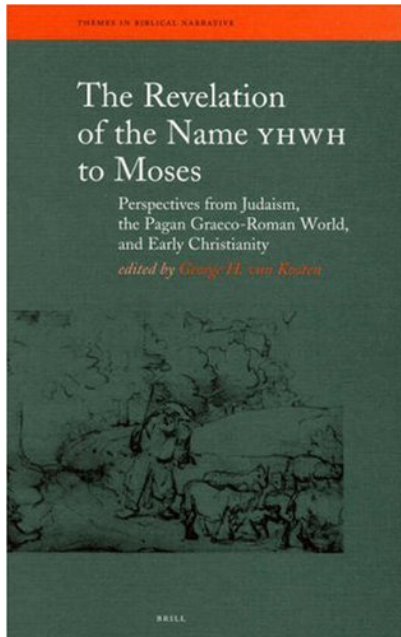


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**Kooten, George H. van, ed.**

***The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity***

Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 9

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This edited volume is a collection of papers presented at the 2004 Themes in Biblical Narratives conference that took place at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen from 26 to 27 July 2004. It is devoted to the revelation of the name YHWH to Moses, a singular moment in Judaism whose importance is also in a way reflected in Greek and Latin “pagan” texts.

The volume, comprising thirteen studies, is divided into three parts. The first part of the volume focuses on the name YHWH in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism; the second part is devoted to “The Name in the Pagan Graeco-Roman World”; the third part deals with the Name in the New Testament and early Christianity. Each of the thirty-five chapters comes with its own bibliography, and an *index locorum* is given at the end of the book.

In the first part, devoted to Judaism, four studies are devoted, at least in part, to the revelation of the Name in the Hebrew Bible. Wout Jac. van Bekkum’s “What’s in the Divine Name? Exodus 3 in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition” deals with the significance and value of the Name from Exod 3 to the rabbinic and mystical texts. In the course of his

study, piyyutic and kabbalistic traditions are examined. From YHWH as the designation for an Edomite-Midianite deity to the mystical idea that the whole Torah is one inventory of divine names, the article shows the complexity of the interpretations of the Name in Jewish religious culture.

Eibert Tigchelaar (“Bare Feet and Holy Ground : Excursive Remarks on Exodus 3:5”), interweaving reflections on ritual and redaction-criticism, examines Exod 3:5. This text includes a motif that was generally neglected in later interpretations: the command given to Moses to remove his sandals. Suggesting that this episode reflects an ancient Arabian ritual custom, Tigchelaar contextualizes it into the Sinai and tent of meeting stories, as well as into ancient Israel’s experience of pilgrimage. This custom is then examined in the context both of pre-Islamic Arabian culture and of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions related to the Temple Mount. From a literary viewpoint, Exod 3:5 is compared to Josh 5:15, before Tigchelaar turns to the reception of the episode. From the conspicuous absence of reference to this motif in biblical and later Jewish literature, it is concluded that ritual barefootedness was common practice.

Horst Seebass concentrates on “YHWH’s Name in the Aaronic Blessing (Num 6:22-27).” The passage is presented as a tradition of the revelation of YHWH’s name. It is situated by Seebass in the block of Num 5–6 and in the more general organization of Num 1–9. Numbers 6:22–27 is viewed by him as the high point in the Aaronic blessing. A comparison between Exod 33:12–23 and Num 6:22–27 shows that the former “enhances the understanding of Num 6:22–27 as a jewel of self-revelation of YHWH.”

In his paper on “The Name in Kings and Chronicles,” Eep Talstra investigates the significance of the Name in the development of the Deuteronomistic History. He first offers a critical overview of modern scholarship on the subject, opposing von Rad and those of his followers who viewed the theology of the Name in terms of intellectual progression. Subsequently, he deals with scholars who envisage the Name in relation to God’s mode of presence, to religious community and rituals, and to identity. In his own treatment of the Name in Chronicles (which he views as a consistent unit as far as the Name is concerned), he emphasizes the great variety (greater than in Kings) in the idiom used for the temple and the Name. Importantly, Chronicles, in contrast to Kings, relates the Name not only to the temple and city but also to the people of Israel itself; in this work, he contends the Name is not an idiom of transcendence; “it has become part of the language of identity. Israel is the fundamental sign of how God is present in the world.”

The next, and last, two papers of the first part concentrate on the reception of the episode of the revelation of the Name in later Jewish literature.

Moving to the Hellenistic period, Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten analyzes the rewriting of Exod 3:1–4 :17 in Ezekiel the Tragedian (“A Burning Bush on the Stage: The Rewriting of Exodus 3:1–4 :17 in Ezekiel Tragicus, *Exagoge* 90–131”). Underlining the differences that separate the biblical account from that of Ezekiel, he explains that many of these are dictated by the rendering of a narrative text into a drama. Yet some embellishments are also due to the Hellenistic context in which the drama took place. Finally, the *Exagoge* also occasionally reflects exegetical traditions found in later Jewish texts. (It is worth noting that a detailed study of Ezekiel’s *Exagoge*, by P. Lanfranchi, was also published by Brill the same year as this volume.)

The next study is that of Ronit Nikolsky. Since there are few references to the Name revealed at the bush in late antique rabbinic literature, she explores a particular exegetical motif and its development throughout various rabbinic writings. The motif is part of the revelation at the *seneh* (bush) and claims that this event lasted seven days. This interesting study shows that the rabbis were occasionally very critical of Moses.

The second part of the book (“The Name in the Graeco-Roman World”) has only three studies, which occasionally overlap. However, the smaller number of contributions is compensated by the quality and extent of the papers, which offer innovative readings of the issue.

The substantial study of G. H. van Kooten, entitled “Moses/Musaeus/Mochos and His God Yahweh, Iao, and Sabaoth, Seen from a Greco-Roman Perspective,” completes and occasionally challenges previous views on the subject. From a methodological viewpoint, he rightly contends that a survey of the Greco-Roman evaluations of Moses is necessary in order to appreciate the passages on the Jewish God’s name. He also says that his research into the Greek sources was first made independently from Stern’s monumental *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*. This procedure resulted, according to him, in the greater emphasis on Alexander Polyhistor and yielded a text by the physician Dioscorides. I must say I do not always agree with van Kooten’s evaluation of Polyhistor, such as when he says that Polyhistor “took over Artapanus’ view that Moses became the teacher of Orpheus” (112). Indeed, the fact that Polyhistor collected Jewish testimonies on Moses (as well as on Abraham and Joseph, as far as we know from Eusebius’s *Praeparatio euangelica*) does not entail that he accepted the views promoted by the authors he quoted. At any rate, this study makes several important observations: in the first century B.C.E., more than in any other time, we find an abundance of occasionally conflicting testimonies on Moses; the figure called Mochos and mentioned by Iamblichus in *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* is likely to have been a blending of both Mochos and Moses, as Dillon already suggested; while the divine Name is barely mentioned in the Jewish texts, it becomes more and more widespread in the non-Jewish literature; the fame of the figure

of Moses in the Greco-Roman world contrasts the limitations of the knowledge of God's name for him (optional change), yet he is known as Iao, Sabaoth (which led to the identification with Dionysos and Jupiter Sabazius), the highest god, and other denominations.

M. F. Burnyeat's elegant essay, "Platonism in the Bible: Numenius of Apamea on *Exodus* and Eternity," takes a philosophical approach to the subject. It is in fact a reprint of a paper published in 2005 in a volume edited in honor of R. Sorabji. This article contextualizes Numenius's view of God as "Being" into the ancient philosophical debate on the good and eternity. In stark contrast to Celsus, another Platonist, Numenius included the Jews in his list of the holders of that which Celsus labeled the *alēthēs logos*. Burnyeat supports the thesis that fragment 13 (des Places), in which the First God is described as *ho ōn*, indeed echoes Exod 3:14.

In a paper on Origen's views of divine names in the apologetic contexts of the *Contra Celsum* ("Does It Matter to Call God Zeus? Origen, *Contra Celsum* I 24–25 against the Greek Intellectuals on Divine Names"), Robbert M. van den Berg examines Origen's position regarding the power and origins of names. He argues against the view that Origen is taking sides in a philosophical debate about the nature of names. According to van den Berg, Origen rejects at once the opinion of Greek philosophers, whether Stoic, Platonic, or Epicurean, contending that divine names are different from other names. They are a form of divine (not human) revelation. Therefore, Origen's theory would not reflect the Platonist, theurgic, doctrine of the time, which accepted that powerful names are expressions of human knowledge concerning the divine. In this respect, Origen was dependent on the Jewish-Christian tradition rather than on the Greco-Roman one.

The third section, on early Christianity, begins with Bert-Jan Lietaert Peerbolte's well-argued contribution entitled "The Name above All Names (Philippians 2:9)," which examines the so-called Christ-hymn of Phil 2:6–11. The author contends that this passage is a pre-Pauline hymn describing the death and heavenly vindication of Jesus as a righteous martyr. He accepts the view that this hymn implies some kind of preexistence of Christ. He interprets the bestowal of "the Name above all names" on Jesus as a reference to the title "Lord," which confers on Jesus an exalted status equal to that of God. His conclusions imply the existence of a high Christology earlier than is usually believed.

Riemer Roukema's essay ("Jesus and the Divine Name in the Gospel of John") is closely related to the previous paper. Indeed, it contends that, in the Gospel of John, Jesus is presented as the Old Testament *kyrios*, YHWH. This point is made through an examination of the passages discussing the (im)possibility of seeing God and those possibly identifying Christ with YHWH (Jesus' "I am" sayings; Old Testament quotations

and allusions; Jesus and his Father's name correspondence with "Lord" and "God"; Jesus as the *kyrios* in Paul). Yet the author notes that this Gospel establishes a subtle distinction between *kyrios* and God the Father. The distinction between the Father and Christ is supported by parallels in contemporaneous texts (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, various gnostic texts, Justin Martyr, the Targumim).

In the next contribution, Albert C. Geljon compares Philo's treatment of Exod 3 with that of Gregory of Nyssa. This subject is well known to Geljon, since his doctoral dissertation dealt with Gregory's use of Philo in his *Vita Mosis*. According to him, the main distinction between the two authors lies in the interpretation of Exod 3:14. For Philo, "He-who-is" refers exclusively to God, to whom the Logos is somehow subordinate, while in Gregory's eyes, the Logos stands on the same level as God. The neo-Arian Eunomius, who follows Philo on this matter, is charged by Gregory with Judaism. Yet the latter does not refrain from using Philo, whose negative theology is similar to that found in Gregory.

Finally, Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, in his short paper "The Revelation of the Unknowable God in Gnostic Texts," examines the connection between God's transcendence and the knowledge of God in gnostic texts. Comparing, for example, Alcinous's *Didaskalikos*, the Apocryphon of John, and the *Trimorphic Protennoia* on this topic, Luttikhuisen concludes that the emphasis on God's transcendence is a common feature of the theological literature of the first centuries. Yet he notes the considerable difference between gnostic texts and both mainstream Christian texts and Greek philosophical texts. Unlike the pagans, gnostic (and Christians in general) regarded the transcendent God as merciful; unlike mainstream Christians, they differentiated the transcendent God from the demiurge, creator of the world.

The variety of texts covered by the contributors (Hebrew Bible, rabbinics, Greco-Roman literature and philosophy, early Christianity, Hellenistic Judaism, Gnosticism) as well as the quality of the papers make this volume recommended to all students of antiquity. Of special interest to me were the essays of Eep Talstra, whose survey of modern views of the theology of the Name is indispensable in the context of the subject of the volume; of Eibert Tigchelaar, whose remarks on Islamic and pre-Islamic Arab barefootedness are welcome given the absence of Islam in the volume; of George H. van Kooten, who offers valuable and extensive insight into the much-debated question of Greco-Roman views of Moses and the divine Name; and of Robbert van den Berg, who provides an interesting new treatment of the question of powerful names in Platonism and Origen. One may nevertheless regret the absence of a paper devoted exclusively to Islam, even if chronological reasons may explain this omission.