

CHAPTER 1

THE TRADITIONS OF THE PENTATEUCH

For the last couple of centuries, biblical scholars and researchers have taken it upon themselves to figure out the origins of the Old Testament. Who wrote these scriptures, and to what timeframe do they belong? Many Judaeo-Christian believers choose a Mosaic authorship, but due to the many anomalies, new theories have emerged. These anomalies include such curiosities as: (1) Who authored the final chapter of Deuteronomy describing the death of Moses?³ And why was Deuteronomy written in a style different from that of the first four books we call the Tetrateuch? (2) Passages that revealed things not known to Moses in his lifetime, which shows its authorship to be of later years; one example is Genesis 36:31.⁴

And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

During the lifetime of Moses, obviously no king resided over Israel, and the Edomite kings listed also came at a much later date than Moses. The author of this passage is writing about the kings of Israel as facts of history; signifying that the author lived during or after the time of the kings of both Edom and Israel. (3) Genesis 35:19 mentions:⁵

³ Deut. 34:5-7.

⁴ JPS translation.

⁵ JPS translation.

And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath—the same is Beth-lehem.

The city of Ephrath was not known as “Bethlehem” until much later. These three words: הוּא בֵּית לָחֶם (*hīw’ bēyt lāḥem*) were obviously written by someone other than Moses. Granted, we are only speaking of three words, but if three words from the Pentateuch can be written by someone other than Moses, then why not six words or one hundred words? (4) Many duplicates⁶ and conflicting passages⁷ can also be found within the Pentateuch. These display many variations from the narrative, but also hint at a final compiler/ editor⁸ omitting things and piecing variations together at the very end. If this was truly of Mosaic authorship, why would there be so many varied repetitions and contradictions?

In the midst of all these controversial anomalies, the *Source Hypothesis* or the *Documentary Hypothesis* emerged, giving a possible explanation to all the irregular fragments of scripture. According to Martin Noth’s view of the sources,⁹ the following criteria had to be carefully analyzed and met when determining to what tradition¹⁰ a piece of literature belonged: (1) duplication and repetition of material, (2) variation in the divine names, (3) contrasting viewpoints in the text, (4) variation in the language and style, and (5) evidence of compilation

⁶ To name a few examples: Exo. 18:17-24 with Deu. 1:12-16; and Exo. 19:17-18 with Exo. 20:18.

⁷ To name a few examples: Num. 10:31 with Deu. 1:32-33; and Exo. 12:37 with Deu. 7:7.

⁸ I discuss this final editor or Redactor below during the division of the Pentateuch according to each scribe and his style.

⁹ Noth, Martin A. *A History of Pentateuchal Tradition*. Trans. B.W. Anderson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice-Hall, 1972; reprints, Chicago, Calif.:Scholars Press, 1981; German original, 1947

¹⁰ The terms *tradition* and *source* will be used interchangeably throughout the rest of this book.

and redaction of parallel accounts.¹¹ When identified, this in turn broke the literature down into four separate sources/traditions: the Priestly (**P**), the Yahwist (**J**), the Elohist (**E**) and the Deuteronomic (**D**). While both **E** and **J** are believed to hold an older tradition, **D** is thought to consist of works composed largely in the 7th century BCE, and then re-edited during the Exile; and **P** is from the period of the Babylonian Captivity and afterward. Modern consensus has determined that all these sources were put together by an editor into the final five-book work known as the Torah. This final editor became known as the Redactor (**R**).

The History of the Hypothesis

Throughout history, many have disputed the origin of the Pentateuch, such as the 11th century CE Isaac ibn Yashush, a Jewish court physician of a ruler in Muslim Spain, who pointed out that a list of Edomite kings that appears in Genesis 36 named kings who lived after Moses, but it was in the late 17th century of the CE that the authorship of the Pentateuch began to really be questioned. This was a period of the Renaissance, when a renewed interest in the classical world and its literature emerged. Richard Simon (1638-1712) argued that the first five books of Moses were a compilation of a number of documents.¹² His main sources of evidence were primarily the numerous duplications discovered within the scriptures. Simon concluded that some of these documents were derived from Moses, but that Ezra, during the post-exilic period, finalized the Pentateuch and produced the completed form we see today. At around the same time

¹¹ Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'brien. Sources of the Pentateuch. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993. 6.

¹² Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'brien. Sources of the Pentateuch. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993. 1.

period, Jean Astruc (1684-1766) claimed the Pentateuch to hold only two sources: (1) one used the title of *'Ēlōhîm* for the supreme deity (2) and the other used YHWH. Motioning against the position of Simon, Astruc argued that it was Moses who had compiled the Pentateuch from these two sources, along with ten additional fragments.¹³ This was an extremely important conclusion, because we were now focusing our attention on the divine names as a sign of different sources. This in turn evolved into the source and fragment hypothesis.¹⁴

These literary phenomena were now at the center of a much-heated debate. Questions arose, testing the authorship of the scriptures. Did the Pentateuch hold Mosaic authorship? The two founding fathers of the Source Hypothesis helped create the direction towards which future research was moving. By 1948, the Source Hypothesis had evolved, and Martin Noth's work attracted widespread attention to the traditions hidden within the scriptures. In his originally German book, *History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, Noth formulates and identifies all of **E**, **J** and **P** found within the Pentateuch. To this day, many scholars base their tradition-historical research on the works of Noth.

Challenging the Chronology and the Tradition(s)

In his book *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (1973), Frank Moore Cross disputes that **P** is nothing more than a redaction, discrediting it as an actual source and placing it as filler to connect all the oddities and genealogies for both **E** and **J**. Cross further claims that **J** was nothing more than 'propaganda work of the empire.' This source recounts the events that brought old Israel into existence, emphasizing *Israel as the*

¹³ Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'Brien. Sources of the Pentateuch. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993. 2.

¹⁴ The fragment hypothesis reduced the Pentateuch to a collection of fragmentary sections partly of Mosaic origin, but put together in the reign of Solomon.

*blessed nation and source of blessing.*¹⁵ As argued by Frank Moore Cross¹⁶, **J** is:

...propaganda work of the united monarchy, specifically the program of Solomon to constitute an Oriental monarchy in the Canaanite pattern. The older epic, cut loose from the covenantal cultus of the tribal sanctuaries of the league, was shaped by the Yahwist for new institutions and new functions.

Many have rejected this conclusion, including Hans Heinrich Schmid, who in 1976 proposed a drastic revision of the current understanding of **J**. Schmid dated **J** to the exilic period, claiming it to hold a close affiliation to the Deuteronomic/ Deuteronomistic literature. John Van Seters also has a late date for **J**. Seters had placed it around the time period of the Greek historian Herodotus, insisting the two bore many similarities.¹⁷

Then there were those who rejected the Documentary Hypothesis. These scholars came from two opposite ends of the spectrum: (1) the most traditional, and (2) the most radical. The most traditional consisted mainly of fundamentalist Christians and Orthodox Jews, who argued that the first five books of the Bible were written by none other than Moses himself.¹⁸ The most radical claim was that the Pentateuch was written centuries later, and that it was more mythological than historical.

¹⁵ Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'brien. Sources of the Pentateuch. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993. 91.

¹⁶ Cross, Frank M. From Epic to Canon. Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 1998. 22-52.

¹⁷ Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'brien. Sources of the Pentateuch. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993. 10-11.

¹⁸ Friedman, Richard E. The Bible with Sources Revealed. 1st ed. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. 1.

More Examples of the Source

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, when analyzing all of the text written, many peculiarities stand out. One example relies on linguistics. The Semitic language of Hebrew had evolved over time, and this fact is apparent when studying the biblical scriptures. As noted earlier, **J** and **E** come from the earliest stage of Biblical Hebrew; while **P** comes from a later stage of the language and is still earlier than the Hebrew used in the Book of Ezekiel, which comes from the period of the Babylonian Exile. The chronology of the languages is confirmed by Hebrew texts belonging outside of the Bible. A good example would be that **J** uses the term *hārābāh* (Gen. 7:22 and Exo. 14:21) for dry ground, while **P** uses a later term for the same meaning: *yabbāšāh* (Gen 1:9, 10; 8:14 and Exo. 14:22).

Terminology varies from source to source. For example, the mountain of Sinai has been seen twenty times throughout **J** and **P**, while **E** and **D** use Horeb or ‘the mountain of God’ fourteen times. Other examples include: the phrase ‘be fruitful and multiply’ occurs twelve times only in **P**, and the term used to identify the place where the dead go, ‘Sheol’ occurs six times in **J** but never in the other sources.¹⁹ These are just a few of many examples.

As for other content within the sources, throughout the scriptures, **E** and **P** identify God as El (*’Ēlōhîm*), meaning God, along with many other variations of this title. It wasn’t until the name was revealed to Moses that we find YHWH used as the name of the supreme deity.²⁰

And God spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am YHWH. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shadday, and I was not known to them by my name, YHWH.’

¹⁹ Friedman, Richard E. *The Bible with Sources Revealed*. 1st ed. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. 8-10.

²⁰ JPS translation.

Meanwhile, **J** uses the name YHWH from the very beginning. More specifically in Genesis 4:26²¹:

...then began men to call upon the name of YHWH.

In addition, **J** never uses the word God (*'Ēlōhîm*) in the proper form in its narration except for six times in the Primeval Story of Genesis (Genesis 3:3, 5; 6:2, 4; 9:26, 27); and again, in the Ancestral Story we see a few references in Genesis 43-45 and Exodus 34.²² With the exception of Genesis 6:2 and 6:4, **J** excludes the word God in the proper form from the narration. It is when the individual persons in **J** speak that the word God is used in such a way. All the other occurrences that I have not listed as being found within the primeval portion of Genesis under **J** have been credited to **R**. Despite this phenomenal fact regarding the divine names, we still find scholars on this subject asserting that the use of these divine names does not prove anything.

Chronology, a large portion of the genealogies, ages, dates, measurements, numbers and precise instructions are obviously of major concern to **P**, while **J**, **E** and **D** cannot compare.

The main takeaway from these sources is that some of the narratives do parallel and repeat themselves, while holding an agenda. Many scholars, such as Frank Moore Cross, assume the reason not much of **E** exists is that wherever it repeated itself alongside or

²¹ JPS translation.

²² Whether this is a direct reference to YHWH or an indirect reference to a God to whom YHWH may have been under in this Israelite pantheon is unknown. I attempt to speak of this more in later chapters under topics of the Divine Council and Hebrew henotheism. Also the occurrences found in chapter 3 of Genesis are questionable. I cover this in a later chapter.

conflicted with **J**, it was simply dropped. It can also be observed that many of the fragments of **J** and **E** appear randomly in the last three books of the Pentateuch without any direction. Nowhere in the Pentateuch does it testify to Moses being the author. This belief relies purely on oral tradition. The oral tradition is believed to have originated in the Book of Deuteronomy, which claims Moses authored a fragment of scripture.²³ Over time, this mention of authorship may have evolved to Moses authoring the entire Hebrew Torah. Another characteristic of both **J** and **E** resides in the anthropomorphic descriptions of the supreme deity. This is never seen in **D** or **P**.

My Choice of the Yahwist and Elohist

While I believe **J** to be of great antiquity, I still do not feel that it is greater than that of **E**; **E** taking more of a Canaanite origin, a topic that I cover in the second part to this book. When removing **J** from the rest of the text, it may be apparent to the reader that it forms a narrative on its own, similar to other Near Eastern mythological stories. It can also be suggested that **J** may have originally been a compilation of short mythological stories transmitted orally until pieced together by the Yahwistic scribe. The following research belongs to not only the entire Pentateuch but is also followed by key passages from Joshua, Judges, 1Samuel, 2Samuel and 1Kings. Section 1 specifically concentrates on the primeval history contained within the Book of Genesis, while Section 2 focuses in on the ancestral portion and beyond.²⁴ I believe that the primeval section holds the key to reveal who the real Yahwist may have been and to what period he belonged.²⁵ The reason Section 1

²³ Deu. 32:1-43; the Song of Moses.

²⁴ The Book of Genesis is separated into two major sections: the Primeval Story (Gen. 1-11a) and the Ancestral Story (Gen. 11b-50).

²⁵ Many have dated the Yahwist to approximately the 10th century BCE.

focuses solely on the primeval history resides in the fact that most of the literature found within it belongs to **J**. In the previous edition of this book, I made the effort of separating primeval **J** and ancestral **J** temporarily into two separate traditions: **J1** and **J2**. This was done to help find a more reasonable date of redaction for **J1**, which **J2** confirms. I will be explaining why I use the term redaction further in this segment. Please do not confuse this division of **J** as two separate scribes. **J1** and **J2** belong to the same source of **J**, written at the same time.

Following the research and writings of Noth, Cross, and the recent Richard Elliott Friedman²⁶, among others, I have stumbled upon a new hypothesis that may help to properly give a date to the fragments of literature in question, while solving some of the world's oldest biblical mysteries. In their book *Sources of the Pentateuch*, authors Campbell and O'Brien have offered the following definition of a hypothesis:²⁷

A hypothesis is an attempt to bring order to a diversity of phenomena by offering an explanation of their interrelationships. It is limited by one's ability to identify all the relevant phenomena and to provide an adequate explanation for these phenomena. All hypotheses are provisional and remain open to continued testing against alternative proposals.

This extract summarizes everything that I am aiming for. This is simply a hypothesis to answer a specific phenomenon found within the Pentateuch, and this theory shall remain open until proven otherwise. It is my goal to redefine the traditions of the Pentateuch, for the hopes of

²⁶ Richard Elliott Friedman, best selling author of *Who Wrote the Bible?*, is Professor of Hebrew and Comparative literature and Katzin Professor of Jewish Civilization at the University of California, San Diego.

²⁷ Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'Brien. *Sources of the Pentateuch*. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993. 16.

a better understanding in future scholarships. For the rest of this book, I will be citing Richard Elliott Friedman's interpretation of the sources, noting the verses that I do not agree with, along with an explanation on why I disagree. This disagreement will be seen in the ancestral studies of the Pentateuchal literature. While on the topic of Richard Elliott Friedman, I wish to give the reader Friedman's interpretation of how **J** fits into the puzzle. By the end of the book, a few changes will be made to Friedman's chronology and interpretation.²⁸

For two centuries (from 922 to 722 BCE) the biblical Promised Land was divided into two kingdoms: the kingdom of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah in the south. A text known as **J** was composed during this period...**J** was composed by an author living in the southern kingdom of Judah...In the year 722 BCE, the Assyrian empire destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. **J** and **E** were then no longer separated by a border. These two versions of the people's history now existed side by side in the kingdom of Judah. In the years that followed, someone assembled a history that used both **J** and **E** as sources...

Earlier in this section, I made a comment pertaining to **J** being a redaction. To redact is to put into suitable literary form, to revise or to edit. As I reveal through the research conducted in this book, I have personally concluded that when Israel fell to Assyria, the Ancestral Story (under **E**) was possibly introduced to Judah for the first time.²⁹ We do know from the Prophetic books that related stories did circulate within the Judahite region beforehand, but possibly never in a committed literary form, as will be seen in this book. If it did indeed exist in written form, **J**, being the non-priestly individual, didn't care

²⁸ Friedman, Richard E. *The Bible with Sources Revealed*. 1st ed. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. 3-4.

²⁹ Read below: in written form.

much for it.³⁰ **J** combined other stories, possibly circulating in the area, such as the Creation, the Fall and the Flood; while modifying the older Israelite epic (**E**) to favor Judah (**J**). It added to the old, while editing what already existed. This is why I feel that **J** is nothing more than a redaction, and will by the end of this book explain why I came to such a conclusion. Section 2 of this book covers how the sections of **E** were dropped, with **J**'s motive of promoting the Judaeen monarchy. In favor of Cross's interpretation of the role of **P**, this scribe built upon the loose ends of both **E** and **J** while showing its own motive to explain the establishment of the early priesthood. By the end of this book, the reader will be shown how **E** was the original, and how **J** and **P** were early editors/redactors; rewriting, editing, omitting and supplementing an already existing text.

For a better understanding of **J** with its origins in Judah and **E** with its origins in Israel, I would highly recommend:

Friedman, Richard E. *The Hidden Book in the Bible*. 1st ed. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Note that I will be covering brief extracts of this topic in Section 2 of this book.

Parša B^erē'sît and the Later Idea of Chapters

In Jewish tradition, the פֶּרֶשָׁה (*paršâ*), meaning 'portion', is a weekly Torah reading text selection. There are 54 weekly Torah portions in total, of which *Parša B^erē'sît* (Portion: In the beginning — Gen. 1:1-6:8) and *Paršâ Nōah* (Portion: Noah — Gen. 6:9-11:32) are the main portions that will be covered in Section 1 of this book. Section

³⁰ This comment will become more apparent in section 2 of this book.

2 focuses on the rest. The reason I mention this is because the reader needs to understand that the concept of chapters in the Bible mean nothing. This division of chapters was nothing more than an invention by later western European Common Era scribes. The purpose of the present division into chapters and verses was to facilitate reference. These divisions sometimes ignore logical and natural divisions. So, where a student of theology may come across the end of a chapter, the case may be that the narrative is not quite over yet, or that it has passed a while back toward the middle of a chapter. I take a different approach from the conventional chapter or *paršâ*. I separate every narrative as a separate episode, meaning a story on its own, until finally compiled together at the very end. This will be properly explained as the reading of this book progresses, but please understand that I use the following layout for the first 11 chapters of Genesis under both **J1** and **P**:

Chapter 1-2:4a is episode 1
Chapter 2:4b-3 is episode 2
Chapter 4 is episode 3
Chapter 5 is episode 4
Chapter 6:1-6:4 is episode 5
Chapter 6:5-9 is episode 6
Chapter 10 is episode 7
Chapter 11:1-11:9 is episode 8
Chapter 11:10-11:32 is episode 9

As for the Ancestral Story, a different approach much be taken and the division is done with the remnants of **E** and how **J2** modified them.

Author's Notes on this Research

Growing up, I had been told to never take the words written in the Old and New Testament literally, and from a religious perspective, I would have to agree; historically, however, this is not possible. In order to understand how Judaeo-Christian belief has lasted so long, one must

come to understand how it has evolved and observe the path to where it is headed. I would like to emphasize that the whole purpose of this research is not to dismiss or disprove any notion of a supreme deity or deities existing, but to show the history of these biblical scriptures and the evolution they underwent during the changes of time. On another note, to help understand history and theology, language plays a very important role. From the understanding of a language used within a culture, a scholar can obtain a true idea of how that culture may have lived and evolved. What is even more beautiful about language is that it always changes. These changes allow you to view all external influences of other neighboring nations when attempting to piece together fragments of history. Whether it has evolved through the ashes of empires or the trade of goods, language is a key to the culture being studied. The reason this is such an effective tool is, once understood, you can place all forms of writing to events within its own period in time.

I have spent a greater part of the past six years researching the material for this book, and while my original hypothesis evolved more and more as the research progressed, I savored every last minute of it. I personally take a lot of pride in the work that I have accomplished, and after reading this book, I hope the reader feels the same way. Now, as I write this, I cannot help but think of the countless individuals who would dismiss my theories before even considering reading any of the material, due to certain religious standpoints. With that in mind, I wish to explain myself and the research that I stand for. I am not here to convert individuals, or be converted for that matter, in anything other than what one's heart truly believes. Once again, I am not here to dismiss an entire Judaeo-Christian religion that has lasted for thousands of years. If you, as the reader, feel threatened by the research in this book and take it as an attack on your faith, then you obviously do not hold that much faith in your religion, or on top of that, in yourself.

Most of my research is based around the Documentary Hypothesis, and while I have just given the reader an introduction to the Documentary Hypothesis, I would like to point out that it was a very brief one. For those who are interested in learning more about these Pentateuchal sources held within the Hebrew Torah, I would suggest the reader take a glance at a few of the other listings to obtain a much more detailed explanation and analysis:

Friedman, Richard E. *The Bible with Sources Revealed*. 1st ed. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.

Friedman, Richard E. *Who Wrote the Bible?*. 2nd ed. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.

Campbell, Antony F., and Mark A. O'Brien. *Sources of the Pentateuch*. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1993.

On top of that, to better understand the material referenced in this book, I would like to advise the reader, if they haven't already, to pick up and read a copy of the Old Testament and then the *Epic of Gilgameš*. I make multiple references to both. It may also be beneficial to read:

Cross, Frank M. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997.