoch* 18:8 might well have in mind Mount Sinai itself as the mountain throne of the Lord."[97]

In *1 Enoch* 24:3 the motif of the throne-mountain appears again: "And (there was) a seventh mountain in the middle of these, and in their height they were all like the seat of a throne, and fragrant trees surrounded it."[98] Yet, from the preceding passages it remains unclear if these descriptions of the mountainous seats are directly related to the actual Throne of YHWH. Such an affirmation, however, is made explicitly in *1 Enoch* 25:3, where we learn from an *angelus interpres* that the mountain indeed serves as the Throne of God

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Hebrew Bible... Exod 24:9–10 suggests that the bottom surface of God's realm is made of lapis lazuli. Ezek 1:26–28 and 10:1 also know of a throne of God that is in the appearance of lapis lazuli. The description of a mountaintop throne recalls the setting of Isaiah's vision in the temple, where he sees the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne (Isa 6:1). The references to lapis lazuli and to a summit like the throne of the Lord in *1 Enoch* 18:8 indicate that the mountain will be the site of a theophany, a place where God would appear and could be seen on earth." Kelley Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: "No One Has Seen What I Have Seen,"* Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period Supplement Series 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 120-121.

[96] George W. F. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: Chapters 1-36; 81-108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 285. In relation to this imagery, Coblentz Bautch notes that "one fascinating hypothesis regarding the purpose of the mountains is suggested by Nickelsburg: since the middle mountain represents the throne of God (*1 Enoch* 18:8; 25:3), perhaps the six mountains to the east and west are thrones of his divine entourage. A similar phenomenon may be attested in a later Zoroastrian work. A. V. Williams Jackson, reflecting upon the seats of the archangels around the throne of God in *Num. Rab.* 2, calls attention to a passage from the Zoroastrian Great Bundahishn." Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography*, 114-115.

[97] Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography*, 121.

[98] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.113.

during the deity's visit to the earth: "And he answered me, saying: 'This high mountain which you saw, whose summit is like the throne of the Lord, is the throne where the Holy and Great One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when he comes down to visit the earth for good.'"[99]

Due to the antediluvian perspective of the Enochic narration, it is possible that, besides the eschatological allusions, the text's authors also had in mind the future Sinai ordeal, an event which occurs many generations after the revelation given to Enoch.[100]

In light of the aforementioned traditions it is possible that the understanding of the mountain as the throne of the divine *Kavod* may also feature in the synoptic renderings of the transfiguration. Scholars have suggested that such a motif of enthronement may be hinted in the account of Jesus' transfiguration. In previous studies,

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[99] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.113.

[100] Coblentz Bautch points to this possibility, noting that "perhaps the presence of Michael, the archangel in charge of the people of Israel (*1 Enoch* 20:5) who provides Enoch a tour of the mountain throne of God (*1 Enoch* 24–25), also hints that this mountain is Sinai." Coblentz-Bautch, *Geography of 1 Enoch*, 124. She further states that, "given the significance of Sinai in *1 Enoch* 1:4 (along with Hermon, it is one of the few locales to be referred to by name!) and the important role the south plays as the site where the Most High will descend (*1 Enoch* 77:1), connecting the mountain of *1 Enoch* 18:8 that reaches to heaven (a mountain with a lapis lazuli summit that is a veritable throne of God) with Sinai appears a most plausible reading. This interpretation is confirmed as well by the parallel tradition in *1 Enoch* 24–25 which provides more information about the coming theophany and the tree of life to be replanted in the north near the temple." Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of Geography*, 124-5. On parallels between mountain-throne in *1 Enoch* 18 and *1 Enoch* 24–25 and mountain-throne in Exodus 24, see also August Dillmann, *Das Buch Henoch. Übersetzt und erklärt* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Vogel, 1853), 129; Adolphe Lods, *Le Livre D'Hénoch: Fragments Grecs, découverts à Akhmîm (Haute-Égypte) publiés avec les variantes du texte Éthiopien* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1892), 185; Pierre Grelot, "La géographie mythique d'Hénoch et ses sources orientales," *Revue Biblique* 65 (1958): 33–69 at 38-41.

however, such enthronement is often connected with Jesus' messianic or royal role,[101] while the theophanic dimension, tied to Jesus' role as the divine *Kavod,* has often escaped scholarly attention.[102] However, the insights coming from proponents of the messianic or royal enthronement view are valuable, since they allow us to see additional biblical allusions present in the transfiguration account. One of these important facets is God's utterance "This is my Son," which some scholars argue represents a typical enthronement formula reminis-

[101] One of the recent proponents of this hypothesis, Terence Donaldson, argues that "the possibility presents itself that the mountain setting of the Transfiguration Narrative functions as a mountain of enthronement." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 147. He further notes that in the Hebrew Bible, "the mountain is referred to as the site for the throne of Yahweh (e.g. Ps 48:2; cf. Ps 99:1-5; 146:10; Jer 8:19), or for his anointed king (e.g. Ps 2:6; cf. Ps 110:2; 132:11-18). And this theme was carried over into Zion eschatology as well: on that day Yahweh (Isa 24:23; 52:7; Ezek 20:33, 40; Mic 4:6f.; Zech 14:8-11) or the messianic king (Ezek 17:22-24; 34:23-31; Mic 5:2-4) will reign on Mount Zion." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 147. Donaldson further recalls that "in Second Temple Judaism, the mountain was also seen as the seat of God's throne (*Jub.* 1:17-29; *1 Enoch* 18:8, 24:2-25:6; *Tob.* 13:11; *Sib. Or.* 3:716-720) and the place where the Messiah will exercise his rulership over the nations (*4 Ezra* 13; *2 Bar.* 40:1-4; cf. *Ps. Sol.* 17:23-51)." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 147.

[102] On the transfiguration as a messianic or royal enthronement see Jean Daniélou. "Le symbolisme eschatologique de la Fête des Tabernacles," *Irénikon* 31 (1958): 19–40; Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146-149; Maria Horstmann, *Studien zur Markinischen Christologie: Mk 8.27–9.13 als Zugang zum Christusbild des zweiten Evangeliums*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 6 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969), 80-103; Harald Riesenfeld, *Jésus transfiguré: L'arrière-plan du récit évangélique de la transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1947), 292-99; Maurice Sabbe, "La rédaction du récit de la Transfiguration," in Edouard Massaux, ed., *La venue du Messie*, Recherches bibliques 6 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 65–100. For criticism of these hypotheses, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 495-502; Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 202ff.

cent of 2 Sam 7:14[103] and Ps 2:7[104] in which the king's ascension to the throne coincides with his adoption as Son by the deity.[105]

Additionally, some features of the previously explored Mosaic extra-biblical accounts also hint at the possibility that the mountain was understood as both the divine seat and the seat of a deified human being. Thus, as we recall in the *Exagoge*, the motif of Mount Sinai was juxtaposed with the theme of the divine throne and the seat of the deified Moses.

An objection to the motif of Jesus' enthronement is the absence of any references to his sitting position. Yet, already in the biblical Mosaic theophanies God is described as standing on the mountain. This position of the deity is later emphasized in Philonic and Samaritan sources. Charles Gieschen argues that the Philonic and the Samaritan understanding of God as "the Standing One" "probably originates from Deut 5:31, where God invites Moses to 'stand' by him as he delivers the Law."[106] The concept of the standing position of the translated person as an enthronement is also discernible in some previously explored Jewish extra-biblical traditions. For example, in *2*

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[103] "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings."

[104] "I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.'" Commenting on the use Ps 2:7, Ulrich Luz notes that "the transfiguration story is reminiscent of an inthronization. ... We are on safer ground if we think of Ps 2:7, which stands behind the heavenly voice of v. 5. It is a psalm that comes from the enthronement ritual of the Jerusalem kings and that was a major influence on the New Testament Son of God Christology. In the early confession of Rom 1:3-4 Jesus' 'inthronization' as Son of God was connected with the resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33-34). It meant at the same time Jesus' exaltation and his association with divine spirit and power." Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 396.

[105] Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146.

[106] Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 31.

Enoch, the translated seer in the form of the seventh antediluvian hero is promised a place to stand in front of the Lord's Face for eternity and takes a seat next to the deity. Such a conceptual constellation of standing/sitting may also be present in the *Exagoge,* where Moses is described as standing (ἐστάθην) and then sitting on the throne.[107]

Secrecy

The singling out of three trusted disciples brings us to another important element of the transfiguration story connected with the Mosaic visionary ordeals, namely, an emphasis on secrecy and concealment. Yarbro Collins brings attention to the distinctive language used to convey this conceptual dimension in Mark, noting that the narrowing of the group, which heightens the awesome and secret character of the transformation, is supported in Mark 9:2 by the phrase "alone by themselves" (κατ' ἰδίαν μόνοι).[108]

The motif of secrecy appears again, even more forcefully, in the conclusion of the story, where Jesus asks his disciples[109] not to share the memory of their visionary experience with anyone.[110] The repeat-

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[107] Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54.

[108] Yarbro Collins, *Mark,* 421. Further in her study, Yarbro Collins notes that "in keeping with the theme of the section 8:27-10:45, the identity of Jesus is revealed in a special way to three selected disciples. That only three disciples see the transfiguration indicates that Jesus' identity is still to some degree a secret. That the identity of Jesus is concealed here as much as it is revealed is supported by the ambiguity in the statement of the divine voice." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 426.

[109] Regarding this tradition, Ulrich Luz notes that "while coming down from the mountain he commands them to be silent about their mountain experience until his resurrection. As in 16:20, the command to silence serves to define the boundaries against outsiders. The revelation on the mountain is granted only to the disciples, who as a special group are contrasted with the people." Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 399.

[110] See Mark 9:9: "As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." This tradition is attested also in Matthew and Luke: Matt 17:9: "As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been

ed occurrences of these peculiar indicators of secrecy and concealment placed at the beginning and end of the transfiguration story are noteworthy, since similar constellations often occur in Jewish apocalyptic and mystical accounts dealing with the construction of the theophanic profiles of various translated persons.

Furthermore, scholars often connect the motif of concealment with the revelation of the glory. With relation to this theme, Morna Hooker observes that

> the theme of suffering (8:31) is taken up again immediately after the story of the transfiguration, when Jesus warns his disciples to tell no one what they have seen, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead (9:9). This particular demand for secrecy suggests that the vision which the disciples have shared is of the glory which belongs to Jesus after the resurrection; this would mean that Mark intends us to see the transfiguration as a confirmation not only of Jesus' messianic status, but of the necessity of the way of suffering, death, and resurrection which lie before him. The story itself is often interpreted as a fulfilment (or a foretaste) of the promise in 9:1 about the coming Kingdom of God; but it seems more likely that Mark sees it as a prefigurement of 8:38, which speaks of the future glory of the Son of Man.[111]

Such an aura of secrecy and concealment which accompany the revelation of the divine *Kavod* is typical for Jewish apocalyptic and mystical lore. There the apprehension of the divine Glory enthroned on the Chariot is often listed among the utmost secrets which were prohibited from being revealed to the wider public.[112] For our study it is

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raised from the dead.'" Luke 9:36: "And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen."

[111] Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 59-60.

[112] *m. Hag.* 2:1 unveils the following tradition: "The forbidden degrees may not be expounded before three persons, nor the Story of Creation before two, nor [the chapter of] the Chariot before one alone, unless he is a Sage

important that the aesthetics of concealment pertaining to the revelation of the divine Glory are already discernible in the formative depiction of the Sinai encounter found in Exod 33 where Moses is told that it is impossible for him to see God's Face and live. Here we find reference to the deity's glorious *Panim*, itself synonymous with the divine *Kavod*.

Jesus' Metamorphosis

The theophanic proclivities of the transfiguration story reach their symbolic threshold in Jesus' metamorphosis. The conceptual roots of this enigmatic transformation remain a contested issue among scholars.[113] Some argue for a Greco-Roman background, while others see formative influences of the Jewish theophanic traditions in relation to putative Greco-Roman influences. According to Adela Yarbro Collins, "the author of Mark, or his predecessor(s), appears to have drawn upon the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis, but in a way that adapts them to the biblical tradition, especially to that of the theophany on Sinai."[114] Besides allusions to Sinai traditions, many scholars find in the metamorphosis of Jesus traces of other Jewish theophanies, including the vision of the Ancient of Days from Daniel 7.

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that understands of his own knowledge." Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 212-213.

[113] Andrew Chester observes that in the transfiguration accounts "the disciples have a vision of Jesus taking on heavenly form. Thus Jesus here assumes, apparently, the form of an angelic figure: or better, perhaps, the form of a being who belongs in the heavenly world. The point also needs to be made that the designation of this vision as a 'Transfiguration' is misleading; it should in fact be called 'Transformation.'" Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 98.

[114] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 419. Joel Marcus also points to the Mosaic connections by noting that "Philo, for example, uses *metaballein* ('to change') and *metamorphousthai* ('to be transformed'), the word employed by Mark in 9:2, to describe the prophetic exaltation that gripped Moses (*Life of Moses* 1.57, 2.280)." Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1114.

The exact nature and extent of Jesus' transformation remains also a debated issue. Ramsey points out that "the word μετεμορφώθη tells of a profound change of the form (in contrast with mere appearances), without describing its character."[115] In light of these peculiarities, some scholars argue that the terminology suggests a change of Jesus' "form." Jarl Fossum, for example, argues that "Mark's verb implies that Jesus' form or body was changed."[116] Heil notes that "the verb μεταμορφόω, employed by Mark and Matthew to describe the 'transfiguration' of Jesus, refers in a very general sense to a 'transformation' or 'change in form' of some kind. What it means more specifically must be determined by the context. Thus, Jesus' transfiguration is further defined as his clothing as becoming extremely white in Mark 9:3 and as both his face shining and clothes becoming white in Matt 17:2."[117]

Moreover, with regard to Mark's unique word choice, some scholars see a connection with the glory traditions.[118] As Morna Hooker observes, the same term is used in 2 Cor 3:18 where Paul speaks about the glorified believers. She writes: "the verb μεταμορφοῦν itself is an interesting one, used in the New Testament only in this story (by Mark and Matthew), in Rom 12:2 and in 2 Cor 3:18."[119] According to her, 2 Cor 3:18 "is of particular interest ... since

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[115] Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 114.

[116] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 82.

[117] Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 76. George Henry Boobyer suggests that despite the fact that in Mark only the garments are explicitly said to assume this glistening appearance, μετεμορφώθη in his opinion "without doubt implies a similar change in Christ's whole figure. Matthew and Luke make that plainer by adding that his face was involved in the transformation." George Henry Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1942) 65.

[118] Thus, Boobyer suggests that "Jesus was changed into a body of radiant δόξα which shone with exceeding brightness, although only Luke uses the word δόξα in describing the vision." Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 65.

[119] Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.

it refers to Christians who with unveiled faces see (or reflect) the glory of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory."[120] Yet, unlike 2 Cor 3, which hints at the believer's changed anthropology via reference to the image, the synoptic accounts do not explicitly delve into such elaboration. Instead, only "visible" things appear to be revealed; so for the recipients of the transfiguration vision, especially in its Markan version, metamorphosis is manifested largely through external features of the adept, including Jesus' attire. Compared to other synoptic authors, these external features in Mark are rather subdued. Reflecting on Markan peculiarities, Morna Hooker further observes,

> the statement that Jesus "was transfigured before them" reminds us of the gulf between him and his disciples: he is revealed as sharing in God's glory, while they are the witnesses to his glory. Unlike Matthew, who refers to Jesus' face shining like the sun (Matt 17:2), Mark does not explain in what way Jesus himself was transfigured: he refers only to the transformation of his clothes, which became whiter than any earthly whiteness.[121]

Scholars have noted that the transfiguration account appears to be underlining the *external* nature of Jesus's transformation, visible to the beholders of this event, represented by the disciples. As Heil notes, "since it is seen by the disciples, the transfiguration of Jesus refers to an external transformation outwardly visible rather than an internal transformation invisible to the physical eye .... The aorist passive form (μετεμορφώθη) indicates that this external transformation of the physical appearance of Jesus was effected objectively, from outside, by God (divine passive) rather than subjectively or interiorly by Jesus himself."[122] Heil also sees the external aspect of the transfiguration in the Lukan rendering of the transformation of Jesus' face, noting that the phrase "the appearance (τὸ εἶδος) of his face," rather than just in his "face," underscores the external rather

[120] Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 61.
[121] Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.
[122] Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus,* 76-77.

than the internal nature of transformation.[123] Heil concludes by arguing that

> the depiction of Jesus' transfiguration in all three versions as an external change, a transformation from outside of Jesus effected by God, does not support those interpretations that speak in terms of a "revelation," or "disclosure," or "unveiling" of an inner, permanent glory or heavenly status which Jesus already possesses. Although the transfiguration of Jesus takes place on a mountain that he ascends together with three of his disciples, it does not represent an "ascension" into heaven. Rather, he has been temporarily transfigured into a heavenly being while on a mountain still on the earth.[124]

As mentioned above, the verb μεταμορφόω, employed by Mark and Matthew, also occurs in several Pauline passages, including 2 Cor 3:18, where Paul anticipates the believer's metamorphosis: "all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are *being transformed* (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the same image *from one degree of glory to another* (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν); for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." This rare terminology of transformation coincides here with the *Kavod* imagery. Scholars also note connections with Phil 2:6-11 where once again the transformation of believers is surrounded by *Kavod* symbolism. In light of this link, Yarbro Collins notes:

> the narrator's statement that 'he was transfigured in their presence' evokes the ancient genre of the epiphany or metamorphosis. This statement may be understood in either of two ways. One is that Jesus walked the earth as a divine being, whose true nature is momentarily revealed in the transfiguration (cf. Phil 2:6-11). The other is that the transfiguration is a temporary change that Jesus undergoes here as an anticipation of his glorifi-

[123] Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 77.
[124] Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 78.

> cation after death (cf. 1 Cor 15:43, 49, 51-53). The motif of a temporary transformation, anticipating the final one, is typical of a group of apocalypses, but there it is associated with a heavenly journey.[125]

These connections indicate that the term "metamorphosis," as found in Mark and Matthew, represents the concept found elsewhere in the New Testament materials, which are, in turn, closely associated with the ocularcentric theophanic imagery.

Jesus' Garment

The account of Jesus' transformation in Mark is accompanied by the reference to his dazzlingly white garment. Scholars have linked this particular attribute of Jesus with the multifaceted legacy of the Jewish biblical theophanies. Commenting on Jesus' attire, Davies and Allison note that "the supernatural brightness of the clothes of divine or heavenly beings or of the resurrected just is a common motif in the biblical tradition .... Like God, who 'covers himself with light as with a garment' (Ps 104:2), those who belong to him are also destined to shine like the sun."[126]

The symbolism of Jesus' garment also evokes imagery contained in the Jewish pseudepigrapha.[127] John Paul Heil calls attention to *1*

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[125] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 421.

[126] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.697. Lee notes that these connections are present not only in Mark but also in other synoptic accounts by arguing that "in the transfiguration story, the radiant face of Jesus and his white garments also serve Matthew in his understanding of the story as an apocalyptic 'vision' (17:9). In Jewish apocalyptic writings, a facial radiance and white garments are general characteristics of belonging to the heavenly world. For example, angelic beings are often portrayed with radiant faces and white garments (Dan 12:3; *1 Enoch* 62:15–16; *4 Ezra* 7:97; *2 Bar.* 51:3)." Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 95.

[127] In relation to this Andrew Chester observes that "in Jewish transformation traditions ... a change into glorious (angelic) clothing symbolizes transformation into angelic form (or into a form, at least, that belongs fully within the heavenly world); that is so, for example, at *1 En.* 62:15; *2 En.* 22:8; *Apoc. Zeph.* 8:3. In other texts (for example, *1 En.* 39:14), it is the face itself that is specifically said to be transformed; in 4Q491 it would certainly seem

Enoch 14:20, where the following description of the deity's attire is found: "And He who is great in glory sat on it, and his raiment was brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow."[128] Reflecting on this clothing metaphor, Heil notes that

> when Enoch had a heavenly vision (*1 Enoch* 14:8) of the "Great Glory," God himself, sitting on a throne, he described God's clothing: "as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow" (14:20). Enoch goes on to mention the "face" of God: "None of the angels was able to come in and see the face of the Excellent and the Glorious One" (14:21). The vocabulary of *1 Enoch* 14:20-21 recalls especially the Matthean description of the transfigured Jesus: "his face shone as the sun, while his clothes became white as the light" (Matt 17:2). In *1 Enoch* 14:20 we have another example, in addition to Dan 7:9, of the white clothing of God himself indicating that white is the color of divine, heavenly clothing.[129]

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that the figure who is speaking has been transformed, and it plausible (but not provable) that in this text both face and clothes have undergone transformation. In any case, in those texts where the focus is on the clothing, the implication obviously is that the face and whole appearance are transformed into angelic or heavenly mode (as at *2 En.* 22:10)." Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 96-7.

[128] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.99.

[129] Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 86-87. These parallels were earlier noted by Christopher Rowland in his seminal study *The Open Heaven.* Rowland observes that "in *1 Enoch* 14:20f. two aspects of the divinity are mentioned, his clothing ('his raiment was like the sun, brighter and whiter than any snow') and his face. Precisely these two elements are mentioned in Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29, though no mention is made of Jesus' face in Mark. The presence of a man with shining raiment is thus remarkably like the two passages just quoted, both of which are intimately linked with the vision of the throne-chariot. No less than five words are used in both the Greek of *1 Enoch* 14:20f. and the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration, namely, sun, face, white, snow (in some manuscripts) and the clothing (which involves a different Greek word, *himatia* in the Gospels and *peri-*

Scholars have indicated that Jesus' white garment also evokes the memory of the attire of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. Some see in this clothing metaphor a transfer of the deity's attribute to a new scion of the theophanic tradition. According to Crag Evans, "Mark's depiction of Jesus is also reminiscent of Daniel's vision of the 'Ancient of Days,' whose 'clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool.'"[130] He further suggests that "perhaps in his transformation we should understand that Jesus ... has taken on some of God's characteristics (much as Moses' face began to shine with God's glory). If this is correct, then the transfiguration should be understood as a visual verification of Jesus' claim to be the 'Son of Man' who will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (see Mark 8:38; Dan 7:10)."[131]

Similarly, John Paul Heil underlines the connection with the Danielic account, noting that "in Dan 7:9, as part of his dream visions (cf. 7:1-2), Daniel watched God himself, as the 'Ancient One,' take his throne for judgment. God's clothing was 'like snow, white' (ὡσεὶ χιὼν λευκόν in the Theodotion recension) and the hair of his head like pure wool. Here, in a vision, God himself is dressed in white clothing indicative of his divine heavenly glory and splendor."[132]

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bolaion in *1 Enoch*). What is more, the word translated 'dazzling' (*exastrapton*) in Luke 9:29 is reminiscent of the use of the word *astrape* (lightning) on two occasions in *1 Enoch* 14 (vv. 11 and 17, cf. Ezek 1:4). Indeed, in the description of the angel in Dan 10:6, the appearance of that being is said to resemble lightning." Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 367.

[130] Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20,* 36.

[131] Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20,* 36.

[132] Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 86. Likewise, Morna Hooker also attempts to interpret Jesus' white garments in the light of the symbolism surrounding the deity's attire in Dan 7:9. She says: "the whiteness of garments often features in apocalyptic writings which attempt to describe heavenly scenes, e.g. Dan 7:9, and Mark himself describes the young man in the tomb on Easter Day as wearing white — a hint, perhaps, that he is a heavenly being." Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.

These particular connections to the attributes associated with the Ancient of Days are important, since they recall the peculiar features of the Son of Man in the *Book of the Similitudes* as well as the portrayals of Yahoel and Metatron in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *3 Enoch*, where the ocularcentric profile of the translated person is similarly constructed through the transference of divine features associated with the Ancient of Days.[133] In this respect, the transference of the garment does not appear coincidental, since it underlines the ocularcentric nature of the celestial manifestation.[134] To an even greater degree, the Gospel of Matthew highlights the ocular aspect of the garment's symbolism by saying that Jesus' garments became white as the light (τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς).[135]

Some supporters of the "Mosaic typology" hypothesis, who have previously attempted to explain all the details of Jesus' transfiguration solely through comparison with the biblical Mosaic traditions, often have encountered problems with the interpretation of Jesus' celestial garment. Although the tradition of Jesus' supernatural attire plays a prominent role in the transfiguration account, the bib-

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[133] On this see Andrei A. Orlov, *Yahoel and Metatron: Aural Apocalypticism and the Origins of Early Jewish Mysticism*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 83-85, 200.

[134] Simon Gathercole notes that "Jesus' clothes ... are whiter than any launderer on earth could wash them, hence they reflect a heavenly whiteness." Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 48.

[135] Exploring this motif of shining garments, Richard Bauckham notes that "a standard set of descriptives that could be used to describe any heavenly being, including quite ordinary as well as quite exalted heavenly beings. The basic idea behind all these descriptions is that heaven and its inhabitants are shining and bright. Hence the descriptions employ a stock series of images of brightness: heavenly beings or their dress are typically shining like the sun or the stars, gleaming like bronze or precious stones, fiery bright like torches or lightning, dazzling white like snow or pure wool." Richard J. Bauckham, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism,* Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period. Supplement Series 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43-69 at 51.

lical accounts are silent about the reception of a garment by the son of Amram. In relation to this situation, Jarl Fossum notes that "the Pentateuchal books have nothing to say about Moses' garments being changed on Mt. Sinai. We should consider the possibility that Matthew and Luke have filled out Mark's story about Jesus' ascent and transformation with traditional elements."[136] Nevertheless, in some extra-biblical accounts, Moses is often depicted as being "clothed" with glory, light, or the divine Name.

The theme of the prophet's clothing with the divine Name received its most extensive elaboration in the Samaritan materials, including the compilation known to us as *Memar Marqah*.[137] In the very first chapter of this document, the deity himself announces to the great prophet that he will be vested with the divine Name.[138] Several other passages of *Memar Marqah* affirm this striking clothing metaphor.[139] Linda Belleville points out that in the Samaritan *Memar Marqah* "Moses' ascent of Mt Sinai is described as an *investiture*

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[136] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 78.

[137] The motif of the investiture with the divine Name can be found also in the *Defter*, the Samarian liturgical materials in which praise is given to the great prophet who clad himself in the Name of the deity.

[138] *Memar Marqah* I.1 reads: "He said *Moses, Moses,* revealing to him that he would be vested with prophethood and the divine Name." John Macdonald, *Memar Marqah: The Teaching of Marqah*, 2 vols. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 84 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963), 2.4.

[139] *Memar Marqah* I.9 iterates a similar tradition: "I have vested you with my Name." Macdonald, *Memar Marqah,* 2.32; *Memar Marqah* II.12: "Exalted is the great prophet Moses whom his Lord vested with His Name.... The Four Names led him to waters of life, in order that he might be exalted and honoured in every place: the name with which God vested him, the name which God revealed to him, the name by which God glorified him, the name by which God magnified him.... The first name, with which Genesis opens, was that which he was vested with and by which he was made strong." Macdonald, *Memar Marqah,* 2.80-81; *Memar Marqah* IV.7: "O Thou who hast crowned me with Thy light and magnified me with wonders and honoured me with Thy glory and hid me in Thy palm and brought me into the Sanctuary of the Unseen and vested me with Thy name, by which Thou didst create the world, and revealed to me Thy great name and taught me Thy secrets...." Macdonald, *Memar Marqah,* 2.158.

with light: he was 'crowned with light' (*Memar Marqah* 2.12) and 'vested with glory' (*Memar Marqah* 4.1): as he descended Mt Sinai according to *Memar Marqah* 4.4) he 'wore the light on his face.'"[140] Fossum draws attention to another Samaritan text where "Moses upon his ascension was clothed in a super-royal robe."[141]

A significant feature of this tradition within the Samaritan materials is that the investiture with the Tetragrammaton entails a ritual of "crowning" with the divine Name.[142] Thus, *Memar Marqah* 1:9 unveils the following actions of the deity:

> On the first day I created heaven and earth; on the second day I spread out the firmament on high; on the third day I prepared a dish and gathered into it all kinds of good things; on the fourth day I established signs, fixing times, completing my greatness; on the fifth day I revealed many marvels from the waters; on the sixth day I caused to come up out of the ground various living creatures; on the seventh day I perfected holiness. I rested in it in my own glory. I made it my special portion. I was glorious in it. I

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[140] Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory: Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 49-50. Joel Marcus also notes that "Markan Jesus' shining garments are in line with some postbiblical Mosaic traditions, since Samaritan texts, *Memar Marqah* 4:6 and passages from *Defter*, describe Moses as being clothed with light or with a garment superior to any king's." Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1115. Marcus further notices that "one of the *Defter* texts ... depicts Moses on Sinai as being covered with a cloud (Cowley, *Liturgy*, 1.40-41), and this is reminiscent of Mark 9:7 ('And there came a cloud, overshadowing them') and different from the Exodus account, in which the cloud covers the mountain rather than the person on it." Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1115.

[141] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 83.

[142] On crowning with the divine Name in later Jewish mysticism, see Arthur Green, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 42ff.

> established your name then also—my name and yours therein as one, for I established it and you are crowned with it.[143]

In this passage the endowment of Moses with a crown is given a creational significance when the letters on both headdresses are depicted as demiurgic tools, instruments through which heaven and earth came into being. In light of this imagery, it is possible that the motif of the investiture with the divine Name is also present in another Mosaic account — the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian. As we recall from the *Exagoge*, Moses receives a mysterious crown and immediately thereafter is able to permeate the secrets of creation and to control the created order. *Exagoge* 75-80 relates: "Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens. A multitude of stars fell before my knees and I counted them all."[144] Here, crowned, Moses suddenly has immediate access to all created realms, "beneath the earth and above the heaven," and the stars are now kneeling before the newly initiated demiurgic agent.

In some Samaritan sources, Moses' clothing with the Name is set in parallel to Adam's endowment with the image. Fossum suggests[145] that in *Memar Marqah,* Moses' investiture with the Name also appears to be understood as vestment with the image.[146]

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[143] Macdonald, *Memar Marqah,* 2.31.

[144] Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54.

[145] Fossum argues that "Moses' investiture and coronation, which usually were connected with his ascension of Mt. Sinai, were seen not only as a heavenly enthronement, but also as a restoration of the glory lost by Adam. The possession of this Glory was conceived of as a sharing of God's own Name, i.e., the divine nature." Fossum, *Name of God*, 94.

[146] *Memar Marqah* VI.3 reads: "He [Moses] drew near to the holy deep darkness where the Divine One was, and he saw the wonders of the unseen—a sight no one else could see. His image dwelt on him. How terrifying to anyone who beholds and no one is able to stand before it!" Macdonald, *Memar Marqah,* 2.223.

Jesus' Luminous Face

Memories of the Mosaic Sinai encounters receive a more pronounced expression in Matthew and Luke's accounts of the transfiguration,[147] in particular, through the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face.[148] As previously mentioned, Jesus' luminous face was often interpreted through the lens of the biblical "Mosaic typology," which resulted in a portrayal of Jesus as the new Moses. Be that as it may, this link has often been criticized by scholars. For example, Simon Lee points out that the luminous face represents more than a mere replication of a Mosaic feature found in the Hebrew Bible. He argues that "while Jesus' radiant face at the transfiguration clearly reminds readers of Moses' experience at the Sinai Theophany, it is questionable whether Matthew, by mentioning his radiant face, intends to legitimize Jesus as the new Moses or affirm his teaching authority. For Jesus was already appointed as God's divine Son in the infancy narrative and at the baptism (3:1–17), and his teaching authority became manifest to the public (7:28)."[149] Lee further points out the limitations of the biblical Mosaic typology by noting that "Mosaic typology cannot be the single dominant hermeneutical key for the entire Matthean Christological project, including the transfiguration. Against Dale

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147 The absence of this tradition in Mark remains a debated issue. Cranfield proposes that "in view of the parallels it is surprising that Mark does not mention Jesus' face. That a reference to it has dropped out of the text by mistake at a very early stage, as Streeter suggested, is conceivable; but perhaps it is more likely that Mt. and Lk. have both introduced the reference independently under the influence of Exod. xxxiv. 29 ff." Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 290.

148 The same theophanic constellations where the features of the Ancient of Days coincide with the symbolism of the shining face will appear in Rev 1. In relation to these developments, Yarbro Collins notes that "Jesus is not depicted as luminous or as wearing white garments in the resurrection-appearance stories. He is so depicted, however, in epiphany stories, including Rev 1:16, which speaks about Christ's face shining like the sun." Yarbro Collins, *Mark,* 422.

149 Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 95.

Allison's new Moses Christology, I argue that Matthew reads the scriptural stories, including Moses, on the basis of his understanding of Jesus."[150] Yet it should be noted that Allison's own position might not be as straightforward as Lee envisions, since he is well aware that the face imagery far transcends the limited scope of biblical Mosaic traditions.[151] Furthermore, a plethora of possible interpretations of the face imagery points not only to various possessors of this attribute but also to the ambiguity of the designation itself. This imagery can be interpreted in a variety of ways, namely, as a part of the human or divine body, as a glorious body itself, or as one of its cognates, such as an image or an *iqonin*.

Although scholars have attempted to interpret the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face through the biblical imagery of Moses' incandescent visage,[152] another important theophanic trend, which speaks about the deity's *Panim*, remains neglected. This tradition, in which the deity's *Panim* becomes a technical term for the Glory of God, is rooted in the biblical theophanic accounts, where, in response to Moses' plea to behold the deity's *Glory*, God tells the seer it is impossible for him to see His *Face*. The tradition of the *panim* as a designation for the luminous divine body receives further development in the Enochic literature. In one of the earliest Enochic booklets, the *Book of the Watchers,* the notion of the deity's *Panim* plays

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[150] Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 95.

[151] Allison points to the ubiquity of such imagery by noting that "seemingly the most cogent objection to the Mosaic interpretation of the transfiguration is this: many stories from antiquity attribute radiance to others besides Moses, so why should the motif be especially associated with him? ... in view of all the evidence, it must be conceded that the motif of radiance was far from being exclusively associated with Moses." Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, 246.

[152] Exod 34:29-30 unveils the following tradition: "Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him." Exod 34:35 affirms a similar tradition: "the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him."

an important role in theophanic descriptions. For our study it is significant that within these early extra-biblical accounts, the imagery of the deity's face often coincides (like in the transfiguration account) with the symbolism of its dazzlingly white/glorious garment. Regarding these developments, Christopher Rowland observes that "in *1 Enoch* 14:20 two aspects of the divinity are mentioned, his clothing ('his raiment was like the sun, brighter and whiter than any snow') and his face. Precisely these two elements are mentioned in Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29."[153]

The symbolism of God's Face receives further elaboration in *2 Enoch* where God's *Panim* is understood not as a part of God's body, but as his entire extent. Moreover, the *panim* became a terminological correlative for another concept prominent in many early Jewish extra-biblical accounts, namely, the image of God or His *iqonin*. We can see this correlation in early Mosaic, Enochic, and Jacobite extra-biblical traditions, where *tselem* is often used interchangeably with *panim*. If in Matthew's and Luke's transfiguration accounts Jesus' luminous face was indeed understood as his *iqonin*, they provide an important connection with other early Jewish theophanic accounts. In these accounts, Jesus' luminous face may also be envisioned not merely as a part of the translated adept's body but as a reference to his glorious *tselem* or *iqonin*. An important feature — indicating that Jesus' face relates not to Moses's but to God's countenance — is the fact that the reference to "face" occurs in the account before the advent of the deified human, rather than after such theophany as is the case with Moses.

Another distinctive aspect of the transfiguration account which hints that it does not operate with the concept of Moses' face as understood in the Hebrew Bible is that, unlike the biblical account, where the prophet's face is understood as the mirror of divine Glory, a material testimony that the seer then carries to the lower realm as a witness of the divine encounter, here the glowing effects of Jesus'

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153 Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 367.

face are not retained in further narration.[154] Furthermore, in Exodus and at Jesus' transfiguration the glorious face is manifested in two different realms: the upper realm in the case of Jesus and the lower realm in the case of biblical Moses. One can see in this topological situation a curious theophanic reversal: the face of the great prophet, not luminous on the mountain, started emitting light upon his descent from the high place; while Jesus' face, shining on the mountain, does not remain incandescent in the lower realm at his descent.[155]

Also important for the interpretation of the transfiguration story is the attempt to connect the face with the imagery of the sun. Once again, this juxtaposition recalls extra-biblical Mosaic testimonies, especially ones reflected in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*. There we learn that the light of Moses' face surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon.[156] *LAB* 12:1 unveils the following tradition: "Moses came down. Having been bathed with light that could not be gazed upon, he had gone down to the place where the light of the

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[154] Jarl Fossum underlines this discrepancy with Moses' situation by noting that the luminosity of Jesus' face unlike in Moses' story was not retained after the descent from the mountain of the transfiguration. He notes that "Matt 17:2 says that Jesus' 'face shone like the sun,' while Luke 9:29 states that 'the appearance of his countenance was altered.' In Exod 34:29-35 it is related that Moses' face shone while he descended from Mt. Sinai. It is tempting to see a connection here, but it should be borne in mind that neither Matthew nor Luke relates that Jesus came down from the mountain with a luminous face." Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 77.

[155] Ulrich Luz also notes this difference by arguing that "the transformation of Moses in Exodus 34 is also something different. It became visible after God had spoken with him, and it did not immediately end, while Jesus' transformation took place before God spoke and was only temporary." Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 396.

[156] Reflecting on these traditions in *LAB,* Kristine Ruffatto notes that "*LAB* 12:1 declares that when Moses descended from his heavenly ascent on Sinai, his radiant face 'surpassed the splendor of the sun and moon' (*vicit lumen faciei sue splendorem solis et lune*). Jacobson writes that comparisons to the sun and moon are fairly commonplace in classical Greek and Latin texts, and that a nearly exact parallel is found at *Pal. Hist.* p. 242 where Moses' face is said to shine ὑπὲρ τὸν ἥλιον. The idea that Moses' shining face surpassed the brilliance of the sun is also found in *Lev. Rab.* 20:2." Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 160.

sun and the moon are. The light of his face surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon, but he was unaware of this."[157] The same comparison between the face of the great prophet and sun is then perpetuated in rabbinic literature. For example, according to *b. Bava Batra* 75a, "the face of Moses was like that of the sun but the face of Joshua was like that of the moon."[158]

Earlier we suggested that the symbolism of Jesus's face is connected with the notion of image or *iqonin*. Why is this important? Because in early Jewish materials, the translated seer is often conceived as the image or the *iqonin* of God. This is evident, for example, in the Adamic lore, where the protoplast is understood as the divine image. The same understanding is implied in the Mosaic and Jacobite extra-biblical accounts through the motif of angelic veneration and hostility. Furthermore, we learned that the role of the translated person as the image of God is closely intertwined in early Jewish accounts with the symbolism of the *panim* or the face. This is especially noticeable in the Slavonic *Ladder of Jacob,* where the conceptual bridge between the notions of image and face are openly expressed in the symbolism of Jacob's *iqonin*.[159]

If the concept of the *iqonin* is indeed present in the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face, it is possible that such imagery does not originate in the traditions about the patriarch Jacob, but rather from the Mosaic developments, currents which, in turn, exercised an unmatched influence on this Christian theophany. In this regard, it is

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[157] Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation*, 2 vols. Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 110. For the discussion of this tradition see Belleville, *Reflections of Glory,* 41.

[158] Isidor Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Hagiga* (London: Soncino, 1935–1952), *Bava Batra,* 75a.

[159] The correlation between *panim* and *iqonin* is also discernible in *Joseph and Aseneth*. On this see Andrei A. Orlov, *The Greatest Mirror: Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Albany: SUNY, 2017), 141-148.

noteworthy that in extra-biblical Jewish lore, Moses' luminous face was often reinterpreted as his *iqonin*.

For instance, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* of Exod 34:29, while rendering the account of Moses' shining visage, adds to it the *iqonin* terminology: "At the time that Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the splendor of the *iqonin* of his face shone because of the splendor of the Glory of the Shekinah of the Lord at the time that he spoke with him."[160] The next verse (34:30) of the same targumic account also uses the *iqonin* formulae: "Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the *iqonin* of his face shone; and they were afraid to go near him."[161] Finally, verses 33-35 speak about Moses' veil, again demonstrating the appropriation of the image symbolism:

> When Moses ceased speaking with them, he put a veil on the *iqonin* of his face. Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil that was on the *iqonin* of his face until he came out. And he would come out and tell the children of Israel what he had been commanded. The children of Israel would see Moses' *iqonin* that the splendor of the *iqonin* of Moses' face shone. Then Moses would put the veil back on his face until he went in to speak with him.[162]

In these targumic renderings one detects the creative interchange between *panim* and *tselem* symbolism. The application of "image" terminology to Moses' story here has profound anthropological significance — since Moses' luminosity becomes envisioned as a restoration of Adam's original *tselem,* which, according to some traditions, was itself a luminous entity. The Adamic connection is often articulated in various non-biblical accounts describing Moses' face. The Samaritan *Memar Marqah*, for instance, makes this connection

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[160] Martin J. McNamara, Richard Hayward, and Michael Maher, eds., *Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, Aramaic Bible 2 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 260.
[161] McNamara et al., *Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, 261.
[162] McNamara et al., *Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, 261.

between the shining face of Moses and the luminosity of Adam's image. According to Linda Belleville, several passages of this Samaritan collection link Moses' luminosity to the primordial glory Adam had prior to the Fall.[163]

The understanding of Moses' face restoring the original luminous *tselem* is also expressed in later rabbinic midrashim where the protoplast's glorious image is put in conspicuous parallel with the radiant *panim* of the great prophet.[164] We find this correspondence divulged in *Deut. Rab.* 11:3:

> Adam said to Moses: "I am greater than you because I have been created in the image of God." Whence this? For it is said, And God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27). Moses replied to him: "I am far superior to you, for the honour which was given to you has been taken away from you, as it is said, But man (Adam) abideth not in honour (Ps 49:13); but as for me, the radiant countenance which God gave me still remains with me."[165]

Another specimen of this tradition is found in *Midrash Tadshe* 4 where the creation of the protoplast in God's image is compared with the bestowal of luminosity on Moses' face: "In the beginning: 'and God created man in his image,' and in the desert: 'and Moshe knew not that the skin of his face shone.'"[166] It is also noteworthy

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[163] See Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 50.

[164] See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.705.

[165] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 7.173. I have argued that already in 4Q504 the glory of Adam and the glory of Moses' face were creatively juxtaposed. The luminous face of the prophet serves in this text as an alternative to the lost luminosity of Adam and as a new symbol of God's glory once again manifested in the human body. On this, see Andrei A. Orlov, "Vested with Adam's glory: Moses as the Luminous Counterpart of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Macarian Homilies," *Christian Orient* 4.10 (2006): 498–513.

[166] Alon Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 183. Examining this passage, Linda Belleville observes that "*Midrash Tadshe* 4 associates Moses' glory

that later rabbinic materials often speak of the luminosity of Adam's face,[167] a feature most likely pointing to an Adam-Moses connection. Take, for example, *Leviticus Rabbah* 20.2, which runs as follows:

> Resh Lakish, in the name of R. Simeon the son of Menasya, said: The apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun; how much more so the brightness of his face! Nor need you wonder. In the ordinary way if a person makes salvers, one for himself and one for his household, whose will he make more beautiful? Not his own? Similarly, Adam was created for the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the globe of the sun for the service of mankind.[168]

In a similar tradition, *Genesis Rabbah* 11 focuses not on Adam's luminous garments, but on his glorious face:

> Adam's glory did not abide the night with him. What is the proof? But Adam passeth not the night in glory (Ps. XLIX, 13). The Rabbis maintain: His glory abode with him, but at the termination of the Sabbath He deprived him of his splendor and expelled him from the Garden of Eden, as it is written, Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away (Job XIV, 20).[169]

The roots of the preceding rabbinic trajectories can be traced to documents of the Second Temple period. For example, the theme of the superiority of Moses over Adam is already present in Philo. Wayne Meeks draws attention to a tradition from *Quaestiones et Solutiones*

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with being created in the image of God, stating that God created man in his own image, first in the beginning and then in the wilderness." Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 65.

[167] According to Jewish sources, the image of God was especially reflected in the radiance of Adam's face. On this, see Fossum, *The Name of God*, 94.

[168] Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (London: Soncino, 1961), 4.252.

[169] Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.81.

in Exodum 2.46, which identifies the ascendant Moses as the heavenly man[170] created in God's image on the seventh day:[171]

> But the calling above of the prophet is a second birth better than the first.... For he is called on the seventh day, in this (respect) differing from the earth-born first molded man, for the latter came into being from the earth and with body, while the former (came) from the ether and without body. Wherefore the most appropriate number, six, was assigned to the earth-born man, while to the one differently born (was assigned) the higher nature of the hebdomad.[172]

It is possible that such an interpretation of Moses' shining visage, not merely as the luminous face but also functioning as the luminous image, could stand behind the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face in the transfiguration accounts. In the peculiar theophanic context of the transfiguration, with its postulation of God's invisibility, the famous Pauline phrase — "Christ as the image of the invisible God" — can be seen in an entirely new light.

Elijah and Moses

One of the important features of the transfiguration account is the presence of Elijah – another prominent seer of the Hebrew Bible associated with aural apparitions of the deity.[173] The appearance of

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[170] Meeks observes that in the early Mosaic accounts "Moses' elevation at Sinai was treated not only as a heavenly enthronement, but also as a restoration of the glory lost by Adam. Moses, crowned with both God's name and his image, became in some sense a 'second Adam,' the prototype of a new humanity." Meeks, "Moses as God and King," 365.

[171] Meeks, "Moses as God and King," 364–65.

[172] Ralph Marcus, ed., *Philo, Questions and Answers on Exodus*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press/Heinemann, 1949), 91–92.

[173] The Lukan version of the transfiguration story appears to further strengthen Elijah's and Moses' connections with the theophanic traditions by mentioning that both "appeared in glory." On this terminology see Jo-

two paradigmatic participants in the Old Testament theophanies at the transfiguration event is not coincidental. Morna Hooker suggests that the "link between Elijah and Moses, and one that is clearly relevant to the transfiguration, is the fact that both of them experienced theophanies on mountains."[174] Both characters, it appears, were strategically placed in the story to bear witness to the novel divine manifestation in the form of Jesus. As in the Hebrew Bible, where both adepts are linked with the respective *Kavod* and *Shem* developments with their corresponding ocular and aural symbolism, the transfiguration account curiously unfolds both theophanic paradigms with their peculiar expressions at the same time: Jesus appears as a glorious form, while God is revealed as a formless voice.

As previously discussed, the biblical materials underline the role of Moses and Elijah as the respective exemplars of two rival theophanic trends: biblical encounters of Moses are permeated with ocularcentric motifs, while the story of Elijah is expressly linked to the aural ideology. Therefore, it may not be coincidental that Mark inverses the historical sequence by listing Elijah first, possibly attempting to underline the priority of the deity associated in the transfiguration story with the aural paradigm to which Elijah serves as the primary biblical exemplar. Ramsey suggests that "the order is peculiar to Mark, and it may be dictated by the greater prominence of Elijah in his gospel."[175] The Gospel of Luke appears to further highlight Moses' and Elijah's connections with the theophanic traditions by mentioning that they both appeared in glory (Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας, οἳ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ).

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seph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, Anchor Bible 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 794-795.

[174] Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 61. Joel Marcus also suggests that "the key to the symbolism of the appearance of 'Elijah with Moses' on the mountain probably lies in their common association with Mt. Sinai = Horeb, where they both encountered God (Exod 19-24, 34; 1 Kgs 19)." Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 632.

[175] Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 114.

Three Dwellings

Peter's statement about building three dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah has often puzzled scholars. Countless hypotheses attempting to contextualize this statement have been offered. Jesus' silence appears to underline the problematic nature of Peter's suggestion, as he places his teacher alongside the two prominent seers of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have proposed that the essence of the statement could refer to Jesus' unique status in comparison with Moses and Elijah. Exploring the tradition of the three dwellings, John McGuckin suggests:

> there is a presupposition of equality of status here ... that Mark is concerned to reject ... which is designed to correct Peter's faulty theology by emphasizing the unique and special status of Jesus ... a uniqueness that has replaced and outstripped all prophetic predecessors and hence the meaning of the phrase: "and looking around they saw no-one only Jesus."[176]

Considering the peculiar choice of the characters, including two major participants in the Hebrew Bible's theophanies, it is not merely their abstract statuses which remain under consideration, but their position in relation to theophanic situation of the story. In these settings Jesus is clearly envisioned as the center of the theophanic event,

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[176] McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ,* 17. Other scholars note that Matthew's phrase, that upon raising their faces the disciples saw "no one except Jesus himself, alone" (οὐδένα εἶδον εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον) suggests that Jesus "alone remains on center stage" in order to reinforce for the disciples his uniqueness vis-à-vis Moses and Elijah. Michael Kibbe, *Godly Fear or Ungodly Failure? Hebrews 12:18–29 and the Sinai Theophanies* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 104. On this see also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.268; Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 233; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 441; John Nolland, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 705; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 648.

while Moses and Elijah are predetermined to constitute its periphery. The three booths tradition therefore may underline the unique status of Jesus as the symbolic nexus of the transfiguration theophany and clearly distinguish him from Moses and Elijah, who are mere recipients of theophanic encounters. Peter's way of addressing Jesus as "rabbi"[177] in Mark might further underline Peter's faulty "human" perception of the unique status of Jesus who became conceived in the transfiguration story as the divine *Kavod*.

The three dwellings tradition, with its tendency to emphasize the unique place of the main protagonist of the vision, helps to discern a peculiar multitiered hierarchy of various characters in the story, including crowds and chosen disciples, Elijah and Moses, the transfigured Jesus, and the divine Voice. If in our story Elijah and Moses are indeed envisioned as heavenly beings, as some scholars have suggested,[178] then their separation from Jesus in the episode of the three dwellings takes on another important function often found in Jewish extra-biblical accounts. This role involves a peculiar distancing of the deified human from the rest of the heavenly citizens and the simultaneous affirmation of his unique proximity to the deity. Such a role is often reaffirmed in various Jewish traditions through the routines of angelic obeisance and disdain. Although in the transfiguration story Elijah and Moses are not bowing down be-

[177] In relation to this term Joel Marcus notes that "in Jewish sources, 'Rabbi' and 'Rab' ('great one') eventually became technical terms for ordained teachers and/or jurists and are still used so today. Scholars of Judaism, however, debate how far the development toward 'Rabbi' as a technical term had gone in NT times. Some think that it was not yet a title but only a vague honorific, roughly equivalent to 'sir.' In support of this interpretation are Matt 20:33, which translates *rabbouni* from Mark 10:51 with *kyrie* ('sir'), and early inscriptions from Palestine and the Diaspora that use *rab*, *rabbi*, and related words as general terms of respect for influential men who were not necessarily teachers.... As Cohen sums up the situation, in the first several centuries of the Christian era the term was 'a popular designation for anyone of high position, notably — but not exclusively — a teacher.'" Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 633.

[178] Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 396.

fore the transfigured protagonist, the prostration of the disciples may allude to angelic obeisance.

The Fear Motif

All three synoptic renderings of the transfiguration story speak about the disciples' fear. These references are important, since fear often accompanies a divine encounter in early Jewish accounts.[179] Early Pentateuchal stories of the primordial humans encountering divine manifestations contain references to the fear that otherworldly realities instill in humans. For example, immediately after the protoplast's transgression, Genesis 3 reports Adam's fear regarding God's visitation to the Garden. This biblical book also recounts the fear of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during their encounters with divine and angelic manifestations. The fear of the visionary becomes a prominent motif in prophetic and apocalyptic accounts of the Hebrew Bible, including the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Daniel.[180]

The fear motif was not forgotten in extra-biblical Jewish literature, including early Enochic lore, a body of materials which represents one of the most extensive early compilations of Jewish visionary traditions. Already in one of the earliest Enochic booklets, the *Book of the Watchers*, we learn about the fear of the seventh antediluvian

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[179] On fear as the human response to theophany, see James C. VanderKam, *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 343; Joachim Becker, *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*, Analecta Biblica 25 (Rome: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 22.

[180] For example, see Dan 8:17-18: "So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, 'Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end.' As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground; then he touched me and set me on my feet"; Dan 10:7-9: "I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground."

patriarch as he approaches the divine presence. Chapter 14 of this early Enochic work portrays the seer's entrance into what seems to be regarded as the heavenly temple, the sacred abode of the deity, a very special *topos* that is terrifying not only to human beings but also to the celestial creatures. *1 Enoch* 14:9-14 offers the following report of the seer's progress into the celestial sanctuary:

> And I proceeded until I came near to a wall which was built of hailstones, and a tongue of fire surrounded it, and it began to make me afraid. And I went into the tongue of fire and came near to a large house which was built of hailstones, and the wall of that house (was) like a mosaic (made) of hailstones, and its floor (was) snow. Its roof (was) like the path of the stars and flashes of lightning, and among them (were) fiery Cherubim, and their heaven (was like) water. And (there was) a fire burning around its wall, and its door was ablaze with fire. And I went into that house, and (it was) hot as fire and cold as snow, and there was neither pleasure nor life in it. Fear covered me and trembling took hold of me. And as I was shaking and trembling, I fell on my face.[181]

It is significant that Enoch is not simply frightened by his otherworldly experience, he is literally "covered with fear." Scholars have pointed out the unusual strength of these formulae of fear. For example, John Collins notes the text's "careful observation of Enoch's terrified reaction."[182] Another scholar, Martha Himmelfarb, notices the power of the visionary's reaction to the divine presence, which in her opinion supersedes some formative biblical visionary accounts, including Ezekiel's visions. She points out that "Ezekiel's prostrations are never attributed to fear; they are reported each time in the same words, without any mention of emotion, as almost ritual acknowledgments of the majesty of God. The *Book of the Watchers*, on

[181] Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch,* 2.98.
[182] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 55.

the other hand, emphasizes the intensity of the visionary's reaction to the manifestation of the divine."[183]

For purposes of our investigation of the Mosaic influences, it is also significant that the fear motif plays a crucial role in biblical and extra-biblical renderings of Moses' story. In light of these traditions, scholars frequently connect the disciples' fear with the fear of the Israelites when they encountered Moses' luminous face. Thus, from Exod 34:29-30 we learn that "when Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him." Exod 34:35 then repeats this motif: "the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him."

Returning to the transfiguration story it is important to note that the fearful reaction of the disciples occurs at different places in each of the synoptic gospels. In Luke the disciples are terrified as they entered the cloud from which they will later hear the deity's voice.[184] In Matthew it occurs even later than in Luke, appearing after the divine utterance about Jesus' unique role in relation to the deity. Scholars argue that "in the Matthean version of the transfiguration it is actually the divine voice, and not Jesus' radiance, which provokes fear."[185]

In Mark, however, the fearful reaction of the disciples happens before the aural theophany. Although it is not entirely clear what provokes the fear in this case, the sudden apparition of Elijah and

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[183] Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 16.

[184] Davies and Allison note that "Luke makes the descent of the cloud the occasion for fear (Lk 9:34)." Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2.703. Huizenga comments further that "in Luke 9:34 the three disciples become afraid as they enter the cloud." Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 218.

[185] Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 211. Davies and Allison also note that Matthew "reserves the experience of awe on the part of the disciples until immediately after the words, 'Hear ye him.' It is the divine word which is awesome." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.703.

Moses or Jesus' metamorphosis,[186] scholars often see it as related to the transfigured Jesus.[187] For example, Davies and Allison note that "Mark places the awe felt by the disciples early in the narrative, immediately after the transfiguration and the vision of Moses and Elijah: not the fact that Jesus commands but his transfiguration itself is emphasized."[188] A similar correspondence — between fear and the ocularcentric manifestation — may also be reflected in Luke, since it is not entirely clear if the cloud's imagery in that gospel is related to Jesus' theophany, or pertains to the revelation of the divine Voice, or both. Luke's attribution of the theophanic fear, therefore, remains rather ambiguous.

In Mark, at least, the symbolism of theophanic fear can be compared to the aforementioned ocularcentric theophany found in biblical and extra-biblical accounts. An additional detail emphasizing the disciples' role as the visionaries of Jesus' glory is highlighted in unique fashion in Luke 9:32, underscoring the progress of the disciples' visionary abilities, since they were first depicted as "heavy with sleep" and then fully awake.[189] In the same verse, Luke also points out that they "saw his glory" (δὲ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ).

Although scholars connect the disciples' fear in Matthew with the revelation of the divine voice, they often forget that the essence of this divine utterance is closely tied to the previous ocularcentric theophanic ordeal of the transfigured Jesus. In fact, it provides an interpretation of this theophany by telling the seers they are privileged to behold the divine Son. In this light, it is possible that even in Matthew the theophanic fear is related to Jesus' epiphany, since it coincides with God's revelation about his true status. Given this, it is

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[186] Some scholars argue that the three disciples in Mark had become terrified at the appearance of Moses and Elijah in conversation with the transfigured Jesus. On this see Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 30.

[187] Leroy Huizenga suggests "in Mark 9:6, Jesus' radiance and the appearance of Moses and Elijah precipitate the disciples' fear." Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 218.

[188] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2.703.

[189] Luke 9:32: "ὁ δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ ἦσαν βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ: διαγρηγορήσαντες δὲ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς δύο ἄνδρας τοὺς συνεστῶτας αὐτῷ."

noteworthy that some scholars choose to read the fear motif in Matthew as indeed related to the ocularcentric theophany. For instance, Christopher Rowland observes that "Matthew 17:6 has the disciples falling on their faces, a typical reaction to a theophany or angelophany (cf. Ezek 2:1; Dan 10:9)."[190]

Veneration Motif?

Among the synoptic gospels, only Matthew relates the tradition in which the disciples, upon hearing the divine utterance, fall to the ground in fear. Jesus then raises them up, encouraging them not to be afraid. For some, these additions are the most important Matthean contributions. Along these lines, Ulrich Luz argues that "the most important Matthean change in the transfiguration story is the addition of vv. 6-7, telling of the disciples' fear and how Jesus raises them up."[191]

The disciples' reactions of fear and obeisance in Matthew are often seen as related solely to the aural manifestation of God, namely, His Voice.[192] Yet Jesus' peculiar affirmations to "get up" and "don't be afraid," can lead to a different interpretation. It is a significant that in Jewish and Christian theophanic accounts similar exhortations to visionaries to not fear or to get up usually come from the very objects of such visions: i. e., angelic or divine figures whose sudden appearance provokes feelings of fear and reverence.[193] This is the

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[190] Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 367.

[191] Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 395.

[192] Thus, Huizenga argues that "in the Matthean version, however, it is the divine voice which declares that Jesus is the beloved Son and commands Peter to remember the prior passion prediction which precipitates the fear." Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 218.

[193] Loren Stuckenbruck notes that "the expression 'Do not fear' was frequently used in biblical and Ancient Near Eastern literature to communicate a message of divine comfort." Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 88.

case, for example, in Dan 10:9-12, where we can find a celestial visitor touching a prostrated seer filled with fear and telling him not to be afraid:

> ... then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground. But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. He said to me, "Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you." So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. He said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words."

In Dan 10:18-19 a similar cluster of motifs is repeated again: "again one in human form touched me and strengthened me. He said, 'Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!' When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, 'Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.'"

A similar arrangement of motifs can be found in the Jewish pseudepigrapha.[194] The shorter and longer recensions of *2 Enoch* 1:6-8 portray angels appearing before Enoch. The text recounts that as he was overwhelmed with fear, the patriarch prostrates himself before them. The angels then tell the seer not to be afraid: "Then I awoke from my sleep, and saw those men, standing in front of me, in actuality. Then I bowed down to them; and I was terrified; and the appearance of my face was changed because of fear. Then those men said to me, 'Be brave, Enoch! In truth, do not fear!'"[195]

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[194] See also *3 Enoch* 15B:5: "At once Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to Moses, 'Son of Amram, fear not! for already God favors you. Ask what you will with confidence and boldness, for light shines from the skin of your face from one end of the world to the other.'" Philip Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983-1985), 1.304.
[195] Andersen "2 Enoch," 1.106-108.

In *2 Enoch* 22 a similar motif appears during the patriarch's encounter with the deity's glorious form, labeled there as God's "face": "I saw the view of the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot in a fire and brought out, and it emits sparks and is incandescent.... And I fell down flat and did obeisance to the Lord. And the Lord, with his own mouth, said to me, 'Be brave, Enoch! Don't be frightened! Stand up, and stand in front of my face forever.'"[196] Here again the phrase "do not fear" (or "be brave") coincides with the motif of bringing the adept into a standing position ("stand up").

It is important to note, that in the Gospel of Matthew the disciples' obeisance occurs immediately after the divine affirmation regarding Jesus' exalted status, and therefore it is possible that the content of the utterance and not the voice itself is what provokes the disciples' sudden reaction.[197] Davies and Allison recognize a certain correspondence between the disciples' bowed faces and the face of the transfigured Jesus, noting that "the motif of falling on one's face in fear is a standard part of any heavenly ascent or revelation story. But here there is more, for there is a contrast between Jesus' face, which is shining, and the faces of the disciples, which are hidden."[198] This motif of the covering/uncovering of faces has ancient roots in the biblical prophetic tradition. In Isaiah's vision, for example, the seraphim avoid looking God in the face. The same motif plays a prominent role in the Hekhalot literature, about which James Davila

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[196] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.136-138.

[197] The motif of the disciples' veneration is reminiscent of the one performed by the magi earlier in the gospel. According to Allison and Davies, "the magi do not simply bend their knees (cf. 17.14; 18.29). They fall down on their faces. This is noteworthy because there was a tendency in Judaism to think prostration proper only in the worship of God (cf. Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 116; *Decal.* 64; Mt 4.9-10; Acts 10.25-6; Rev 19.10; 22.8-9)." Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 1.248. Robert Gundry notes that "they (the magi) knelt down before him with heads to the ground." Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 31.

[198] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.703.

observes: "the attending angels ... must cover their faces to protect themselves from the divine radiance. Only then is it safe for God to uncover his face in this cosmic game of peekaboo."[199]

Unlike Mark, the Gospel of Matthew applies the symbolism of luminous *panim*/face to Jesus, which, as in other Jewish traditions, may signify the divine image. If so, the disciples' obeisance provides additional evidence that in some versions of the transfiguration story Jesus' face is envisioned as the *iqonin*. This links the transfiguration account to Jewish extra-biblical accounts, which often depict their protagonists as the image of God, an office requiring angelic veneration.

Another important similarity with Jewish accounts is that the disciples' prostration occurs after the deity's affirmation about Jesus' unique status. This brings to mind a tradition found in chapter 4 of *3 Enoch* or *Sefer Hekhalot*, where angelic obeisance to the translated human is given after the deity's assurance that Enoch-Metatron, who just underwent a celestial transformation, represents the "chosen one."

As previously noted, early specimens of this tradition are present in *2 Enoch*[200] and the *Primary Adam Books*,[201] where angelic obeisance coincides with affirmations of the new celestial power's unique status.

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[199] James Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 139.

[200] Cf. *2 Enoch* 22:5: "And the Lord, with his own mouth, said to me, 'Be brave, Enoch! Don't be frightened! Stand up, and stand in front of my face forever.'" Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.136-138.

[201] In the Georgian version of the *Primary Adam Books* the affirmation mentions Adam's unique role as the divine image: "Bow down before the likeness and the image of the divinity." The Latin version also speaks about the divine image: "Worship the image of the Lord God, just as the Lord God has commanded." In the Armenian version too Adam's name is not mentioned and the newly created favorite seems to understood now as the divine manifestation: "Then Michael summoned all the angels, and God said to them, 'Come, bow down to god whom I made.'" Gary Anderson and Michael E. Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve. Second Revised Edition,* Early Judaism and Its Literature 17 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 16E.

To conclude our analysis of the disciples' obeisance, we should note that in Matthew this motif fits nicely in the chain of previous veneration occurrences, evoking the memory of the prostrating magi and Satan's quest for worship.[202]

Imagery of the Cloud

All three synoptic accounts mention the cloud overshadowing the protagonists of the story. Scholars often see in this imagery a connection with the theophanic symbolism found in Exodus, where the cloud overshadows the mountain and the Israelite prophet.[203] From Exod 24:15-18 one learns the following:

> Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

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[202] Another unique Matthean occurrence of this motif is found in Matt 18:26 where we find a familiar constellation of "πεσών" and "προσεκύνει." Gundry observes that, besides the magi story, "Matthew inserts the same combination of falling down and worshiping in 4:9 and uses it in unique material at 18:26." He further notes that, "[I]n particular, πεσόντες sharpens Matthew's point, for in 4:9 falling down will accompany worship in the alternatives of worshiping God and worshiping Satan, and without parallel it describes the response of the disciples who witnessed the transfiguration (17:6)." Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 31-32.

[203] McGuckin notes that "both Matthew and Luke recount the awe of the disciples as a result of the cloud theophany. This is a common and typical theophany-form based upon the Sinai archetype." McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 11.

In this passage the cloud serves as the screen which conceals both the divine Voice and the divine Form — the *Kavod*. This double function of the theophanic cloud, able to conceal both the aural manifestation of the deity and its ocularcentric counterpart, may also be present in the transfiguration accounts.

Although the cloud is traditionally understood as a part of the aural epiphany of the divine Voice, it is also possible that such overshadowing pertains to Jesus' glory, since he is described as enveloped in it.[204] With regard to the cloud symbolism, Ramsey notes that Luke "infers that the cloud enveloped all, including the disciples who 'feared as they entered into the cloud.' Saint Mark leaves the point obscure."[205] He further suggests that "the νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα is the sign of the presence of the glory; and the promise is being fulfilled that in the messianic age 'the glory of the Lord shall be seen and the cloud' (2 Macc 2:7)."[206]

Additionally, Matt 17:5 appears to highlight the "visual" dimension of the cloud symbolism by mentioning a "bright" cloud (νεφέλη φωτεινή). Such a reference (once again) may connect the cloud with the visual, rather than the audial, theophany.

Another important conceptual facet is that the bright cloud may be understood here as a kind of a garment of the aural deity, a counterpart to Jesus's dazzling attire. Indeed, scholars have entertained the possibility of interpreting the bright cloud as the "garment" of the aural Divinity, a vestment corresponding to the glorious clothes of his ocular counterpart. Jarl Fossum, for example, suggests that "the brilliant garment and the cloud ... are variants of the same theme. Matthew actually says the cloud was 'bright' (φωτεινή),

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[204] As in many others Jewish visionary accounts, the cloud here serves as a paradoxical theophanic device that simultaneously reveals and conceals the deity. In this respect, Charles Cranfield rightly observes that "the cloud is at the same time the sign both of God's self-revelation and of his self-veiling." Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 295.

[205] Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 115.

[206] Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 115.

which suggests that he took it to be 'the glory of the Shekinah', as is the phrase in *b. Shab.* 88b."[207]

The Divine Voice Traditions

Although all versions of the transfiguration story mention the apparition of the divine Voice, they fashion the context of the aural manifestation of the deity differently. Experts have suggested that in the Gospel of Matthew the voice of God plays a more central role than in other versions of the transfiguration story. Ulrich Luz proposes that for Matthew, it is "in substance the most important element, as the detailed reaction of the disciples demonstrates. Thus in contrast to the other synoptics, he has clearly made the audition (and not the vision of the transfigured one!) the center of his story."[208] A. D. A. Moses concurs, arguing that "the 'voice from the cloud' . . . undoubtedly is the climax of Matthew's τὸ ὅραμα (Matt 17:9)."[209]

Often the centrality of the audial revelation in the Gospel of Matthew is postulated on the basis of the disciples' reaction, or one might say, overreaction to the divine utterance. Yet, as I have suggested above, it is difficult to determine if the reaction is related to the aural manifestation itself or to the peculiar content of this audial message in which Jesus' status is suddenly revealed. In other words, it remains unclear if the disciples' fear and reverence were provoked by the revelation *of* the first "person" or the revelation *about* the second "person."

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[207] Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 93.

[208] Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 394.

[209] Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 138. A similar suggestion also comes from Donaldson. While exploring Matthew's version of the transfiguration, he observes that "there can be no doubt that the key and climax to the transfiguration account is to be found in the content of the heavenly proclamation .... It is the divine proclamation, with its identification of Jesus as the Son, that overshadows and clarifies all other elements in the narrative." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 148.

As in certain Jewish accounts, e. g., the *Apocalypse of Abraham,*[210] *b. Hag.* 15a and *3 Enoch,* in the transfiguration story the ocularcentric apparition of the deified person is followed by an epiphany of the divine voice. However, unlike in *b. Hag.* 15a and *3 Enoch,* this voice does not intend to expose or demote the new power's controversial stand, but is rather determined to affirm and elevate the extraordinary status of this new custodian of the ocularcentric trend. Scholars rightly make a connection between this aural manifestation of the deity and its earlier counterpart found in the scene of Jesus' baptism.

As with other details of the transfiguration story, the symbolism of the divine Voice again evokes the memory of the theophanic imagery found in the Book of Exodus.[211] From Exod 24:16 one learns that "the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud."[212] The crucial difference here is that while in the Exodus account the manifestations of the *Kavod* and the divine Voice belong to the single divine "power," in the transfiguration account these two manifestation are now divided between separate theophanic agents.

Many commentators have attempted to elucidate the symbolism of the divine voice in the transfiguration story through the Jewish traditions about the *bat qol* imagery.[213] These comparisons are

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[210] Scholars sometimes compare the manifestation of the divine voice in the baptism and the transfiguration accounts with the personified voice in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Thus, in relation to these parallels, Allison notes that "the voice itself (personified? cf. Rev 1:12; *Ladder of Jacob* 3; *Apoc. Abr.* 9) speaks." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.336.

[211] A. D. A. Moses notes that both in Exod 24:16 and Mark 9:7, the divine voice speaks out of the cloud. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 43-44.

[212] A. D. A. Moses suggests that "the 'voice' in Exodus 24-31; 33-34 is addressed to Moses, while at the transfiguration it is directed at the disciples (not Jesus)." Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 45.

[213] Reflecting on the divine Voice traditions in the baptism and the transfiguration accounts, Davies and Allison note that it is natural to link the voice from the heavens with the rabbinic *bat qol* ("daughter of a voice"). This vehicle of revelation is sometimes quoted in Scripture, often to declare

important, since they provide an important parallel with rabbinic and Hekhalot accounts; here the aural reprimand of Aher and Metatron is clearly rendered as the *bat qol*.[214]

We can see an almost identical withdrawal of the deity into an aural mode in the account of Jesus' baptism. For now we mention in passing that the parallelism between the epiphany of the divine Voice at the baptism (3:17) and the transfiguration (17:5) is especially lucid in Matthew, where the message is repeated verbatim.

Another important aspect of the divine Voice imagery in the synoptic gospels is its marked distance from the *Kavod* symbolism, representing a striking departure from the Jewish accounts. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Ladder of Jacob,* the deity's Voice remained closely associated with the *Kavod* imagery. Thus, in chapter 18 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham,* when the seer encounters the divine Voice in heaven, the divine utterance appears to be situated in close proximity to, if not enthroned upon, the Seat of Glory. *Apoc. Ab.* 18:2-3 reads:

> And I heard a voice like the roaring of the sea, and it did not cease because of the fire. And as the fire rose up, soaring higher, I saw under the fire a throne [made] of fire and the many-eyed Wheels, and they are reciting the song. And under the throne [I saw] four singing fiery Living Creatures.[215]

In the *Ladder of Jacob* the associations between the divine Voice and the *Kavod* are made clearer, since the symbolic link is found in the

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God's favorable estimation of a righteous individual or to settle disputes, and it was often spoken of as being from the heavens, and could be thought of as the voice of God himself. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.335-6.

[214] Although the *bat qol* has often been interpreted as an inferior revelation, scholars argue that in the transfiguration account, given its theophanic context, "the voice from the cloud is clearly a divine voice." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 425.

[215] Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, Text-Critical Studies 3 (Atlanta: Scholars, 2004), 24.

midst of the "double" theophany. As one recalls from the *Ladder,* the divine Voice is portrayed as the apex of the *Kavod* complex, situated above the "upper face":[216]

> And God was standing above its highest face, and he called to me from there, saying, "Jacob, Jacob!" And I said, "Here I am, Lord!" And he said to me, "The land on which you are sleeping, to you will I give it, and to your seed after you. And I will multiply your seed."[217]

Yet, in the synoptic transfiguration accounts and elsewhere in the synoptic gospels the divine Voice is never associated with the *Kavod*. Such a dissociation of the aural manifestation of the deity solidifies Jesus' role as the unique custodian of features attributed to the divine *Kavod*. The same tendency is observed in the rabbinic and Hekhalot traditions which refrain from linking the *bat qol* and *Kavod* symbolism.

"Listen to Him"

In all three renderings of the transfiguration story the message of the divine voice climaxes with the command "listen to him." Scholars often see this as a clear allusion to the Sinai encounters. For example, Joel Marcus suggests that "the concluding words of the heavenly voice, 'Listen to him!' (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) are so close to the exhortation of Deut 18:15, 'To him you shall listen,' (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε) that we may speak of a virtual citation."[218] He further notes that

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[216] I have argued that the upper fiery face in the *Ladder of Jacob* bears similarities with the *Kavod* complex. It brings to mind *2 Enoch*'s depiction of the *Kavod* as the fiery Face in *2 Enoch* 22. The salient detail that connects both texts is that the Face in *2 Enoch* is similarly defined as "fiery" and "terrifying." This tendency to equate the *Panim* with the *Kavod* is already present in some biblical accounts, including Exod 33:18-20, where in response to Moses' plea to God to show him His Glory, God answers that it is impossible for a human being to see God's Face.

[217] Horace G. Lunt, "Ladder of Jacob," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983-85), 2.407.

[218] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 80-81.

> in its Old Testament context, the exhortation "to him you shall listen" is part of Moses' instructions to the children of Israel to obey the prophet who will arise after his death: "Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren — to him you shall listen .... And Yahweh said to me ... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (Deut 18:15-18).[219]

Marcus concludes by suggesting that "if the larger context of this passage is in view in the words 'listen to him!' in Mark 9:7, then the Markan transfiguration narrative identifies Jesus as this prophet-like-Moses, who became an important figure in the eschatological expectation of postbiblical Judaism."[220]

Adela Yarbro Collins also entertains the Mosaic connection, noting that

> the command "listen to him" (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) was probably taken by some members of the audience as a general expression of the authority of Jesus and the attitude that his followers should take toward him. For those knowledgeable about scripture, it probably recalled the statement in Deut 18:15 LXX, "to him you shall listen" (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε). Those familiar with the expectation of an eschatological prophet like Moses were especially likely to make this connection.[221]

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[219] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 80-81.

[220] Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 81. Jarl Fossum also argues that "ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, undoubtedly refers to LXX Deut 18:15, where Moses says: 'A prophet from the midst of your brothers, like me, the Lord your God shall raise up for you; him shall you listen to (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε).' Jesus is thus designated as the Prophet like Moses. Like his prototype, he has to descend from heaven in order to proclaim God's will." Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 93-4. See also McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 79.

[221] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 426. See also Cranfield who argues that "the last two words ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, attest Jesus as the one in whom the prophecy of

While Mosaic connections have been acknowledged in previous studies, parallels with another mediatorial trend, the Angel of the Lord traditions, have consistently escaped scholarly attention. These associations with the chief angelic mediator of the Hebrew Bible are crucial for our study. The Angel of the Lord figure played a pivotal role in the conceptual framework of the Deuteronomic aural ideology,[222] often functioning as a replacement for the divine visual presence. Comparable to the synoptic transfiguration accounts, where Jesus becomes the embodiment of the invisible deity, it is possible to discern early traces of a similar concept already in the biblical traditions regarding the Angel of the Lord. As in the transfiguration account, the deity in the Hebrew Bible also orders the people to listen to his mediator. From Exod 23:20–22 we read the following:

> I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him. But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

The first important detail of this address is the phrase "listen to him," found in Exod 23:21, which he Septuagint renders "εἰσάκουε

Deut 18:15, 18 is fulfilled and underline his unique position." Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 295-6.

[222] There are various opinions about the possible conceptual roots of Exod 23:20-22. Some scholars suggest that it represents the Deuteronom(ist)ic redaction of Exodus. On this, see William Johnstone, "Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies, with Special Reference to the Sinai Pericope in Exodus," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 16-37 at 26; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch (Ex 20,22-23,33). Studien zu seiner Entstehung und Theologie*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 188 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 406-414; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomic Contribution to the Narrative in Genesis-Numbers: A Test-Case," in Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists. The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 84-115 at 94-97.

αὐτοῦ." This command is then repeated in Exod 23:22, as the deity again instructs the Israelites to listen attentively to the angel's voice (ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς). The deity's utterances thus parallel the tradition found in the synoptic transfiguration accounts, in which God's instructions about listening to his envoy take on the form of a command.[223]

The parallels with the Angel of the Lord traditions are important for our study since Jesus' novel theophanic identity, as with the Exodus angel, is constructed through the ocularcentric absence of the deity, now withdrawn in the aniconic aural dimension. Scholars have argued that a similar situation can be detected in the mediatorial profile of the Angel of the Lord. According to Darrell Hannah, "the Exodus angel ... becomes to some extent an expression of the divine absence in that he is a substitute for Yahweh (Exod 33:1-3). As a replacement for the divine presence, it would appear that the angel of the Exodus is beginning to have a quasi-individual existence."[224]

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[223] On the commanding language in the transfiguration story, see Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 81, footnote 1.

[224] Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity,* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.109 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 21. On this see also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 134. Charles Gieschen argues that the figure of the Angel of the Lord exhibits "a delicate distinction between YHWH and his visible form.... This text testifies that a figure that has some independence from YHWH can still share in his being through the possession of the divine Name (i.e., a divine hypostasis)." Charles Gieschen, "The Divine Name in the Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115-58 at 122-123. Camilla von Heijne, in her recent study, points out that "the relationship between God and this angel is far from clear and the identity of YHWH and His angel is merged in many texts, e.g., Gen 16:7-14; 21:17-20; 22:1-19; 31:10-13; 48:15-16; Exod 3:1-6; Josh 5:13-15; 6:2, and Judges chapters 6 and 13. In these pericopes, 'the angel of YHWH' seems to be completely interchangeable with YHWH Himself. According to Exod 23:20-21, the angel possesses the name of God, it is 'in him,' and it appears to be implied that this 'divine Name angel' has the

Scholars have argued about the formative role of the Angel of the Name within the conceptual framework of the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic *Shem* ideologies.[225] According to one hypothesis, the figure of the Angel of the Lord constitutes one of the conceptual roots of *Shem* theology. Thus, Mettinger observes: "it appears that when the Deuteronomistic theologians choose *shem*, they seized on a term which was already connected with the idea of God's presence. Exod 23:21 tells us how God warned Israel during her wanderings in the desert to respect his angel and obey his voice, 'for my name is in him.'"[226]

Some aspects of the aural ideology are already notably present in Exod 23 through the repeated references to the voice of the angelic mediator. Thus, in Exod 23:21-22 Moses is advised to listen to the Angel of the Name's voice. In light of such affirmations, it is possible that the celestial messenger mediates not only the divine Name but also the deity's Voice. Deliberating on the imagery of the voice in Exod 23, Moshe Idel notices that "this angel is not just a visual yet silent apparition, a sort of pillar that guides the tribes day and night; rather it has a voice that is its own, though at the same time it is God who is speaking. The ambiguity here is quintessential: though God is

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power to forgive sins, an ability that elsewhere in the Bible is reserved for God. This angel is always anonymous and speaks with divine authority in the first person singular as if he is God Himself, thus there is no clear distinction between the sender and the messenger. Unlike other biblical angels, the 'angel of the Lord' accepts being worshiped by men and seems to be acknowledged as divine; e.g., Gen 16:13; 48:15-16; Josh 5:13-15, and Judg 13:17-23." Camilla H. von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord in Early Jewish Interpretations of Genesis,* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 42 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1.

[225] Von Heijne discerns that in Exod 23, "the angel is apparently distinct from God and yet not completely separate from Him. By possessing the divine Name, he also shares the divine power and authority. Compare this to the Deuteronomistic theology, in which the concept of the name of God is used to describe the way in which YHWH is present in the Temple of Jerusalem." von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord*, 97-98.

[226] Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament series 18 (Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1982), 124-125.

the speaker, it is the angel's voice that is heard. Thus it seems the angel serves as a form of loud speaker for the divine act of speech."[227] The Angel of the Lord's abilities in mediating not only the deity's visible presence, but also functioning as its aural counterpart are intriguing. These features evoke the Christological developments found in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation where Christ assimilates both the divine Form and the divine Voice.

Not only does Exod 23:20–22 contain a command to listen to the mediator now embodying the deity; the passage also affirms his possession of the divine Name. The deity instructs the Israelites not to rebel against the Exodus angel, "for my name is in him." Here the call for obedience to the mediator and the divine command to listen to his voice is justified by his role as the embodiment of the Tetragrammaton.[228] In light of this onomatological tradition, it is possible that God's aural address in the transfiguration story also contains an allusion to Jesus' possession of the divine Name. In this regard Jesus' designation as the "Son" is especially noteworthy. Already in the Gospel of John "Son" can be interpreted as the divine Name.[229] This interpretation, in fact, was perpetuated in later Christian texts. Thus, for example, from the *Gospel of Truth* 38:6-7 we learn that "the name of the Father is the Son."[230] The *Gospel of Truth* 39:19-27 contains the same tradition: "It is the Father. The Son is his name. ... The

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[227] Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London: Continuum, 2007), 17.

[228] On the language of abiding and its connection with the divine Name traditions see Joshua J. F. Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John: Significance and Impetus,* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.447 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 132ff.

[229] On these traditions, see James McPolin, *The Name of the Father and of the Son in the Johannine Writings* (Ph.D. diss.; Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971), 71; Fossum, *The Name of God*, 106, 122-123; Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, 16; 206.

[230] Harold W. Attridge, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, Nag Hammadi Studies 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 111.

name, therefore, is that of the Father, as the name of the Father is the Son."[231] With regard to these passages Jarl Fossum argues that "the *Gospel of Truth* ... teaches that the Son, being born from the Father ... is the proper Name of God."[232]

CONCLUSION

Our study illustrated the importance of extra-biblical Jewish traditions for better understanding the Mosaic conceptual background of Jesus' theophany on the mountain.

To conclude our analysis of the transfiguration accounts, the question raised earlier must now be addressed: why are Jesus' exalted attributes, including his luminous face and garment, not retained after his descent from the mountain? Such absence might serve as a key for better understanding the significance of Jesus' transfiguration and its relation to his role as the Glory of the invisible God. Previous interpreters have rightly pointed to the proleptic nature of the transfiguration account, which attempts to provide a glimpse into Jesus' role as the divine *Kavod*, the theophanic office fully revealed only after his death and resurrection. Cranfield suggests that the transfiguration "was a revelation for a few moments of the glory which even then, before his Passion, belonged to Jesus. It was a temporary exhibition of his glory ... which would enable the disciples after the Resurrection to realize for certain that even during the time that he emptied himself (Phil 2:7), he continued to retain his divinity entire, though it was concealed under the veil of the flesh."[233] The proleptic

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[231] Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 113.

[232] Fossum, *The Name of God*, 107.

[233] Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 295. Moving along the same lines, Boobyer also suggests that the transfiguration might represent a momentary breaking through of the body of Christ's pre-existent glory, which throughout his life on earth was concealed beneath the outward human form. Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 66. He further add that "no doubt the evangelist could have conceived Christ's δόξα appearance as the fashion of his pre-existent state. Christ had had such a form in heaven, according to the view of the early Church, just as God Himself was thought to possess a similar appearance." Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 66.

nature of the transfiguration story again evokes the memory of Mosaic extra-biblical accounts where the prophet's luminous face serves as a preliminary glimpse into his final glorification at the time of his translation to heaven.

The transfiguration account thus prefigures Jesus as the divine *Kavod* and provides a glimpse into his reception of the theophanic attributes in this role. Ramsey sums up this idea by stating, "the transfiguration prefigures a glory that lies in the future."[234] Although we do not yet witness a permanent ocularcentric manifestation of the deity, the stage is certainly set for such a transition.

[234] Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 117.