

A Prologue to Genesis

Moses 1 in Light of Jewish Traditions

E. Douglas Clark

Referring to ancient and long-lost scripture that Joseph Smith restored, Wilford Woodruff declared it to be part of “the rich treasures that are revealed unto us in the last days.”¹ One such treasure is Moses chapter 1, a scriptural jewel we have hardly begun to appreciate but whose luster has become more apparent in light of various ancient texts and traditions that have emerged since Joseph Smith’s day. So striking are the parallels as to recall Joseph’s own prophecy that “the world will prove Joseph Smith a true prophet by circumstantial evidence.”²

Beginning with the work of Hugh Nibley, scholars writing on Joseph Smith have focused on the Prophet’s retrieval of the ancient past, as exemplified by a session at the 2005 Library of Congress conference entitled “Joseph Smith and the Recovery of Past Worlds.”³ That Joseph’s restoration went far beyond primitive Christianity into the oldest traditions of the Hebrew Bible has been noticed by several scholars, including Yale’s Harold Bloom, who wrote that Joseph Smith “was an authentic religious genius, unique in our national history. . . . Smith’s insight could have come only from a remarkably apt reading of the Bible, and there I would locate

1. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1893, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:159, as recorded by Wilford after helping set the type for the March 1842 printing of one of the original installments of the Book of Abraham.

2. Joseph Fielding Smith and Richard C. Galbraith, eds., *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1993), 301.

3. John W. Welch, ed., *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 53–117.

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“When I first set out to show the interesting parallels between Moses 1 and Jubilees 1,” says E. Douglas Clark, it was “only as an afterthought that I began to look at other sources for additional possible parallels, and I was struck by the specificity and number of what I discovered.” As with many distinguished scholars who have done careful comparative evaluations of ancient writings and Joseph Smith texts, Clark is impressed that “one cannot examine these without ending up with a profound appreciation for the authenticity and value of ancient scripture restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.”



Clark sees Moses 1 and Jubilees 1 as prologues to Genesis. Significantly, Moses 1 appeared before the Jubilees prologue was known to exist. Clark continues, “As I see it, the emergence of numerous parallels to Moses 1 in a host of previously unknown ancient sources yields evidence for the authenticity and antiquity of Moses 1. The evidence is compelling enough that a burden of proof would now rest on those who would argue against the prophetic calling of both Moses and Joseph Smith.”

Clark hopes to continue this study with a larger work involving other passages of modern scripture. Comparing ancient texts with restored scripture not only generates circumstantial evidence but also creates opportunities for fresh insights as well: “I hope that readers will come away with a greater appreciation of the remarkable events and truths contained in Moses 1, along with a greater appreciation of the prophetic calling of the man through whom it was brought to light in our day.”

For the full text of Jubilees 1, go to byustudies.byu.edu.

the secret of his religious genius. . . . So strong was this act of reading that it broke through all the orthodoxies—Protestant, Catholic, Judaic—and found its way back to elements that Smith rightly intuited had been censored out of the stories of the archaic Jewish religion.”⁴

Moses 1 was revealed shortly after the organization of the Church to the twenty-four-year-old Joseph Smith, who prefaced the account with these words: “Amid all the trials and tribulations we had to wade through, the Lord, who well knew our infantile and delicate situation, vouchsafed for us a supply of strength, and granted us ‘line upon line of knowledge—here a little and there a little,’ of which the following was a precious morsel.”⁵ This precious morsel would be but the first chapter of what is now published in the Pearl of Great Price as the Book of Moses, which in addition to its place in the Latter-day Saint canon of scripture also constitutes the first portion of Joseph Smith’s inspired translation of our traditional Genesis account.⁶

The famous opening words of Genesis, “In the beginning,” launch the reader immediately into the creation account without any hint of authorship. Not so in the Book of Moses, whose first chapter serves as a kind of prologue⁷ to the creation account, which is a revelation to Moses when he was “caught up into an exceedingly high mountain” (Moses 1:1). Further

4. Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 82, 84. For Mormon perspectives on Bloom’s interpretation of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, see Eugene England, Truman G. Madsen, Charles Randall Paul, and Richard F. Haglund Jr., “Four LDS Views on Harold Bloom: A Roundtable,” *BYU Studies* 35, no. 1 (1995): 173–204.

5. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:98.

6. Moses 1 was published for the first time in Nauvoo, Illinois, in the January 16, 1843, edition of *Times and Seasons*. It was rightly placed as the first chapter of Joseph Smith’s translation of Genesis in 1867 by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This same format was soon adopted by the Latter-day Saint Church in its 1878 edition of the Pearl of Great Price with its publication of the “Book of Moses” (comprised of the first eight chapters of Joseph Smith’s Genesis translation).

7. Nibley used the phrase “Prologue in Heaven” to describe the relationship of a few of the initial verses of Moses 1 (verses 2–8) to the rest of the chapter. He went on to point out other texts that contain similar prologues, most specifically Job. Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, Winter Semester 1986* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 205. Other prologues include the *Shabako Stone*, the *Enuma Elish*, the *Mephitic Theology*, the *Odyssey*, *Faust*, *Lokasenna*, Abraham 3:22, and 1 Nephi 1:8–15. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 210–12.

underscoring the importance of Moses 1 is the observation of historian Richard Bushman that “is worth close attention because it laid down themes Joseph would return to for the rest of his life.”⁸

The prevailing academic theory of the origin of the book of Genesis denies Mosaic authorship, claiming instead that Genesis is a synthesis of several different source documents that were redacted or edited into the Pentateuch long after the time of Moses.⁹ In contrast, ancient Jewish and Christian tradition insisted on the historical Moses as the author of Genesis and the other four books of the Pentateuch. This tenet was memorialized in the thirteenth century by Maimonides as one of Judaism’s thirteen Principles of Faith: “I believe with a perfect faith that the whole Torah now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses our teacher.”¹⁰ Modern scholars have similarly noted, “For the Jewish, and to an only somewhat lesser degree, Christian religions it is axiomatic that Moses, ‘our Master’, wrote Genesis.”¹¹

Curiously, however, as pointed out in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, “Genesis itself contains no information about its authorship, nor can any biblical passage be cited in support of a tradition concerning it.”¹² The Book of Moses prologue asserting Mosaic authorship has no counterpart in any of the extant ancient Bible translations of Genesis such as the Septuagint

8. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 134.

9. This theory, called the documentary hypothesis, sees four general strands or sources in the received text. These are the Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and the Priestly (P). While the documentary hypothesis as articulated by Julius Wellhausen enjoyed unquestioned status for over a century, the hypothesis has come under critique in the past twenty-five years. John J. Collins has recently called it a “highly speculative enterprise.” Nevertheless, he and other scholars still see strands of J, E, D, and P. Today, the debate centers largely around the parsing of texts rather than the general theory. While the separation of the J and E sources is often difficult, the disentangling of the D and P sources is easier. This isn’t to say that some J and E passages are not easily separated, for example, the flood narratives, the burning bush, and the doublets throughout Genesis and Exodus. This is why some scholars prefer the identifier *JE*. John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 57–64.

10. Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, “Pentateuch: The Traditional View,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 17 vols., corrected ed. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, n.d.), 13:262.

11. Yehuda T. Radday and Haim Shore, *Genesis: An Authorship Study in Computer-Assisted Statistical Linguistics*, Analecta Biblica no. 103 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1985), 1.

12. Nahum M. Sarna, “Genesis, Book of: Composition—The Critical View,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 7:388.

(early Greek) or the Samaritan Pentateuch, nor in any of the Aramaic paraphrases (known as Targums). Nor is any such prologue to be found in the Genesis story as retold by the first-century historian Josephus, nor in the retellings by Pseudo-Philo, Jasher, or the Chronicles of Jerahmeel.

But the most ancient Jewish retelling of Genesis, a work called the Book of Jubilees which was unknown in Joseph Smith's day, does in fact begin with a prologue that has remarkable parallels to Moses 1. Both of these introductory texts act as prologues to writings of Moses. Other striking parallels are also found in additional ancient texts and traditions, none of which, in all likelihood, were known to Joseph Smith. This short study will explore these parallels, along with the unique value of Moses 1 for Latter-day Saints.

An Ancient Surviving Prologue to a Genesis Account

Throughout the history of ancient Israel, much of the sacred literature of the Hebrews was recorded and compiled into the Pentateuch.¹³ Many books were in circulation from the Jewish return from Babylon until the time of Jesus, a number of which books were not included in the Hebrew canon nor in later Christian canons. These unpublished books now comprise a large collection of works generally thought to date from about 200 BC to AD 200,¹⁴ but often preserving traditions far older. One of these extracanonical books is the Book of Jubilees, whose title derives from the book's divisions of time from Adam until the Exodus into forty-nine-year periods of Jubilee.¹⁵ The entire book is extant only in medieval Ethiopic texts, although a large portion of a Latin text survived. These texts were likely originally translated directly from Hebrew manuscripts.¹⁶ Fifteen older Hebrew fragments of the book were also discovered in the Qumran collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scroll fragments of the Book of Jubilees include chapter one, providing an important textual witness to the medieval Ethiopic text.¹⁷

13. John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 64.

14. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:xxv.

15. Philip R. Davies, George J. Brooke, and Phillip R. Callaway, *The Complete World of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 102–5. See also Leviticus 25:8–16, 23–55, 27:16–25, and Numbers 36:4.

16. James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1977), 5, 16–17.

17. Jubilee fragments were found in caves 1, 2, 3, 4, and 11 at Qumran. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, xi. For an

Scholars traditionally date the composition of Jubilees to the second century BC, making it the earliest¹⁸ known retelling of Genesis. In addition, as one prominent scholar points out, “the Jubilees stories are themselves the crystallization of earlier tradition.”¹⁹ Jubilees gives an account of the creation of the world and tells stories about Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. The book is of special interest to Latter-day Saints for several reasons, not the least of which is its emphasis on themes like priesthood and the latter days, and its strong affinities with early Enoch texts, most especially 1 Enoch, which also happens to be preserved in Ethiopic.²⁰ Jubilees was apparently considered authoritative among the Dead Sea community of Qumran,²¹ in whose library, discovered in 1947, the only known Hebrew manuscripts of Jubilees have been found. Although Jubilees was referred to and at times quoted by a number of early Christian authors,²² it went the way of many other important texts possessed by early Jewish and Christian communities, as explained by a modern scholar: “By the strangest quirk of fate respecting literature that I know of, large numbers of writings by Jews were completely lost from the transmitted Jewish heritage.”²³ It was only in 1844 that Western scholars even became aware of the existence of a copy of the book of Jubilees; the first modern translation from a Latin version appeared in German in 1850–51, and it was not until 1895 that the first English translation, from the Ethiopic, was published. Even now it remains little known outside of academic circles.²⁴

English translation of the Qumran book of Jubilees, see Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, eds., *Parabiblical Texts*, The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3:38–87.

18. James C. VanderKam, “Book of Jubilees,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 434–35.

19. George W. E. Nickelsburg, quoted in Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergen, eds., *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 171.

20. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:5–89; VanderKam, “Book of Jubilees,” 436. For a development of the eschatology of the book of Jubilees, see Gene L. Davenport, *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: E. G. Brill, 1971). For a discussion of the cosmology of the book of Jubilees, see James M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

21. VanderKam, “Book of Jubilees,” 437.

22. James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Vol. 511, Scriptores Aethiopici, Tomus 88 (Lovanii: In Aedibus E. Peeters, 1989), xii–xviii.

23. Samuel Sandmel, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:xi.

24. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:42.

The first thing one notices about Jubilees is that, in contrast to Genesis, the creation account is preceded by an entire chapter of prologue that describes the setting for the subsequent divine revelation to Moses. Moses is divinely summoned to a mountain where he experiences God's glory and is instructed to record what he would be told. He is then apprised of the future apostasy of the children of Israel after they are settled in the promised land and how they would kill the prophets and go into captivity. He learns that eventually, however, the children of Israel would repent and be transplanted back as a righteous plant. Following Moses' intercessory prayer, in which he pleads with the Lord to show mercy and salvation to the people, Moses is again instructed to write everything that should be made known to him, and "the angel of the presence" is told to dictate to Moses the whole account of the creation and the division of years until all creation would be renewed by the powers of heaven.

The similarities to the prologue in the Book of Moses are striking, beginning with the fact that each of the two prologues constitutes an entire prefatory chapter providing the setting for the subsequent divine revelation to Moses about the creation and early history of the world. In addition, in both versions Moses is atop a mountain when the Lord's glory is made manifest to him (Moses 1:1–2; Jubilees 1:1–3). Both tell that Moses learned not only about what had gone before but also about things yet to come (Moses 1:41; Jubilees 1:4). In both versions Moses is instructed to write what he sees in a book for the benefit of those who would live in a future time (Moses 1:40–42; Jubilees 1:5–6). And both mention a future age of divine revelation to those who would believe (Moses 1:41–42; Jubilees 1:22–25).

There are also important differences between the two accounts, as when, for example, Moses 1 recounts that Moses was taught about the Only Begotten—a feature understandably absent from Jubilees, which came down to us through Jewish hands. Nor does Jubilees tell of Moses' encounter with Satan or of the Lord's grand purpose in his vast creations, all as chronicled in Moses 1.

Other Echoes of the Restored Prologue

Other parallels to Moses 1 absent in Jubilees are found in yet other ancient Jewish traditions, including those preserved in pseudepigraphical texts, rabbinic commentary, medieval Kabbalistic texts, and other traditions handed down. These additional parallels are remarkably specific and cumulatively impressive.

Moses' Theophany as an Ascension. In Moses 1, Moses' theophany takes place not on a mountain that he has climbed but rather on "an exceedingly high mountain" to which he has been "caught up" (Moses 1:1). One rabbinic source, commenting on what Moses beheld at the burning bush, notes that "what the righteous see ennobles them, because it elevates them to the loftiest heights."²⁵ What is implied in this source is expressly attested in others, that at the burning bush Moses was caught up from the earthly realm to a loftier place to speak directly with God.²⁶

The Transfiguration of Moses. In the Joseph Smith account, "The glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence" (Moses 1:2), and Moses later mused: "Mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him" (Moses 1:11). Likewise, rabbinic texts disclose that as Moses was taken up from the burning bush to a higher place, he knew that as mere flesh and blood he could not endure the divine presence and was gloriously transfigured so that his flesh resembled fire.²⁷ One source describes how "the Lord . . . clothed Moses with the brightness of his glory."²⁸

The Timing of Moses' Theophany. In Moses 1, Moses' theophany precedes the Exodus—the very task Moses was assigned to perform: "Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God" (Moses 1:25). In contrast, Moses' theophany in Jubilees occurs on Mount Sinai after Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Even so, ancient Jewish sources speak of multiple ascensions of Moses, including one at the beginning of his career and another during the Exodus. It was no less an authority than Louis Ginzberg, the famous copious compiler of Jewish legends, who pointed out that when medieval sources

25. Menahem M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation: A Millennial Anthology*, 9 vols. (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1953–1979), 7:82, quoting Esther Rabbah 7:9.

26. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, 7:97–99, 130; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938), 2:305–6, and accompanying notes in 5:416–18.

27. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2:306, and accompanying notes in 5:416.

28. Cited in J. P. Stehelin, *Rabbinical Literature: or, the Traditions of the Jews Contained in the Talmud and Other Mystical Writings*, 2 vols. (London: J. Robinson, 1748), 1:7.

quote only fragments from Moses' ascension, it is impossible to tell to which ascension they are referring²⁹—showing how easily the different ascension accounts could have become confused or conflated.

A Type of the Messiah. As the divine glory rests upon Moses in the Joseph Smith prologue, Moses is told that he is “in the similitude of [the] Only Begotten” (Moses 1:6). This similarity of Moses to the coming Messiah is echoed in widespread Jewish tradition (reflected also in the New Testament) seeing Moses as a prototype of the Messiah.³⁰ According to the Testament of Levi (ancestor of Moses), the coming Messiah’s “appearance is inexpressibly like that of a prophet [*or* ‘high prophet’³¹] of the Most High of the posterity of our father Abraham”—apparently referring to Moses.³²

Confrontation of Satan. The Joseph Smith version also recounts Moses’ encounter with Satan, who, upon being spurned by Moses, began to rant and rave, causing Moses “to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell” (Moses 1:20). Similarly, in rabbinic texts, after Moses receives the Torah he is confronted by Satan.³³ Another tradition remembers that at the burning bush, Moses was granted a vision of hell and the horrific suffering of the wicked,³⁴ who, as Moses saw, “cried bitterly.”³⁵

Vision of All Things. After Satan’s departure in the Joseph Smith prologue, as divine glory once again rested on Moses, he “cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it

29. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5:417.

30. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 4:857–73.

31. H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 149. The authors comment that “the coming of Jesus Christ is compared with that of a great prophet, not just a prophet (of the Most High).” Hollander, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 150.

32. Testament of Levi 8:14, translation in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary* 4:859 n. 131. This verse is cited by the author of the article, J. Jeremias, as part of his discussion regarding the similarity of Moses to the Messiah. The versions of the Testament of Levi vary in their readings of this verse, giving rise to different translations; for example, see Testament of Levi 8:15 in R. H. Charles, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908), 46.

33. Shabbath 89a, in I. Epstein, ed. *Shabbath: Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. H. Freedman (London: Soncino, 1972).

34. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2:309–313 and accompanying notes in 5:418–19 n. 118–19.

35. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2:310.

which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God” (Moses 1:27). Similarly, in a pseudepigraphical source named Ezekiel the Tragedian, Moses recounts that while on Mount Sinai in the presence of the Almighty, “I gazed upon the whole earth round about; things under it, and high above the skies.”³⁶ Likewise in the Zohar, when God spoke to Moses before the Exodus, Moses beheld properties of matter “which were concealed from all others but revealed to him,” things which “are hidden, and Moses alone perceived them.”³⁷ From ancient times and continuing through the Middle Ages there was a persistent tradition holding that Moses was “the greatest universal genius and master of”—as well as “founder of”—“all the arts and sciences.”³⁸ Sir Isaac Newton traced the idea of atomism—of matter as composed of atoms—to none other than the Hebrew prophet Moses.³⁹

Vision of All Generations. According to the restored prologue, Moses saw not only the earth and its constituent particles, but also “the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore” (Moses 1:28). So also a rabbinic source tells that even as “God did shew unto Adam every Generation,” meaning “all the Souls, which were to come into the World, . . . so that Adam could perfectly distinguish them,” later “thus it happened on Mount Sinai” with Moses, so that “the Souls, which were not then born into the world, were present on Mount Sinai, in the same form in which they were to appear in the World.”⁴⁰

Worlds without Number. As Moses’ vision in the restored prologue continues to unfold, he sees “many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof” (Moses 1:29). The Lord had already told Moses that “I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end” (Moses 1:4). Now as the creations multiply before Moses’ eyes, he hears the Lord say: “For my own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth

36. Ezekiel the Tragedian 77–78 in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:812.

37. Zohar 23a through 23b in Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff, trans., *The Zohar*, 2d ed., 5 vols. (London: Soncino, 1984), 3:77–78. These passages speak in terms of colors, apparently a portion of the color spectrum that only Moses could see.

38. Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 30–40.

39. John Fauvel and others, eds., *Let Newton Be!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 194–95.

40. Stehelin, *Rabbinical Literature*, 1:269, quoting Jalkut [Yalkut] Chadash.

in me. . . . And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:31, 33).

An intriguing echo of this event appears to have survived in the Zohar, which, in commenting on God’s revelations to Moses before the Exodus, tells of “a hidden region, so transcendent that it passes all understanding, the very source whence the worlds were designed and came into being.” Indeed, the very name by which God revealed himself to Moses implies “fashioning of worlds.”⁴¹ What makes these statements in the Zohar so remarkable is that the doctrine of multiple worlds disappeared from orthodox Judaism, to be revealed anew in the dispensation of the early Christians (who spoke much of it⁴²), only to be lost again in the apostasy that soon followed.⁴³ It was Sir Isaac Newton who, near the end of his lifetime of assiduous study of the structure of the universe and the wisdom of the ancients,⁴⁴ stated that this earth “is but a sort of picture of the Universe,” for “God always created new worlds, always creates new worlds, new systems to multiply the infinitude of his beneficiaries, and extend all happiness beyond all compass and imagination.”⁴⁵ Since Newton’s death in 1727, the remarkable advancements in astronomy for which he opened the way have led a number of leading astronomers to conclude that there must indeed be numerous other worlds supporting intelligent life.⁴⁶

Worlds Yet to Come. In the Joseph Smith prologue, Moses learns not only about existing and past worlds but also about worlds to come. God informs him that “as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works” (Moses 1:38). So also, according to the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, Moses was shown “the worlds which have not yet come.”⁴⁷

41. Zohar 22a in Sperling, Simon, and Levertoff, *The Zohar*, 3:74.

42. Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, vol. 12 of The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 285–95.

43. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 293–94; Hugh Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, vol. 1 of The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 140.

44. Fauvel, *Let Newton Be!* 185–201.

45. Gale E. Christianson, *In the Presence of the Creator: Isaac Newton and His Times* (Norwalk, Conn.: Easton Press, 1989), 574.

46. James S. Trefil, *Space Time Infinity* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985; Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1985), 168–75; Byron Preiss, ed., *The Universe* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), 302–14.

47. 2 Baruch 59:9 in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:642.

Contemplating the Divine Creator and His Grand Purpose. The Joseph Smith prologue further tells that as Moses sees the creations stretch out beyond what he could ever have imagined, he asks God: “Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them.” God responds, “For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me” (Moses 1:30–31), and that “only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you” (Moses 1:35). Why? Because, as the Lord had explained earlier, “no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth” (Moses 1:5).

Similarly the Zohar, in speaking of God’s revelation to Moses and “the worlds [that] were designed and came into being,” explains that up to a certain “point only is it permissible to contemplate the Godhead, but not beyond, for it is wholly recondite.”⁴⁸ According to one Talmudic passage, upon receiving the Torah from God, Moses asked “that He should show him the ways of the Holy One.”⁴⁹ God’s answer is the same as in the Joseph Smith version; says the Talmud: “God would not grant Moses’ wish to behold all his glory.”⁵⁰ Even if some of the answers were reserved for later, Moses learns, as recounted in the Joseph Smith prologue, the great secret behind all of God’s expansive and eternal creative activity—that his work and glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Looking Ahead to the Last Days. Accordingly, Moses would be shown the history of only his own earth and would record that history for future generations, even if, as God tells Moses in the Joseph Smith prologue, the day would come when “the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write” (Moses 1:41). But those intentional omissions in Moses’ history would eventually be remedied by the Lord of history, who promised Moses that “I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe” (Moses 1:41).

The oldest⁵¹ Jewish source mentioning Moses’ view of hell, the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, tells also that God showed Moses “many warnings together with the ways of the Law and the end of time.”⁵² The Syriac

48. Zohar 22a in Sperling, Simon, and Levertoff, *The Zohar*, 3:74.

49. Berakoth 7a, in I. Epstein, ed., *Berakoth: Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Maurice Simon (London: Soncino, 1990).

50. Aaron Rothkoff, “Moses: In the Aggadah,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 12:397.

51. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5:419 n. 118.

52. 2 Baruch 59:4 in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:641–42.

Apocalypse of Baruch was translated into Latin in 1866 and first into English by R. H. Charles in 1896.⁵³ Like nearly all of the other texts and traditions mentioned above, it was unavailable to Joseph Smith, the man whom the Lord raised up to be “like unto” Moses to restore by revelation the passages long ago deleted from the account originally revealed to Moses.

Value of Moses 1 for Latter-day Saints

Moses 1, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, offers a unique contribution to the vast canon of revealed scripture. The entire absence of Moses 1 from the version of Genesis that has come down to us, along with continuing debates about the authorship of the Pentateuch, certainly bear out God’s revelation to Moses that “the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write” (Moses 1:41). Of course, as Nibley noted, “those who wish to credit Joseph Smith with a comprehension of comparative literature and ritual far beyond his time and training are free to do so. They may even insist . . . that this is the way any uneducated rustic would tell the story.” But today “we have several very ancient and significant parallels to Moses 1, which lie far beyond the reach of coincidence or daydreaming. The number of details and the order in which they occur make it perfectly clear that we are dealing with specific works of great antiquity that come from a common source.”⁵⁴

As a prologue to the creation account in Genesis, the restored words in Moses 1 serve as an essential introduction to the full book of Genesis, and, indeed, to the entire Bible. This prologue reveals the setting, background, and context for all the words, deeds, and purposes of God. It provides crucial understanding of the nature of God—that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God and that Moses could see God “face to face” and talk with him (Moses 1:2). It discloses the origin of man and God’s love for his children: “Behold, thou art my son” (Moses 1:4). It exposes the reality of Satan and his role in God’s plan (Moses 1:20–22). It also establishes the need for a Savior and Redeemer, who, as Moses learned, is called the “Only Begotten” (Moses 1:6), and introduces the functions of the Holy Ghost (Moses 1:24). All of this leads to an understanding of the work and the glory of God and his grand plan for his children (Moses 1:39), providing eternal purpose and meaning to life.

53. R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 2: Pseudepigrapha (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 480 note b.

54. Hugh W. Nibley, *Nibley on the Timely and Timeless* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1978), 7.

Without these plain and precious truths revealed in Moses 1, we are hard pressed to understand the drama that begins in Genesis and continues to our day. For as we enter mortality, as Nibley observes, we find ourselves in the position of someone who arrives late to a play and must leave early, and so never sees the beginning or the end, but while there is actually ushered onto the stage to play a brief part.⁵⁵ The restored prologue in Moses 1 tells us what the drama is all about and points the way for us to prepare for that immortality and eternal life which God has prepared for his children.

55. Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, vol. 3 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1987), 268–69.

E. Douglas Clark is an attorney and has consulted at numerous United Nations conferences and events in New York and around the world. He received his BA, MBA, and JD degrees from Brigham Young University, where he was managing editor of the law review. His publications include *The Blessings of Abraham: Becoming a Zion People* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2005); “Cedars and Stars: Enduring Symbols of Cosmic Kingship in Abraham’s Encounter with Pharaoh,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, no. 3 in *Studies in the Book of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005); and *The Grand Design: America from Columbus to Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).