

## Text and Commentary

## THE BOOK OF MOSES

AN EXTRACT FROM JOSEPH SMITH'S NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

PROLOGUE—GOD'S  
REVELATION TO MOSES

**1** The words of God which he spake unto Moses at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain. <sup>2</sup>And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses. Therefore, Moses could endure his presence.

THE FIRST TRANSFIGURATION  
AND VISION OF MOSES

<sup>3</sup>And God spake unto Moses, saying,

“Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name. For I am without beginning of days or end of years, and is not this endless? <sup>4</sup>And, behold, thou art my son. Wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands. But not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. <sup>5</sup>Wherefore, 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. <sup>6</sup>And I have a work for

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**1** The opening chapter of the book of Moses narrates a dramatic experience of the eponymous prophet on an unnamed mountain (1:42) sometime after his encounter with God in the burning bush (1:17) but before the exodus of Israel out of Egypt (1:26). The first line of OT1 identifies this text simply as “A Revelation given to Joseph the Revelator June 1830.” Scholars continue to wonder if Moses 1 is a standalone revelation or if it acts as a sort of preface to the rest of the Prophet’s inspired revision of the book of Genesis. Moses 1:40 appears to indicate that the account preserved in this chapter is a sort of framing device for the subsequent narrative. Although 1:40–41 indicates that Moses recorded his experience, without recourse to any ancient manuscripts it is unknown how much of this chapter is a restoration of lost text as opposed to Joseph Smith’s expansive revelation about an important (but otherwise unknown) incident in Moses’s life. **1:1–2** Moses being “caught up” into a high mountain and beholding the glory of God face-to-face evokes a temple setting and context comparable to imagery attested throughout the Hebrew Bible and other ancient sources. Latter-day Saint commentators have written extensively on this chapter, noting its similarity to other ascension texts wherein a prophet ascends into the presence of God and receives a divine commission. The striking parallels between Moses 1 and this body of ancient literature are undeniable. (Consult the bibliography for representative samples of this scholarship.) *Saw God face to face*. Compare Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:10. Other prophets so privileged to have beheld the Lord “face to face” include, but are not limited to, Enoch (Moses 7:4), Abraham (Abraham 3:11), Jacob (Genesis 32:30), and Moroni (Ether 12:39). **1:3** *Endless*. Compare Moses 7:35. (see additional clarification on this name for God provided in Doctrine and Covenants 19:4–12.) **1:4** This is the first of several instances in this chapter where Moses is for the first time declared to be a son of God (compare Moses 1:6–7, 13, 40). The status of Moses as a son of God will feature prominently later in the narrative when Lucifer attempts to deceive Moses into worshipping him (1:12–13). The Hebrew phrase “son of God” (*ben ’elohim*) denotes a divine or supernatural being. As a son of heavenly parents along with the rest of humanity, Moses was indeed a

thee, Moses, my son. And thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten. And mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth. But there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all. <sup>7</sup> And now behold, this one thing I show unto thee, Moses, my son. For thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee.” <sup>8</sup> And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created. And Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created. Of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. <sup>9</sup> And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses. And Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.

### MOSES'S SOLILOQUY

<sup>10</sup> And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man. And he said unto himself, “Now for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed. <sup>11</sup> But now 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.”

### SATAN TEMPTS MOSES AND IS REBUKED

<sup>12</sup> And it came to pass that when Moses had said these words, behold, Satan came tempting him, saying,

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son of God. But in this context, the phrase likely implies more than mere divine parentage, signaling Moses's status as a participant in God's heavenly divine council. **1:5** The phrase “on the earth” is absent from OT1 and was inserted interlineally in OT2. The implication seems to be that anybody who experiences the full scope and extent of God's eternal glory throughout Creation cannot be withheld from a greater or more permanent level of deification, and therefore Moses was shown only a portion thereof. **1:6** Here the title of “Only Begotten” is invoked for the first time. This epithet will feature prominently throughout the rest of the book (see Moses 2:1, 24–27; 3:18; 4:1, 3, 28; 5:7–9, 57; 6:52, 57, 59, 62; 7:50, 59, 62). As used in the New Testament, the term derives from the Greek *monogenēs* (with equivalents in Hebrew and Aramaic: *yēhīd*) and is featured in other scripture as a title for Jesus (see John 3:16; Alma 5:48; Doctrine and Covenants 76:23). It carries a sense of possessing a unique or special relationship to somebody else and otherwise of being “one of a kind.” (Isaac is afforded this attribute at Genesis 22:2 and Hebrews 11:17 even though Ishmael was his older half-brother.) *No God beside me*. See also Isaiah 45:5, 21–22; Hosea 13:4–5; Doctrine and Covenants 76:1. This declaration is an affirmation of God's incomparable status as the Father of humanity and Lord of Creation, not necessarily a declaration of His sole existence. Indeed, as depicted unmistakably throughout the text, besides God stands His Only Begotten Son. **1:8** *Children of men*. The Hebrew meaning of this term (*bēnēy 'adam*) is simply “mortals, humans” (compare Abraham 3:27) **1:10** Compare Joseph Smith—History 1:20, where the Prophet Joseph Smith reports being similarly exhausted after his visionary experience. See also 1 Nephi 1:6–7; Alma 19:6. **1:11** In the ancient mindset, encountering God or other divine beings was considered extraordinarily dangerous and potentially fatal (see Exodus 33:20; Judges 6:22–23; 13:21–23), for precisely the same reason given here. **1:12** Satan appears in the narrative here for the first time

“Moses, son of man, worship me.”<sup>13</sup> And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan, and said, “Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten. And where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?”<sup>14</sup> For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him. But I can look upon thee in the natural man. Is it not so, surely?<sup>15</sup> Blessed be the name of my God, for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me, or else where is thy glory, for it is darkness unto me. And I can judge between thee and God. For God said unto me, ‘Worship God, for him only shalt thou serve.’<sup>16</sup> Get thee hence, Satan. Deceive me not. For God said unto me, ‘Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten.’<sup>17</sup> And

he also gave me commandments when he called unto me out of the burning bush, saying, ‘Call upon God in the name of mine Only Begotten, and worship me.’”<sup>18</sup> And again Moses said, “I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him. For his glory has been upon me; wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan.”

<sup>19</sup> And now, when Moses had said these words, Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying, “I am the Only Begotten. Worship me!”<sup>20</sup> And it came to pass that Moses began to fear exceedingly. And as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell. Nevertheless, calling upon God, he received strength, and he commanded, saying, “Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship,

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and will be a prominent antagonist throughout the rest of the account, scheming to influence the lives of the children of Adam and Eve in deleterious ways. *Son of man*. Satan demotes Moses’s status to that of a mere mortal in an attempt to command his allegiance, seemingly unaware of God’s declaration at Moses 1:4. Moses counters in the next verse and at 1:16 by affirming his ennobling status as a son of God in the “similitude” (that is, likeness or resemblance) of God’s Only Begotten. **1:15** *Darkness unto me*. Both OT1 and OT2 use the word “blackness” instead of “darkness.” This earlier reading may evoke a more visceral visual experience on Moses’s part (that is, Satan’s imitative glory is as the pitch blackness of night compared to the splendor and glory of God) and might relate to the “blackness” that characterizes the people of Canaan at 7:8 and the descendants of Cain in 7:22. (See also the commentary on these verses.) **1:17** This verse preserves one of God’s instructions to Moses otherwise unattested in the Hebrew Bible (see Exodus 3). **1:18** OT1 and OT2 add “and it is glory unto me” after “his glory has been upon me.” **1:19** *Satan ranted upon the earth*. OT1 and OT2 both read that Satan “wrent” upon the earth. This is most likely a variant of “rent” (the past tense of “rend”), meaning that Satan broke up the earth around Moses in a terrible display of fury. The change to “ranted” occurred in the 1981 edition of the Pearl of Great Price. With either verb the imagery is basically the same: Satan, out of desperation and anger that Moses refused to worship him, lashed out in some type of terrifying display (see also 1:21). *I am the Only Begotten*. With this declaration, Satan desperately attempts to reassert his status as a once-ranking member of the divine council. He is, in effect, attempting still to subvert the Father’s plan even after his disastrous attempt to claim glory for himself in the premortal council (compare 4:1–4; Abraham 3:24–28). **1:20** Compare the description given by Joseph Smith of his encounter with

which is the God of glory.”<sup>21</sup> And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook. And Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying, “In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan.”<sup>22</sup> And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and he departed hence, even from the presence of Moses, that he beheld him not.<sup>23</sup> And now of this thing Moses bore record, but because of wickedness it is not had among the children of men.

## THE SECOND TRANSFIGURATION AND VISION OF MOSES

<sup>24</sup>And it came to pass that when Satan had departed from the presence of Moses, that Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven, being filled with the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son.<sup>25</sup> And calling upon the name of God, he beheld his glory again, for it was upon him. And he heard a voice, saying, “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.<sup>26</sup> And lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days. For thou shalt deliver my people from bondage, even Israel my chosen.”<sup>27</sup> And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it, and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God.<sup>28</sup> And he beheld 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 seashore.<sup>29</sup> And he beheld many lands, and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof.

<sup>30</sup>And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying, “Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them.”

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Satan in the Sacred Grove in Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16. **1:21** In OT1 and OT2 Moses explicitly calls upon the name of Jesus Christ to rebuke Satan. Two subsequent scribal edits changed this to “his Son” and then finally “the Only Begotten,” the latter of which was used by Orson Pratt in the 1878 edition and subsequent editions of the Pearl of Great Price. Moses’s invoking the name of the Only Begotten as opposed to the name Jesus Christ is more in harmony with the repeated mention of this title throughout the previous verses, which perhaps accounts for the change. **1:22** Weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth is characteristic of Satan and those who share his eternal fate (see Mosiah 16:2; Alma 40:13; Doctrine and Covenants 19:5; 101:91; 133:73). **1:24** The imagery of Moses lifting up his eyes to behold another heavenly vision reflects a common biblical idiom sometimes used in visionary or quasi-visionary contexts (see Genesis 13:10, 14; 18:2; 22:4, 13; 24:63; 31:10, 12; 33:1; Exodus 14:10; Numbers 24:2; Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 121:1; 123:1; Isaiah 40:26; see also the commentary at Abraham 3:11–12). **1:25** Compare Exodus 7:1, where the Lord declares that Moses is “a god to Pharaoh.” The promise that Moses will have power over the waters is an obvious allusion to the parting of the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:21–31). **1:29** Moses beholds in vision many lands called “earth.” The immediate context and Moses 1:40 suggest that Moses is beholding many lands and their inhabitants on this planet, with each land called “earth” (Hebrew: *’eres*, “land,

<sup>31</sup> And behold, the glory of the Lord was upon Moses, so that Moses stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face. And the Lord God said unto Moses, “For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me. <sup>32</sup> And by the Word of my power have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many. <sup>35</sup> But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the Word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they

unto man. But all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.”

<sup>36</sup> And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, “Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content.” <sup>37</sup> And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying, “The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine. <sup>38</sup> And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come. And there is no end to my works, neither to my words. <sup>39</sup> For behold, this is my work and my glory: to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. <sup>40</sup> And now, Moses, my son, I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which

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country, earth”). However, a grander cosmic scale involving multiple worlds cannot be fully ruled out in light of 1:37–38. **1:30–31** OT2 replaces “tell me” with “shew me,” suggesting anticipation for another visionary experience. *Face to face*. For a second time Moses beholds the Lord face-to-face. As with Abraham (in Abraham 3:11) the context is a visionary glimpse of Creation. **1:32** The Only Begotten is identified as the Word of God’s power, anticipating the profound Logos hymn of John 1:1–18. **1:33** Compare Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24. **1:34** The gloss provided in this verse identifies Adam as “many” (although the antecedent to “many” could also be “man” or “men,” a reading that is reinforced by Moses 4:26). Coupled with 1:29, this may suggest a plurality of “Adams” who inhabit many lands called “earth” throughout God’s Creation. **1:35–36** The Creation that God reveals to Moses pertains only to this world (compare 1:40; 2:1), leaving open for speculation the nature of the rest of God’s innumerable Creations. The infinite and grand scope of God’s creative power throughout the cosmos as described in this text leaves the reader overwhelmed with a simultaneous sense of both astonishment and nothingness (compare Moses’s reaction at 1:10). **1:37** OT1 begins this verse with “And the Lord God spake unto Moses saying The Heavens there are many.” This was revised in OT2 to read: “And the Lord God spake unto Moses of the Heavens saying these are many.” **1:39** This verse—cherished and cited by Latter-day Saints as a short encapsulation of the purpose and intention behind God’s plan of salvation—is explicitly couched in the context of the purpose behind Creation and humanity’s existence. OT1 renders it “this is my work to my glory to the immortality & the eternal life of man.” The rendering of this verse so well known to Latter-day Saints today was made in OT2 and has been used by each edition of the Pearl of

thou standest. And thou shalt write the things which I shall speak.<sup>41</sup> And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, 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.”

#### EPILOGUE: AN INJUNCTION TO SECRECY

<sup>42</sup>These words were spoken unto Moses in the mount, the name of which shall not be known among the children of men. And now they are spo-

ken unto you. Show them not unto any except them that believe. Even so. Amen.

#### GOD REVEALS THE CREATION TO MOSES

(GENESIS 1:1-2:3; ABRAHAM 4:1-5:3)

**2** And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, “Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven and this earth. Write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End—the Almighty God. By mine Only Begotten I created these things.

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Great Price since 1878. In the OT1 rendering, the work of the Father in bringing about the immortality and eternal life of humankind is depicted more forcefully as being commensurate or proportional with the increase of His glory. In other words, as more of His children attain immortality and eternal life, the glory of the Father increases. This subtly anticipates teachings made by the Prophet Joseph Smith toward the end of his life that the eternal life and exaltation of God and His children compound as they continue to progress through the eternities. **1:42** This injunction to secrecy is especially appropriate when the account is viewed as a temple text and an apocalypse—that is, a revelation that unveils mysteries or secrets about the world, its destiny, and God’s plans for humanity (see the commentary for 7:65–67). A common feature in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature is the urge to keep the contents of revelations secret or otherwise shielded from profane or unworthy readers (compare Daniel 8:26 and also Matthew 17:9; Mark 9:9, where Jesus swears the disciples to secrecy after His own transfiguration on a high mount).

**2** This chapter commences the first of two Creation accounts found in the book of Moses that correspond to Genesis 1:1–2:3. OT1 and OT2 respectively begin this chapter by designating it as “chapter first” and “The Book of Genesis Chapter first,” which seems to indicate some intention behind its being the opening chapter of the Prophet’s inspired revision of Genesis. As mentioned previously, it is unclear if the preceding chapter describing Moses’s visionary experience on the mount is a standalone revelation or a prologue to the narrative that commences with this chapter. (Based on internal textual cues, the latter seems more likely.) **2:1** *The Lord spake unto Moses.* In a radical departure from the Genesis text, which features an anonymous third-person narrator throughout, this chapter opens at first with an anonymous third-person narrator (Moses?) but then immediately shifts to the Lord narrating the details of Creation directly to Moses in the first person. In this respect, the text bears striking resemblance to the apocryphal book of Jubilees, which also begins with Moses’s being summoned to a high mountain where the Lord (or the angel of the Lord) gives an account of the Creation and other events from early biblical history that Moses is commanded to record. *This heaven and this earth.* As at Moses 1:35–36, 40, the text makes it clear that the details of Creation