

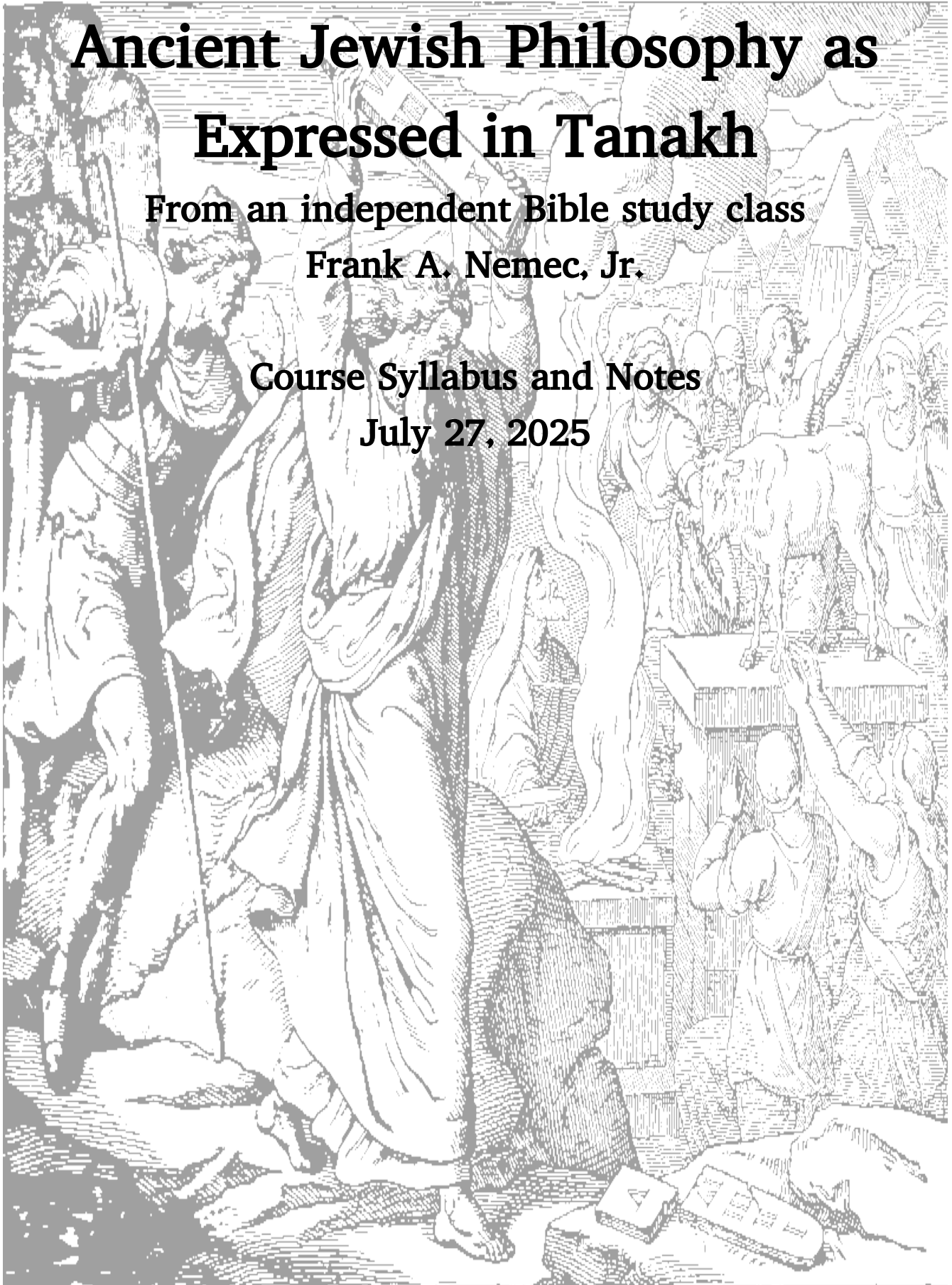
Ancient Jewish Philosophy as Expressed in Tanakh

From an independent Bible study class

Frank A. Nemec, Jr.

Course Syllabus and Notes

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General Material

This document is evolving to capture an understanding of philosophical thought of ancient Israel, as those thoughts are expressed in **Tanakh** (what Christians renamed as the **Old Testament**). These notes began as a framework for a class on the history of Israel as recorded in the Bible, and in the context of its peers, and as matched with history. The class met Sunday evenings 6:30-8pm in room 3191 at Valley Church, Cupertino, California, starting June 10, 2012, then later using Google Meet as personal schedules permit. The reading itself is to be done by each student, outside of class, preferably in advance of the discussion. It's not primarily a doctrine class. Experiencing the overview requires a disciplined style of reading. It's tempting to read footnotes and follow cross references. Don't procrastinate on the reading, especially in the beginning. The discipline to just read the Bible is difficult. Page counts are of the paper ESV Bible. They include the introductions, illustrations, and footnotes. The total is about 600 pages.

This document includes some material on the **New Testament**, the collection of texts chosen to represent the canon of orthodox Christianity. Most of Paul will be a separate document.

I encourage taking notes to bring to class. Thoughts and answers should be based on the texts up to that point. That is, don't rewrite the texts to incorporate later ideas. Input from extra-biblical sources is very welcome, and very much helps understand biblical texts.

The latest version of these notes is always available on the web page for this class:
<http://www.nemecfamily.net/fan/writing/HistoryofIsrael/>

Disclaimers

I accepted the role of leader or facilitator of this class by request of the people attending this Sunday evening Bible study. I intend to encourage attention to certain questions and issues, as can be seen by the rest of this syllabus. I intend to offer some of my ideas on these and related subjects. I do not speak as a teacher or other official of Valley Church. The ideas are mine, not those of Valley Church, its elders, pastors, or staff. This is not an official Discipleship Elective of Valley Church.

The first item in the [doctrinal statement of Valley Church](#) reads, "We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being inspired by God and completely inerrant in the original writings and of supreme and final authority in faith and life." This encapsulates a Fundamentalist position. Mine is Conservative, but not Fundamentalist. I discuss this in my [notes on the gospels](#). I neither insist nor expect that people agree with me on this or any other opinion I have or express.

When I express a view about biblical scholarship in class, unless I say otherwise, it is generally a consensus or a broadly held view among modern biblical textual scholars (not theologians), and of scholars of the history and religions of the Ancient Near East. When I discuss ideas and their development, the views are generally mine. That is, I present my understanding of the ideas each author intended to communicate with his writing. I typically will not say whether or not I agree with those ideas. That's not the point of this study.

I say so when I express an idea that is my own. But because of my memory problems, I may forget that

I've read it somewhere. Significant ideas in my written notes are nearly always annotated with their source.

The primary source for this class is the Bible texts themselves. The objective is to read them and understand them (exegesis), not to read into them (eisegesis).

I admit some laziness or carelessness when I refer to things relating to Israel as Jewish. Hebrew or Israeli might be more accurate in many cases. I will probably never get around to more careful and precise use of these terms.

Historical-Critical Hermeneutic

I use the historical-critical hermeneutic as I study the texts of the Bible. I trace the ideas of the people of Israel as they develop over time, as reflected in their writings in Tanakh. Then, the ideas of New Testament authors. People write to communicate their ideas. My objective is to understand and convey those ideas, the ideas of the authors of the texts. This runs from pre-Israel (Abraham and his peers), ancient Israel, Israel under united monarchy, Exilic (Babylonian Diaspora), through post-Exilic (after return to Israel under Cyrus). I consider ideas of Second Temple Judaism, especially around the first century, as precursors to New Testament thought. I look at how these ideas appear in the sayings and teachings attributed to Jesus in the synoptic gospels. I look for these ideas in the writings of Paul.

The hermeneutic most likely to discover the meanings intended by each author in his texts is this historical-critical method. I strongly encourage reading Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them), by Bart Ehrman (Ehrman, Jesus Interrupted). He is far more informed and persuasive than I will ever be. He makes clear the weaknesses of the doctrines of inspiration by (among other things) showing the resulting contradictions.

Translations

If you hold a doctrine of inspiration of the original autographs, then why would you settle for anything less than an accurate translation of the best collection of texts that textual criticism can provide, based on all manuscripts available today? Those are Masoretic and Nestles. Translations based on those texts, emphasizing formal equivalence ("essentially literal"), and faithful to the texts, are ESV, NRSV, and NASB. NET is almost as good. KJV, though a good translation into 17th century English, is of significantly less value, since it's based on a different textual body (Textus Receptus). For the Old Testament, they used the 1524 Hebrew Rabbinic Bible, but chose Septuagint or Vulgate when they better suited their doctrines. That was definitely biased! The worst are the modern paraphrases which write into modern language the interpretations of their authors. I read the Bible to understand what each biblical author meant, not what a 'translator' thinks they meant or wishes they meant.

All of my quotations are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

Guiding Questions

1. What kind of relationship do the people have with God? How does it change? In most Bibles, LORD is used for Yahweh, and God for Elohim. What do they call their God and the

- neighboring gods?
2. What do God and the people expect from each other? What covenants are in play?
 3. How do the people govern themselves? What can you see about political and religious leadership? How were leaders selected?
 4. How do the people relate to their neighbors?
 5. Where do ideas first appear? How are they different from earlier and later ideas, including ideas of Christianity? How do the ideas differ from those of their neighbors? How do the ideas of this text match the ideas of other biblical texts?
 6. By the modern definition, when does the history of Israel begin? You'll need to go well beyond the text for that.

What was Israel?

Israel referred to a geographic territory within Canaan. Most of the action in Tanakh happened there. It also referred to a Semitic-speaking ethnic population. It referred originally to what were called the northern tribes, but after the attempted unification under Saul and David, it referred to both the northern and southern tribes. When the priests of Israel wanted the people to practice monolatry, they described El / Elohim as the God of Israel. That was standard practice. Each geographic region had its own god(s). The people of Israel should worship the god of Israel (the land). Context tells the reader how an author is using that word in a particular instance.

Central Philosophy and its Worldviews

The central philosophy of ancient Israel is embodied in the Mosaic Covenant, and finds expression in the Covenantal, Prophetic, and Apocalyptic worldviews. **If you don't understand these, you can't understand Tanakh or the sayings attributed to Jesus.**

Covenantal Worldview

Religious thought of Israel was characterized by its **covenantal worldview**. This is how they understood their relationship to their god. The first two were in the literary form of royal grant treaties. They are unconditional promises by the superior power of benefits to the inferior power. The **Noahic Covenant** and **Abrahamic Covenant** are covered under Genesis.

Key Bible Texts on the Covenants

This section lists key texts covering the covenants of Israel.

1. Genesis 9:8-19 Noahic Covenant (no more global flood)
2. Genesis 12:1-3, first statement of the Abrahamic Covenant. Note verse 4 which tells us Abram met the terms required of him. Be alert for this pattern. The covenants require certain actions from Israel and from God. The texts make frequent statements about when those actions are, or are not, done.
3. Genesis 15:4-5 One of several statements of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abram's offspring numbered as the stars in the heavens 3×10^{23} and see 22:18.
1. Genesis 17:2-8, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant

between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” Here, the first mention of its henotheistic and eternal aspects, as well as the requirement of **circumcision**. Exodus 20:3 makes the henotheistic nature fully clear, as does Exodus 6:7, “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.” Perhaps this is the antecedent of the “**I am**” references, including Exodus 3:14. **Henotheism** is a theistic religious philosophy that recognizes the existence of many gods but requires exclusive devotion to only one. It is also described as **monolatry**, the worship of one. **Monotheism**, a later development, says that only one god exists.

2. Genesis 22:15-18 star numbering again, and “in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”
3. Genesis 26:1-5:
 1. Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”
 2. This shows that Abraham had already satisfied the human requirements of this covenant.
4. Exodus 19:5-6 a preliminary statement of the Mosaic Covenant, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In verse 8, the people agree to be bound by this covenant.
5. Exodus 23:20-33 The bully big prother blessing. Prosperity, health, fertility. Repeated acceptance by the people.
6. Exodus 32:11-14 Moses saves Israel from destruction by invoking the covenant.
7. Deuteronomy 1:10, “The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven.” proclaims that the population aspect of the Abrahamic covenant had been completed.
8. Joshua 24 shows a required renewal ceremony of the Mosaic Covenant. In the vassal suzerainty model, each new generation must be educated and must accept the terms.

Pervading Jewish thought is the idea of the covenant (Berit). This is an expression of the relationship between the people of Israel and their god. The first form, the **royal grant**, is used for the covenants to Noah, Abraham, and David. This model, and the vassal suzerainty treaty below, have been used in ancient Mesopotamia from at least 4500 years ago. The earliest example we have is the *Stele of the Vultures*, from before 2500 BCE. For a very good description of these covenants, and how the covenants of Israel follow their design, see lecture 10 of course 653 from The Teaching Company, [The Old Testament](#), by Amy-Jill Levine. For further reading, she recommends Rolf Rendtorff, [The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation](#), Margaret Kohl, trans. ; (Edinburgh:

T&T Clark, 1998).

All of these texts were written when Israel was under the **Mosaic Covenant**, also called the Sinaitic Covenant. The earlier covenants and renewals are historical references. This covenant is so fundamental to Jewish thought that it deserves to be properly understood. We will examine each covenant and ask certain questions. Who set the terms of each? Whose freedom of action is limited by each covenant, and how? What exactly does each covenant require of the people of Israel? Do they cover anyone besides Israel? How is 'faith' described, and what part does it play? What are the benefits and penalties? What are the prescribed remedies for breaking each?

Questions to keep in the back of your mind throughout the class: How does every OT text relate to each covenant? When is Israel shown as keeping vs. breaking each covenant? How can you tell? How do the people (as shown by the authors) respond when it appears God is not keeping his end of the bargain? How, when, and where does that change?

I am starting to investigate the idea that the distinctions among the covenants (Abrahamic, Sinaitic, Mosaic etc.) are Christian inventions. Did Israel consider these as different descriptions or different expressions of the same covenant? Do they recognize the Abrahamic as applying equally to the Arabs? By popular request, this session will include a high-level view of Leviticus. What are the major offerings and how are they described? Who were the priests and where did they function? What's so special about blood? What were the required feasts? How does chapter 26 relate to the covenant? Any surprises? Which activities and sacrifices are related to sin?

The Mosaic Covenant

The **Mosaic Covenant** is expressed in the literary form of a **vassal suzerainty treaty**, most closely the Hittite form. The Wikipedia description seems clear and accurate, and matches the more scholarly sources I've read. Covenants of this form have been found as early as 2500 BCE, the Stele of the Vultures, a fragment of which is shown in the figure. That's more than a thousand years before Mount Sinai. This form was also used in Mesopotamian/Sumerian treaties, perhaps including Ur.

The suzerain (superior) nation imposes requirements on the vassal nation. The contract offers benefits if the vassal keeps the terms, and cursings (penalties) if they don't. This is precisely how Israel viewed the Mosaic Covenant. One might say that Israel developed their idea of the covenant from the familiar Suzerainty treaty. Or one might say that an omniscient God chose to



Figure 1: Stele of the Vultures

express his demands in a form the people would understand. Choose according to your philosophical presuppositions. The more I learn about the Hittites, how they ruled their conquests, and how they related to their gods, the stronger this connection becomes.

These literary forms were universally understood in the ANE. There was never a Hebrew **empire**, though for a while, they approached empire under Saul, David, and Solomon. Or as I mention later, they at least had a legend of empire. Their little plot of land along major trade routes was typically controlled by the local empires: Egyptian, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian, then later Greek and Roman. They lived under terms dictated by a conquering power.

Throughout these notes I mention texts expressing clearly the idea that the people are keeping the terms of the covenant, and that God is keeping his. The idea that the covenant is impossible to keep is purely a New Testament idea.

This foundation idea is seen throughout Torah, and in most of Tanakh. The Mosaic Covenant is expressed in a form very familiar to everyone in the ANE: the **vassal suzerainty treaty**. This is a form of contract between the party of the first (the dominant party, the suzerain) and the party of the second (the subservient party). It was commonly imposed by a conquering power over a conquered tribe. See also ESV notes page 325 for Deuteronomy according to this structure. Exodus 19 sets the stage for presenting the covenant to Moses, the elders, and the people. In verse 7, the people accept it by signing a blank check. They accept it again in Exodus 24:3. It follows a very specific format:

1. preamble, the titles of the superior party. "I am Yahweh your Elohim" (Exodus 20:2a).
2. historical prologue, assuring the party of the second part that the party of the first part is capable of fulfilling its obligations. See Joshua 9 and Exodus 20:2b, "... who brought you out of the land of Egypt ...". This is also an example of Yahweh keeping his part of the Abrahamic Covenant.
3. regulations/stipulations, the longest section. They typically require loyalty of the vassal to the lord, and restricts additional alliances. Exodus 20:3-6 as a concise, memorable excerpt, but most of Torah.
4. safe deposit and public readings. Deuteronomy 10:5, 31:9-13, Ezra. These often include formal renewal ceremonies, at least for every new generation, such as Joshua 24. The priests of the religion (thus the authors of Tanakh) recognized the essential importance of continually persuading the population that their god was capable of keeping his end of the bargain, as well as the importance that the population as a whole continue to meet their obligations. It's why they harp on the exodus and the conquest of Canaan.
5. witnesses. Typically these are the gods of all the parties. Given the jealousy of the God of Israel, the Mosaic Covenant uses the people as both signatories and witnesses, and also monuments like stones. See Joshua 24 for these also.
6. blessings and curses. Deuteronomy 7:11-24, 28:1 vs. 28:15ff. Exodus 23:22, "But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries."

Why These Texts were Written

Why were these texts (Torah and the rest of Tanakh) written? Perhaps this is the story. Under Saul and David, a dozen motley tribes were glued together to form a kingdom. It lasted for a few years, then split in two, north and south. If you want to have a kingdom (in this case, a small empire), you need some cohesive factors to hold it together. We always treat 'us' more favorably than 'them', so how can we make people feel that they really are part of the greater whole, the same 'us'?

First, tell them they are all related. Synthesize a legendary tradition of their common genealogy. While you're at it, solidify their identity by crystallizing 'them'. Tell stories where the outsiders, though they might be somewhat related to you, descend from less-than-honorable parentage. Go even further, and write legends saying you slaughtered most or all of them.

Second, unify them under a common religion. Our (Israel, north) god is El. Your (Judah, south) god is Yahweh. Your god told your leader (Moses) that he is really the same god as my god. So by definition, we all really worship the same god. Our practices are dictated by your leader, who said that those practices were dictated by your god, which is really also our god. We know all this because your writings say so.

Third, unify them with a common literary heritage. Blend all their traditions into a unified narrative. But represent the traditions of each tribe enough that someone from a tribe will recognize his traditions. Of course, the blending will be biased toward the people who wrote it: the priestly and ruling class of Yahweh. The final editing of Torah reflects the 'reforms' of Josiah, shown most clearly in the Deuteronomistic texts. Because disparate traditions are blended, there will be contradictions. Still visible in trace form are practices we no longer practice, and beliefs we no longer believe. This is an early example of what we now call revisionist history.

At the peak of the united monarchy, David was king. David wanted what most monarchs want: for his children to rule in his place. So he got the priests to say that their god demanded that rule be limited to his descendants. But he diluted the power of that declaration. With thousands of wives and concubines between David and his son Solomon, it wasn't long before anyone in any of the tribes could claim Davidic descent. The father of my child was really Fred, but the child will get better treatment if I say the father was the king. The price I pay is a night of pleasure with that strong, good-looking, powerful king. Now we really don't know who the father is. Fred won't kill him because he thinks he's the father. The king won't kill him because he thinks he's the father. We have observed this behavior in animal packs.

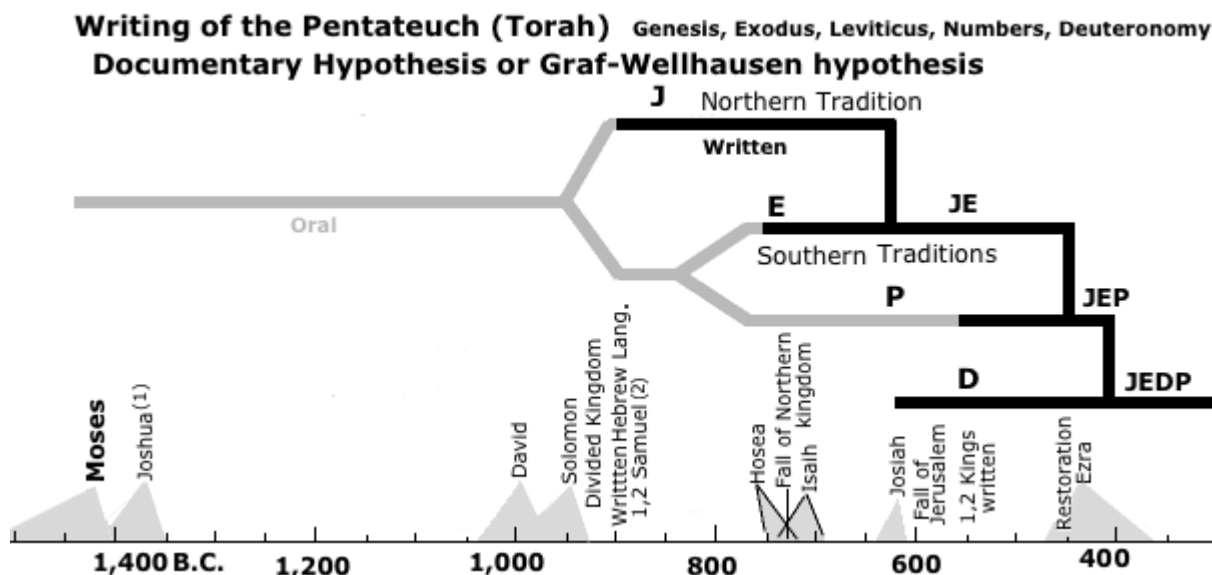
Fourth, solidify the covenantal worldview, with the details and terms of their central philosophy, the Mosaic Covenant. Judaism then became a 'religion of the book', perhaps the first. When ideas are written and preserved, it becomes much harder to change them. Christianity later followed suit with the formation of its canon. The editors convey the same message: We have the true and correct ideas, so we don't want anyone to change them, ever. If Judaism was correct in doing that, then Christianity was wrong.

Finally, convey the **etiology of Jewish philosophy**. Google offers this (non-medical) definition, “the investigation or attribution of the cause or reason for something, often expressed in terms of historical or mythical explanation.” Wikipedia expands, “An etiological myth, or origin myth, is a myth intended to explain the origins of cult practices, natural phenomena, proper names and the like.” We see this practiced extensively throughout Torah and all of Tanakh. Sometimes the name itself is the explanation. Course 653, The Old Testament, from The Teaching Company covers this in detail.

Documentary Hypothesis

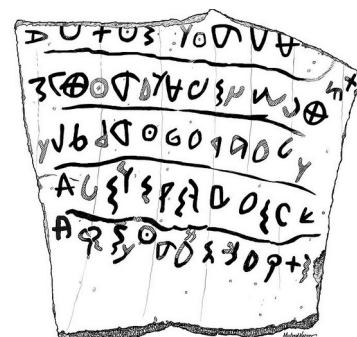
In 1883, Julius Wellhausen published *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (*Prolegomena to the History of Israel*). This was the foundation work of a school of thought regarding the authorship of Torah. It is best known as the **Documentary Hypothesis**, or JEPD. Later scholarship rejected some of his ideas, but the general ideas are now widely accepted. I will present these ideas in their most general form, but still use the recognized term Documentary Hypothesis. The idea of Wellhausen most commonly rejected is the idea that each source was a complete, consistent written text on its own. Don't try to forge clear delineations between sources in the texts. But don't ignore the sources. They can help understand the texts. I will stick with the term 'source' (rather than text or source text), especially since the Elohist source was very likely oral.

I suggest understanding this division of the texts to improve our understanding of the texts themselves. The ideas were assembled and edited into what eventually became **Tanakh**, the Jewish canon, and most specifically, that part of the canon called **Torah** (Hebrew תּוֹרָה literally, teaching or instruction). When you see the word law in an English translation of the OT (and it's not brother-in-law), it's Strong's 8451, torah. The ideas came from different sets of people, at different times, and were written in different styles, often with different philosophical and historical contexts. Understanding the ideas of a text is more likely to be correct when each is understood and interpreted in its own context, rather than trying to force it into some other context.



Modern biblical textual scholarship compares the biblical texts to the many other writings of the era, including those of the neighbors of

Ancient Jewish Philosophy as Expressed in Tanakh, by Frank Nemec, p:



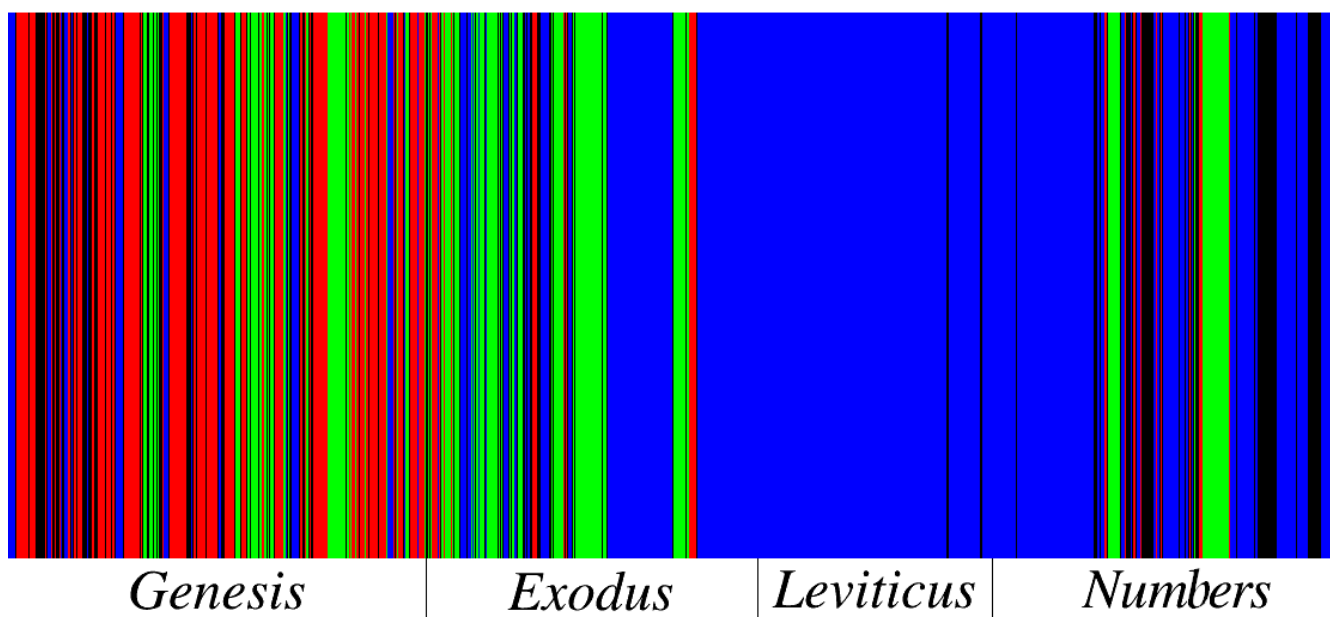
Israel. The 'writing' of Torah was completed 600-400 CE. The language is Classical Hebrew, which flourished during the Babylonian exile. Evidence of any writing in any form of Hebrew before that time is scarce. The earliest extant candidate is from around 1000 BCE, the Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon. The rendition shown here by Michael Netzer was based on enhanced photographs.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khirbet_Qeiyafa_Ostrakon.jpg These and the proto-Canaanite symbols derived from Egyptian hieroglyphs from as early as the 32nd century BCE.

Aggregation and various stages of redaction resulted in the Hebrew texts we have today in Tanakh.

Scholars don't know whether one person did the final writing/editing, or whether a group of people was involved. They drew material from at least these specific sources (written or not). The authors/editors seemed to take care to preserve the thoughts and styles of the varying sources, while composing a unifying document. The first image above (from <http://donsnotes.com/religion/bible-pent-authors.html>)

Yahwist (J) *Priestly (P)*
Elohist (E) *Redactor (R)*

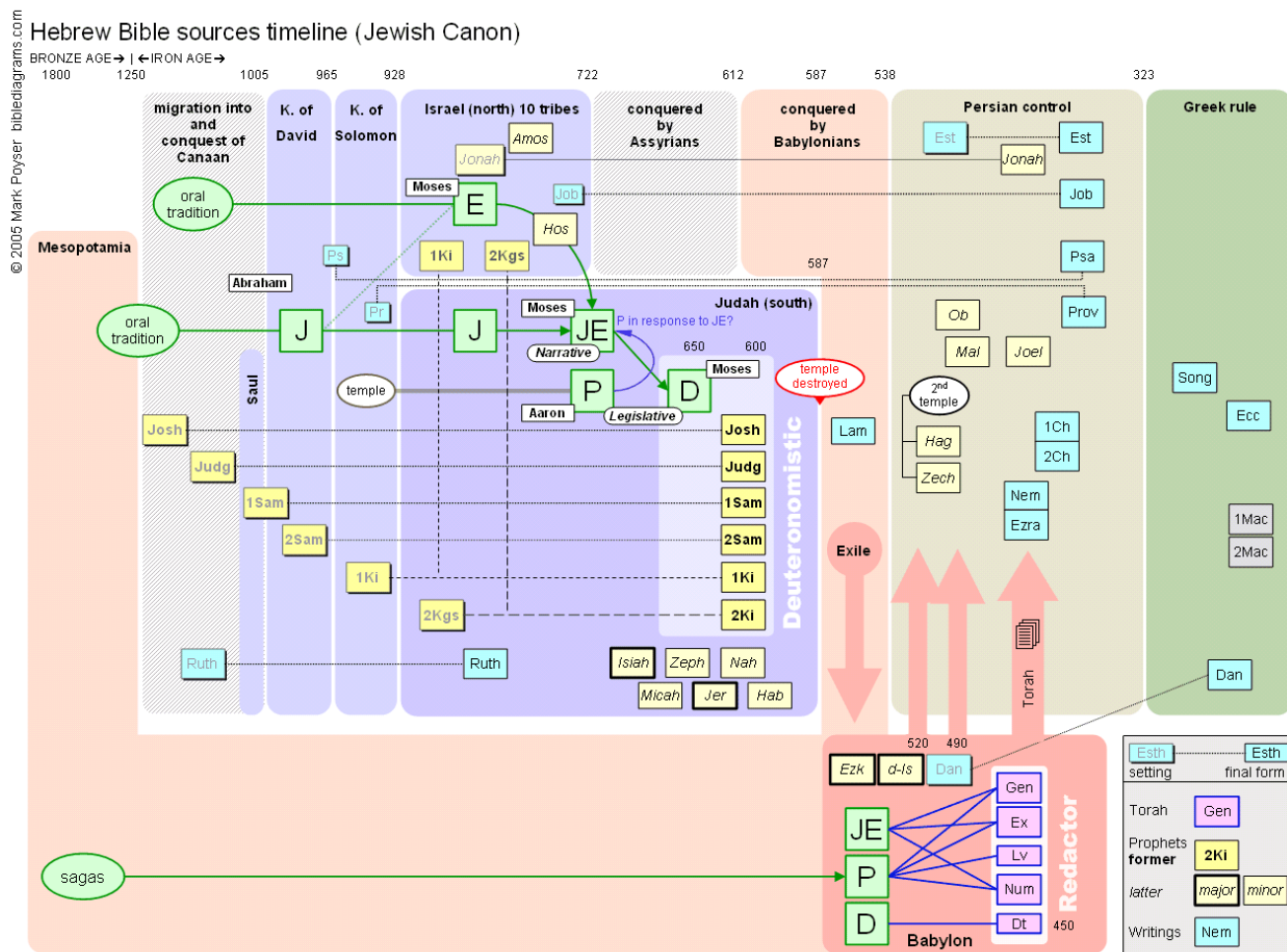


shows a rough timeline and path for the development of the text from the sources.

The next below (from Wikimedia) shows one example of a possible assignment of sources to text. The last is from <http://comingeon.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/bible-development-timeline-004.gif> which is in Arabic by a Syrian.

Torah and Talmud were long considered too sacred to write down. The Jewish tradition of Oral Torah is that it was handed down by Moses on Sinai, memorized, and passed on by word of mouth. In my skeptical opinion, an ulterior motive for not writing it was preserving the freedom of leadership to change it. Once it was written, it was much harder to change. Since the Jews had a very strong tradition of scribal integrity in preserving written Torah, I consider Torah an accurate representation of official Jewish beliefs at the time of writing and/or editing, with at least some effort to preserve, represent, or describe their beliefs earlier in history. This lets us trace the evolution of their beliefs over their history.

It's also why I seek the best honest scholarly estimates of the actual time of writing. The dates of final composition / editing indicate to me the dates of the ideas they represent. Dates of suggested possible earlier sources or texts are much harder to assess. Since we don't have those texts or sources, we can't compare the preservation of ideas.



2 Kings 22 shows Josiah (specifically Hilkiah the high priest) 'finding' Torah. Some suggest Josiah had the Deuteronomist create the laws requiring worship (therefore priestly power) to be concentrated into Jerusalem, and insert them into Torah.

Jahwist source

This is the only source to use the personal name Yahweh (Jahweh in Wellhausen's German) earlier than Exodus 3. The consensus estimate is c. 950 BC (during the reign of Solomon), not long before the split of the United Kingdom of Israel into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah in 922 BC. Newer research suggests a date in the 7th century BC. It is represented by much of Genesis, beginning at 2:4b, portions of Exodus and Numbers, and a few short texts in Deuteronomy. It is associated with the southern tribes of Judah.

Elohism source

This source refers to God as Elohim, the plural form of El. See Folklore Analysis and Type Scenes for more detail. Scholars suggest c. 850 BC for this source. Genesis 15 seems to be the earliest. It is associated with the northern tribes.

Deuteronomist source

This source was likely composed during the Babylonian Captivity (587-539 BC), or before (c. 650-621 BC). This may have been during the reign of Josiah (c. 641-610 BCE (or 640-610), 2 Kings 22). Most historians credit Josiah with writing or compiling these texts during the Deuteronomic reform of his reign. Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Kings are considered books from this source, with those after Deuteronomy from the (perhaps different) Deuteronomistic history source..

Priestly source

This source was likely composed c. 600-400 BC, during or shortly after the Babylonian Captivity, and is represented by about a fifth of Genesis (including 1:1-4a), much of Exodus and Numbers, and essentially all of Leviticus.

Various factors, including comparing language features to peer literature, suggests that the redaction of these sources into the texts in the form we have now was complete around 450 BC.

Genesis 14 seems to be from a completely different source. It contains alternative names for several places, suggesting perhaps that an older account was reworded and inserted here. As noted under Names of God, Melchizedek (mentioned only here) is a Jebusite name, and Zedek the name of a Jebusite god.

You can learn more about this at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis and other sources. I think we can best understand the texts of the Bible when we know something about who wrote them, when they were written, and why they were written.

Literary Genres

People write to communicate their ideas. Authors choose a literary genre as the clay with which to mold their sculpture. Each genre embodies a set of socially-agreed-upon conventions. Communication works best when writer and reader both understand the genre. Understanding an ancient text requires understanding the genre used by the author and what that genre was like at the time of writing. I'll introduce some relevant to understanding the Bible.

Narrative

This is the simplest, most mundane. Tell a story. Narrate events, factual or fictional. It's up to the reader to figure out why the author is narrating these events.

History

This modern genre is not found in the Bible, though some argue Acts is in this genre. It presents facts as derived from, and supported by, credible evidence. It can progress to interpretation of those facts to

suggest explanations. We have well-documented events leading up to the US Civil War. Interpretation offers explanations for why those events led to the outbreak of war.

Pre-historic events are those for which we have no credible direct evidence. We can make limited use of tools like archaeology and falsifiable retrodiction. If A had happened, we should see lots of examples of E and F but no examples of G and H. If B had happened, we should see lots of G and H but no E or F. We observe (with archaeology, for example) E and F but no G or H. Thus we have a strong case that A happened but B didn't happen.

Legend and Myth

In the interest of clarity and objectivity, I'll simply quote Wikipedia.

A **legend** is a genre of folklore that consists of a narrative featuring human actions, believed or perceived, both by teller and listeners, to have taken place in human history. Narratives in this genre may demonstrate human values, and possess certain qualities that give the tale verisimilitude. Legend, for its active and passive participants may include miracles. Legends may be transformed over time, in order to keep them fresh and vital.

Many legends operate within the realm of uncertainty, never being entirely believed by the participants, but also never being resolutely doubted. Legends are sometimes distinguished from **myths** in that they concern human beings as the main characters rather than gods, and sometimes in that they have some sort of historical basis whereas myths generally do not.

The Bible is religious literature, written by the priestly class, so legend and myth are blended. Their common property is that they cannot be transformed into history because of the absence of evidence. It's hard, if not impossible, to tell how much of their traditional legend/myth was believed by how many of the people. It's plausible that many people believed Israel once had a king named David but not believe all the stories told about him, and that many believed that Abraham was pure legend, representing the genetic and cultural heritage of all the people of the Levant.

Allegory

Allegory uses a character, place, or event to represent a 'hidden' meaning with moral, political, or religious significance. It's more extended than a simple analogy used to explain an idea by comparison. Prototypical examples include Plato's Allegory of the Cave and the English morality play, *Everyman*. The most obvious biblical example is Adam, whose name literally means man.

Biblical Hebrew Poetry

This style is featured prominently in the wisdom literature, but also in songs or chants elsewhere. A common notable feature is *parallelismus membrorum*, or Hebrew parallelism. The same idea is expressed in two successive units, in different words. The parallel units express a unity, not a distinction. Proverbs often uses the antithesis variant, expressing the opposite. An example is Proverbs 10:1, "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother." Finer aspects of Hebrew poetry is lost in translation to English. Modern publishers use typesetting hints. When a text like Proverbs 10 is widely recognized as written in the poetic style, they will set the text as poetry:

A wise son makes a glad father,
but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
but righteousness delivers from death.

History vs. Doctrine

True modern historians are not biased by religious doctrine, either positively or negatively. If you wish to use history in support of doctrine, you would not want them to be. No one confident in their doctrine should fear introspection by historians. With this in mind, I aim to present objectively the consensus of historians on any particular subject. Every thinking person must evaluate any perceived conflicts between religious doctrine and the consensus of historians, and honestly understand and, if necessary, explain any discrepancies.

A common and most plausible explanation for many such differences is the prevalent misunderstanding of, and neglect of, the literary genre of a piece of religious literature. Anyone with a rudimentary education in literature understands the different genres of writing across the history of human writing. They learn to distinguish among myth, legend, allegory, poetry, bios/biography, polemic, history, philosophy, prophecy, apocalypse, and many other literary genres. They craft their interpretations of any text according to the genre in which it was written.

Folklore Analysis and Type Scenes

Lecture 7 of course 653 The Old Testament from The Teaching Company covers this in detail. This excerpt is from the course outline.

- I. I. Folktale analysts, such as the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp, observe that traditional stories are composed of a number of set motifs. In tracing a few of Propp's motifs, our test case is the story of Jacob, beginning where the previous lecture ended, Gen. 27:41.
 - A. The hero's absence from home.
 - i. Jacob is sent away both to escape his brother and to find a wife (Gen. 28:2,5).
 - ii. Abraham and Moses face similar displacements, as do Ruth, Esther, Jonah, and Daniel; their stories also are profitably interpreted as folktales.
 - B. Heroes are often aided by helpers. As Jacob is helped by God, so are Abraham and Moses.
 - C. An opponent seeks to thwart the hero.
 - i. Jacob faces not only his father-in-law, Laban, and his brother Esau but also a mysterious wrestler at the Jabbok River. The number of opponents demonstrates his extreme peril, bravery, and ultimate good fortune.
 - ii. Moses confronts Pharaoh and his own people; David faces opposition from Saul and others.
 - D. The hero receives a mark or brand, usually indicating maturation or survival.
 - i. "When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and Jacob's thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him" (Gen. 32:25). Thereafter, he walks with a limp.
 - ii. Other examples include the mark of Cain (Gen. 4:15), Abraham's circumcision (Gen. 17:9–14, 23–27), and Moses's shining face (Exod. 34:29–35).
 - E. The hero is transfigured. As the frog becomes a prince, so Jacob is told (Gen. 32:28): "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with

people, and have prevailed.”

- II. Type scenes: Recognizing the formulaic, audiences delight in the manipulation of details (hence, the popularity of situation comedies, game shows, teen slasher films). Although the Bible likely contains singular examples of what its original audiences would have recognized to be conventions, some cases remain evident, including birth annunciations, the “ancestress in danger,” infertile women becoming pregnant, and perhaps the entire Book of Judges. Our test case, the meeting of a woman at a well, begins with a comparison of Gen. 29 (Jacob meets Rachel) and Gen. 24 (Abraham’s servant meets Rebecca) and includes Moses (Exod. 2) and Saul (1 Sam. 9).

Names of God

Jebus (Ex 3:17 Judges 1:21) was the name of Jerusalem before its conquest by King David around 869 BCE (1003 BCE by some popular Bible chronologies). The Canaanite tribe inhabiting it were called Jebusites. Some modern scholars think they were an Amorite tribe. They worshiped Zedek (Sydyk, Sydek, Sedek). People of the **ANE (Ancient Near East)** often incorporated the name of their god into their own names. The Bible is full of examples of this. The most notable is Israel (literally, the people of El). The most familiar Biblical Jebusite names are **Melchizedek** and **Adonizedek**. I have a note suggesting that both David and Solomon had sons named after Jebusite gods, but I need to confirm this.

The first king of the united kingdom of Israel was Saul, a Gibeonite, a tribe with roots in Edom. A conqueror, or a builder of empire, often imposes his own gods upon the conquered peoples. Edom seems to be the home of **Yahweh**. We can only try to piece together how the ideas of gods developed in the ANE. No clear records survive. The area of scholarship around the earliest worship of Yahweh in southern Canaan is summarized by the Kenite Hypothesis, and is currently the standard view among modern scholars. Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, was a shepherd and a priest in the land of Midian. In Judges 1:16 says Moses had a father-in-law who was a Kenite. The hypothesis suggests that Yahweh was Jethro's name for their tribal god. Moses may have been the unifier. The author of the Exodus account may be citing this unification in 6:3.

The northern tribes were nomadic herdsman from the regions north of Judah. Typical of this region was worship of **El**, a god of the mountains, head of the Canaanite pantheon. The word el was also sometimes used as a generic name for gods. Both usages were common in the ANE. Confirmation of a reason Israel used the plural form **Elohim** to refer to the God of Israel is lost to antiquity. I have seen a suggestion that Elohim was the name for that entire pantheon of which El was head. I think Israel chose to retain the plural form after they transitioned from considering a pantheon to considering a single god. Perhaps this was similar to how several Egyptian gods were merged into **Ra**. Nomadic tribes seldom had a reason to develop writing. Perhaps this is why we don't seem to have any wisdom literature from the E-tradition.

As builders of empire, Saul and David had reason to unify the people by unifying their religions. The view that seems best represented in Biblical text is the view expressed as a major theme in Deuteronomy. The term most prominent there (appearing 240 times) is Yahweh our Elohim, the LORD our God. It could be viewed as saying that Yahweh has conquered and become our god. I could also be saying that Yahweh, the god of the south, the god of Edom, the god of Saul, is actually the same as El

(pluralized to Elohim), the God of Israel, the mountain god of the northern nomadic tribes. There is no definitive explanation for the use of the **plural Elohim**. To me, the most plausible origin of the use of the plural is shown in the earliest uses of the term in Torah. It seems to describe the actions of the entire pantheon of El. I am told the word is grammatically singular or plural in both ancient and modern Hebrew. Any suggestion that Jewish usage of it refers to more than one god flies in the face of the most fundamental, protected, and cherished tenet of Judaism: Yahweh our Elohim is one. I think that tenet gradually developed during their history. Early Torah seems to show that dichotomy, as parts seem to describe deity as a group rather than an individual. See also Psalm 82, referring to the divine council, and Ugaritic texts using the same phrase. Similarly, texts probably earlier than the Masoretic have sons of El in place of children of Israel.

Several ancient writings show varying accounts of varying views of the Yahweh of a particular locality, from around the 14th century BC. It has been suggested that J was the primary driver of unifying these various views into a single, unified view of a single, unified Yahweh. Control of the worship of Yahweh was thus centralized to Jerusalem. The very name of Elijah means “my god is Yahu” (El i jah). We have the name directly from Jewish writings as the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), with perhaps vowels from Adonai (my lord) to make it again pronouncable. A Jewish author (Emanuel Derman) suggests the Tetragrammaton is not the name of God, but the name of the name of God.

Check the notes in your Bible describing your translation. Most use LORD for Yahweh, and God/god/gods for El/Elohim in the OT. See for example <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahweh#Protestantism>. This practice began with the Septuagint. My notes will generally use the names Yahweh and Elohim. I intend no offense to Jews, but it's the best way I can communicate what we believe the names to be. Otherwise, Christians tend to ignore any distinction between the two names. It seems unlikely that biblical authors, or even the people of Israel, were careless with their usage of names for their god. All textual indicators suggest extreme reverence for the names of God. Common in ANE religions was an unwillingness to vocalize the names of their gods for fear of offending them. Later Jewish traditions are even more extreme, including unwillingness to pronounce or write even an approximation of the name. What began with removal of vowels to form the Tetragrammaton continues with modern usage of g-d as a substitute. Earliest Hebrew writing had no vowels or vowel marking suggestions. Most likely, when those were added to the writing, they were not added for Tetragrammaton.

Though it may seem out of place, mention of **Baal** here is appropriate. With the discovery in 1928 of Ugaritic libraries and temples, including temples for **Dagon** and for **Baal Hadad**, we learned and confirmed much about ancient Canaanite religion. The Ugaritic texts removed any doubt that El was the head of the Canaanite pantheon. This excerpt from (Kugel, p. 423) provides a taste of the kinds of things we learned:

At the head of the Ugaritic pantheon stood El. El was his actual name, even though the same word also means “a deity” in Hebrew and other Semitic languages. El was the supreme Canaanite deity and the father of other gods, sometimes referred to collectively as the “sons of El.” He is generally depicted as an old, wise, kindly, paternal figure; he created the earth and humanity itself. El had a lady friend named Athirat, mother of the gods. Although El must at one time have been the most active of the gods, at Ugarit he had begun to be supplanted by a more youthful and vigorous figure, Baal. Baal (*ba'al* means “master” and was apparently at first

only an epithet for the god Hadad) controlled the storm clouds and the life-giving rain; he was the “cloud rider” whose arrival was heralded by peals of thunder and flashes of lightning. He dwelt on Mount Sapan (in today's Arabic, *jabl al-Aqra'*, the highest mountain in Syria) with his consort, the bloodthirsty 'Anat – although other Ugaritic texts identify Baal's consort with another goddess, 'Ashtarte/Astarte.

Linguistic parallels are very strong, associating the “rider of the clouds” of Ugaritic mythology with “him that rideth upon the heavens” (Psalm 68:4, KJV, and elsewhere, such as Isa 19:1, Deut 33:26, Psalm 68:33, and Psalm 104:3). We have a more familiar example of the use of a term like master to refer to a god. Israel used (and still uses) *adonai* (lord, master) to refer to their god. It's why English translations, as noted above, use LORD in small capital letters for the Jewish use of *adonai* as a replacement for the Tetragrammaton.

Greek Mythology

I briefly discuss Greek mythology here for several reasons. It's a clear view into religious thought of the Ancient Near East (ANE). Homer and his writings of Greek mythology have been dated as early as 850 BCE to as late as 650 BCE, with some believing the texts were updated until they were finally fixed some time in the 6th century BCE. Roughly speaking, they were peer writings. I found a fascinating documentary on Greek mythology at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd3vClVdnRE>.

I haven't looked at Greek or Roman mythology for decades. What I did learn was mainly for the purpose of recognizing literary allusions to ideas. My idea from this documentary is thus pure speculation. Homer was the intellectual / literary giant of his day. He made perhaps the first effort to unify all the religious ideas he could find. Reading Homer shows this was a difficult task, perhaps impossible. I compare his task to that of a modern Christian theologian, trying to coerce all ideas in the Bible into a single systematic theology. I suspect Homer was influenced by (and incorporated) some ideas from Judaism, but not the other way around. Christianity began in a world saturated in Greek mythological thought. In that world, Judaism was a tiny, bizarre cult. They were isolationists, and refused to worship any of the traditional gods. Thus they were considered atheists. In a few places, the documentary mentions ideas and personalities in Greek mythology similar to ideas of Christianity. Anyone familiar with Greek mythology would have recognized these ideas, and not considered them as strange or as novel as we presume. If you want to have any meaningful dialog with those who consider Christianity myth, it would be helpful to have at least some understanding of myth.

Estimated Timeline

These estimates are taken from page 32 of the ESV Study Bible, using the later date for Exodus.

2000-1825	Abraham (Bronze Age)
1900-1720	Isaac
1840-1693	Jacob
1749-1639	Joseph
1340-1220	Moses
1260-1220	Exodus

1210 to 1050-1030	Judges (Iron Age)
1050-1030 to 1010	Saul's reign
1010-971	David's reign
971-931	Solomon's reign
740	King Uzziah died (scene of Isaiah 6)
722	Fall of Israel (north) to Assyria
628	Josiah's reforms
586	Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon (Neo-Babylonian Period trough 539)
538	Return to Jerusalem begins (Persian Period)
516	Second temple completed
458	Second return under Ezra
445	Third return under Nehemiah
333	Conquest by Alexander the Great (Hellenistic Period)

The Books of Tanakh

Genesis

Note the covenants with Noah in chapter 9, Abraham in chapters 12, 15, and 17, with Isaac in 26, and with Jacob (Israel) in 35.

The name Israel: Ish (man) – ra – el (the people of El)

Gen 1 name of God: God (El). Who is telling this story? El was the head of Canaanite pantheon. It's the north speaking. 1:1 **Spirit of God** – If you're thinking the Holy Spirit, you have the wrong idea. This is simply the action or activity of God.

The Genesis creation narrative is a response to, and competition for, **Enûma Eliš**, the Babylonian creation myth. That work proclaims **Marduk** as supreme. It names **Apsû** (a god representing fresh waters) and **Tiamat** (representing ocean waters). The chaos and the deep of Genesis 1:2 is also a reference to Tiamat. While not named, Lilith of Mesopotamian and Jewish mythology



makes several appearances in the narratives, as the serpent, and (in contrast to Eve) Adam's first wife (Alphabet of Sirach). In Genesis 1-3, we saw two different creation narratives. The authors / editors respected the ideas, emphasis, and style of each contributor and each source. What is the author saying by juxtaposing these two accounts? Gen 1 speaks of Elohim Gen 2:4+ speaks of Yahweh Adonai (represented LORD God in the ESV), as it transitions from the Priestly to the Yahwist source. Thus, Gen 1 conveys the Priestly or Elohist creation tradition, whereas 2+ conveys the Yahwist creation tradition.

Understanding peer philosophy of the broader ANE helps you recognize and understand where Israel is saying its ideas are better than those of its neighbors. Like Isaiah and the prophets of Baal. It's often impossible to date the ideas, so it's hard to say who incorporated whose ideas.

The Divine Council

The first sentence of Genesis 1:26 drops into our laps two major controversies! The first is the **Divine Council**. People have offered various explanations for Elohim in the plural form. As I discuss in the syllabus, I think this refers to the entire Caananite pantheon of El. This passage would naturally be understood as El directing his pantheon to implement this part of creation. El would be acting in the role of a chief executive officer (CEO). This paradigm is also a natural fit with the expressions of "Elohim said let there be X and there was X." It is an expression of executive authority. A modern expression, used by a captain of the Starship Enterprise, is "Make it so."

An excellent article (https://books.google.com/books?id=3TdrDQAAQBAJ&pg=PA86&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false) in the Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings, provides background. It explains (with references) that the Ugaritic council was led by El. The same expression is used in Psalm 82. Psalm 29:1 commands them to praise Yahweh. That author without doubt though Yahweh was in charge, even of the pantheon of El. That article shows many other parallels within the Hebrew and Ugaritic texts.

While Israel was **monolatrous** by the time these texts were edited, many texts within Torah and the rest of Tanakh show clearly that the people of Israel believed that there were other gods (**henotheism**). The histories also show that the people of Israel sometimes worshiped and served these other gods. The priests of Yahweh / Elohim (who wrote these texts) obviously wanted a monolatrous Israel, preserving their monopoly power.

In Our Image

Gen 1:26 man is the generic term for mankind. The name likely arrived from the **Adammu** of Ugaritic myth, an androgynous deity, the divine prototype of humanity [Korpel]. Eve was the 'helper' to do what Adam could not do alone: make babies. In 2:7, man is formed from the dust of the ground. The name we translate Adam is so close to the word for the ground that there may actually be no difference. The connection between mankind and the ground is strong. "Let us make man **in our image**, after our likeness." The word translated image is translated elsewhere as idol. It is a physical representation of a god. Most gods of the ANE were

anthropomorphic in form as well as personality. A modern expression of this idea is “Man created gods in his own image.” Genesis turns this upside-down and explains it by saying that Elohim created man in the image of Elohim. The idea of God as non-corporeal spirit came later. This was their explanation for why so many of the gods look like humans. God made man to (physically) resemble God. It could also explain why God did not permit man to make images of other gods, of Yahweh, or (an early application of the principle of the **Hedge of Hillel** (khumra or chumra)) of anything. An explanation later in Torah is that you can't make an image of Yahweh because you don't know what he looks like. Earth was already full of images (idols) of Yahweh: every human. Humans (at least Jews) were prohibited from making images, but God could. We are the idols!

I think the phrase also means that the pantheon created humans as fellow immortals. Only later, when humans disobeyed, was that immortality removed from them. That idea appears in Psalm 89:5-7.

Gen 1:22 and 28 tell the animals and the humans to multiply (reproduce).

Environmental Stewardship

Read Genesis 1:26-28 in a good, accurate translation. Humans are given dominion over all animal life on earth. Some say this is an assignment of responsibility for environmental stewardship. The word translated dominion is used for the power of a captor over his captives, their land, and their property. The captor can do anything they want with them. Typical dispositions ranged from ethnic cleansing by slaughtering all the humans and animals and burning all their property, to just killing all the males, to just killing the leaders and making everyone slaves, to imposing a vassal suzerainty treaty, where the captives agree to submit to rule of the captors and pay ransom. Examples are Genesis 37:8 (Joseph ruling his brothers); Numbers 24:19, “And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!”; Judges 5 (the song of Deborah and Barak for their triumph over the Canaanites); Judges 14:4, “At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.”

Nothing in Torah indicates Israel felt any responsibility toward the animals or to the planet. If you want to build a doctrine of stewardship, you need more than a weak interpretation of these two verses. Torah shows Israel using animals as they saw fit. They had to offer sacrifices from them. Eventually they and the polytheists reduced the waste by offering only the parts they didn't use (the fat and some organs). They were forbidden to use some animals like pigs, scavengers, and shellfish. That was environmental progress, but they had to modify their doctrines to accommodate it.


In the civilized world of today, we realize that we share the only planet we have. We are working toward a wise balance between preservation of the earth and its ecosystems, and use of those. Religion gets no credit for that. The religious right is infamous for its consistent opposition to anything environmental.

Gen 2:1-2 say creation was finished because the ancients never observed spontaneous creation. These accounts were an explanation for what is here now. Calling it finished is how they justify not looking

for evidence of creation.

Food for Thought: *Why* did God create man? This question is not about what you think, what you have been taught, or your doctrine or catechism. Does the text of the Bible itself anywhere address this question? Does it contain any clues? Make and defend your case from the Bible itself, not from your philosophy or doctrine.

The creation narrative of Genesis 2:4+ does not attempt a comprehensive explanation and does not mention any timespan (such as a week). With Gen 2-3, Judah has specific stories about the first female human. Israel doesn't. 1:27, "male and female he created them"; 5:2, "Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created." From the Yahwist source, this narrative may echo ideas from Egypt or Babylon, where male and female do not have a separate creation event.

The Hebrew word  translated rib in 2:21-22 means on the side of, and usually referred to a lateral limb, perpendicular to the spine. [An article by the Biblical Archaeology Society](#) suggests that this narrative is an explanation for why the human penis (unlike that of many other mammals) does not contain a bone.

Genesis 3 continues the Yahwist tradition. Perhaps the Priestly and Elohist traditions had no comparable tradition. Nothing in this text suggests that the serpent was anything but a snake. To call the serpent Satan requires peshar. Covered more in my notes on the gospels, peshar or presentism is the interpretive practice by Jews from the time of the Babylonian captivity of claiming that an ancient text has a modern meaning. Also, no one would be surprised to read about a talking snake in an allegory. An allegory is written to make a point, not to explain details.

I have always been uncomfortable with the idea that "knowing good and evil" was a bad thing. I think I figured out why. Since the very next chapter begins with, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain," and the entirety of Torah is to show Israel how to distinguish good and evil, I think 3:5 is about personally and intimately experiencing good and evil. I think the verse uses 'know' in the same sense as Genesis 4. By implication, all they have had so far was good. Gen 3:13 (and much later, 1 Timothy 2:14) says that Eve was deceived. Perhaps she had never before experienced a lie. This is the first time a human knew evil by actually doing it, experiencing it.

The text never says that Eve was the first woman, only that no suitable mate for Adam was found. Other Jewish folklore shows **Lileth** as Adam's first wife, created at the same time, and from the same dirt, as Adam.

Gen 3:16-19 What is this explaining? Don't try to read your favorite doctrines into it. Instead, just read it, and see what it is explaining. The motive behind the earliest religions was to explain what they didn't understand, to answer the big mysteries of life. Which was this? Read the specific consequences of this violation to find out. For those so thoroughly indoctrinated they are incapable of reading the consequences, plainly described, as written, here they are:

1. Snakes crawl.

2. Snakes and humans don't like each other. Snakes will hurt people. People will kill snakes. Lilith was a bad influence.
3. Childbirth is painful.
4. Husbands will dominate their wives. More generally, males dominate females.
5. Life is tough.
6. You will die because you will not be allowed to continue eating of the tree of life. Gen 3:22, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.", is saying that Adam had joined the pantheon. So that humans would not live forever (as gods in the pantheon), they had to stop eating of the tree of life. Humans were banished from the company of the immortals. They were expelled from the garden of Eden, the garden of the gods, from Babylonian and perhaps even earlier Sumerian mythology.

It continues to amaze me how such a simple piece of ancient literature can be so consistently and intentionally misunderstood. Genesis 3 is a simple allegory rooted in the central idea of Jewish philosophy: the Mosaic Covenant. For Israel, to obey Yahweh / Elohim brings good things; to disobey brings bad things. In this case, it's their explanation for why life is tough, women don't like snakes, and why humans die. It also establishes an excuse for misogyny. If Israel had never disobeyed Torah, we wouldn't have these bad things. A hearer of these texts would find his head swimming as he recognized all the references to peer (especially Babylonian) mythology.

I found another serpent idea, which I have begun to confirm, via Bryson Hughes:

The serpent of Eden was not a snake. In Enoch the serpents were a band of 18 watchers / angels who made a pact to mutually defend one another for the crime of marrying human women. Enoch names all 18 of them and specifically notes the one which deceived Eve. "Satan" is not the devil, or a proper name. It is simply an untranslated Hebrew word which means enemy /adversary / prosecutor. Why translators choose not to translate "satan" properly can be attributed to conformity to Christian cultural mythology in which "satan" is popularly conceived of as the proper name of the devil, which is incorrect. There are Hebrew proper names for the devil such as Beelzebub, which Translates as Lord of Flies. It is an implied reference to the foulness of that evil Spirit entity in suggesting flies are upon it as upon excrement. Another name is from the Babylonian creation myths adopted by some Hebrews, in which God subdues the dragon of chaos holding creation together by His might. This is referenced in the Psalms, the Epistles and Revelations. That dragon's name is Rahab, which is also the name of the woman of Jericho who assisted the Hebrew spies.

The book of 1 Enoch, of interest to many but canonical only to two Orthodox Tewahedo churches, the Ethiopian and the Eritrean, does have content like this. The first part, the Book of the Watchers, is generally dated to around 300 BCE. The Watchers were the angels who fathered the Nephilim in Genesis 6. The names of the holy angels are enumerated in 1 Enoch 20, and each name ends with 'el', including Michael and Gabriel.

Gen 4 Cain may be their reference to the Kenites. This is the first of many prominent exceptions to primogeniture, the inheritance right of the firstborn. Gen 5 is likely from the Priestly source. In 5:24, Enoch was taken to serve the gods. 5:32, "After **Noah** was 500 years old, Noah fathered **Shem, Ham, and Japheth.**" See Gen 10.

Gen 6:1-2, “When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.”

Ancient mythology is rife with accounts of gods having sexual relations among each other, and with humans. In this passage, el / elohim might be used in the generic sense. Most likely that's what this is talking about. These ideas were all around them. This Jewish account of Noah from the Yahwist source seems to be saying, among other things, that the God of Israel didn't like this kind of activity, and used the flood to eliminate it from earth. We never again encounter this idea in Tanakh. [See Numbers 13:33 for a possible exception.] That's my thought. See also the notes above under Genesis 3.

The first action taken by Yahweh is in verse 3. This (not Genesis 3) would be the explanation from the southern tribes for why there is death. At the very least, the reader would automatically compare these writings with peer mythology, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh. As Diaspora living in Babylon, they would have been thoroughly familiar with this literature, whether they wanted to be or not. The most dramatic difference is in what motivated the flood. It focuses on Enkidu's death, and Gilgamesh's subsequent quest for immortality. The Genesis flood story gives a different account for why we don't have immortality, and how it came about. The simple explanation for verse 3, “his days shall be 120 years.”, is that in 120 years the flood would come.

A natural phenomenon has been offered as an explanation for the inspiration for the various flood legends of the region. It's the Black Sea deluge hypothesis. It suggests that around 5600 BCE, rising sea levels after the last ice age, during meltwater pulse 1C, breached a shrinking sill between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea at the Bosphorus.

Gen 6:9, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.” This is not consistent with most doctrines of universal depravity of man. I discussed what the Jews meant by righteousness. I invite all students to keep this in mind as they read the OT, and see if what I said is true.

Gen 7:2 Seven pair of clean animals. Why? (to sacrifice in 8:20). How did they know what was clean? Was this an anachronism? At the time of Noah, there's no hint that laws of clean/unclean animals had yet been given. However, they had been given by the time these texts were written. Even in 9:2-4, man became a universal omnivore. There was no clean/unclean, just don't eat the blood.

Gen 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” – capital punishment for murder. If this were the penalty simply for killing a human, and if it were enforced, the first murder would have ended the human race. Another indication it meant murder, not just any killing of a human.

The **Noahic Covenant** is declared in verse 8. The literary form is the royal grant treaty, familiar to everyone in the ANE. They were typically unilateral and unconditional, but the beginning of the chapter is an indication that it included behavioral obligations by the inferior party. When the people are assigned enforcement duties, the philosophy transitions from covenant to **law**.

Gen 9:25-27, “**Cursed be Canaan** [a son of Ham]; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers. ... Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.” – This pronouncement encompassed all the ethnicities known by Israel/Judah. It provides justification for the later ethnic cleansing of Canaanites. It's also explanation or justification for the practice of slavery in the region, including slavery of Africans (presumably descended from Ham). These were an application of the “God said it; I believe it; that settles it.” mentality. Even today, to insult someone, you often say something negative about their parentage, that it was less than honorable. See Genesis 19 about xenophobia. See Deut 22:30 to see what is meant by uncovering your father's nakedness.

To help you recognize these names and understand their context, I offer a sneak preview of Exodus with these excerpts: “I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (3:17), “When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, ...” (23:23), and “And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you.” (23:28).



(map image from WikiMedia)

Genesis 10 is the Table of Nations from the Priestly source. It claims to define the genetic origin of each ethnicity of the region. It defines “peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.”

1. **Japheth**: the coastal peoples (of the eastern Mediterranean). Not much more is said specifically about this line.
2. **Shem**: The texts we have about Eber are somewhat ambiguous about how he fit in, but the name is considered the origin of **Semitic** as it applies to ethnicities and languages. There's quite a bit of variation in how the term Semitic is used. The most important descendant, Abram, appears in the next chapter.
3. **Ham**: Considering the curse in the previous chapter, it's no surprise that the claimed descendants of Ham include traditional enemies of Israel: **Egyptians, Babylonians, Philistines,**

and **various Canaanite groups**. See also the footnote in the ESV Bible. Cush fathered **Nimrod**, a mighty hunter. Though this sounds complimentary, it is likely derogatory, meaning old-fashioned. The ESV notes support this idea. Cush is identified with both Assyria and Babylon. Both will later conquer Israel. The most notable descendants are Canaan, and from him, the **Jebusites** and various other tribes we'll encounter. Gen 10:11 explains how these people got to Assyria and Babylon.

Gen 11 (Judah speaking, the Yahwist source) gives a different explanation for the origin of language diversity. Both accounts acknowledge the existence of tribes who don't understand each other's languages. They can also be considered part of an explanation for how the north and the south could have different names for what they came to consider the same god. The tower they have in mind was probably a Mesopotamian ziggurat. The name Babel (בְּבֶלֶט) means literally the gates of El. That is, the gateway to the realm of the gods. The Hebrew word balal means to confuse, to mix, to mingle. I suspect they derived this verb from this story. The Hebrew name translated here as Babel is translated elsewhere in Tanakh as Babylon.

Gen 11:10-26 Why this genealogy? To show **Abram** as descended from Shem. It seems to contradict the (perhaps different) tradition that the Babylonians descended from Ham. Note the introduction of the players in 11:27-32.

Gen 12:3 is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. Tribes which cursed Abram's line were often cursed by being annihilated. All the families left on earth (not annihilated) will be blessed because they blessed Judah. One example was Joseph blessing Egypt in the famine years. Part of the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 12 is God's promise to be the “big brother”, or the bully protector, of Abram and his descendants. Bless and curse are not wimpy feel-good words. Curse usually implies violence. The various later expressions or reiterations or confirmations of this covenant may be the descriptions of a single covenant as they appear in the various sources (JEDP) of the Documentary Hypothesis. Immediately following the pinnacle of the Abrahamic Covenant, we have the first sister act (or its first telling).

Gen 12-13 Abram in Egypt. How could Abram understand the Egyptian language? Abram then settled into the Negeb (literally south, southern Caanan). Abram and Lot were rich. Another mention of the tent, plus noticing that all the wealth described was portable, indicate this tribe was still nomadic. Lot settled generally east of the Jordan River; Abram generally west.

Gen 13:13 Sodom (see 10:19 for who was there). We don't know for sure what kinds of “wicked, great sinners against Yahweh” they were. Perhaps Ezekiel 16 answers this. 13:14-17 a promise of land, this one (cf. 12:7) with a timescale: “forever”. They did not have our modern mathematical concept of infinity. To them, this meant indefinitely, with no predetermined endpoint.

Gen 14 describes some simple warfare, and seems to come from a different source. It seems incongruous, here only to explain how **Lot** was caught in a conflict between four kings and five kings, and was then rescued. Recall from Gen 11:27, Lot is part of Abram's larger family unit (son of Abram's brother Haran). Lot is not a descendant of Abram, so none of the covenants apply to him or to his line. “Alternative names are given in this passage for a number of locations. This suggests that an older

account has been reworded for inclusion here in Genesis.” (ESV notes)

Melchizedek

In Genesis 14 (and only here) we meet **Melchizedek**, a very interesting character, another king who, as many kings did, also served a limited priestly role. He’s also mentioned in Psalm 110, which adds no information about him. Salem is known today as Jerusalem. God Most High (El Elyon) is a name that would be applied to El as head of the Canaanite pantheon. It can also mean god of the mountains. What we find in Tanakh is too little to form a coherent view what the Jews thought of Melchizedek. It’s a Jebusite name, and Zedek is the name of a Jebusite god. Writings of the Ancient Near East (ANE) show a very wide variety of ideas about Melchizedek. So far, I haven’t found a credible set of ideas on which the strong emphasis in Hebrews is based. Chazalic literature and the Babylonian Talmud identify him as Shem. Midrash says priesthood was given to Shem in Gen 9:27. In the Zohar’s commentary on Gen 14, it was God who gave the tithe to Abram in the form of removing the Hebrew letter ‘he’ from the throne of glory and presenting it to the soul of Abram (to change his name to Abra-ha-m. (Wikipedia) 11Q13 (from the Dead Sea Scrolls) shows him as a divine being and applies such Hebrew titles as Elohim to him. Philo identifies him with the Logos as priest of God. Josephus refers to him both as a Canaanite chief and as a priest. 2 Enoch says he was born of a virgin and was taken by Gabriel (or Michael in some ms.) to the Garden of Eden to preserve him from the flood (without the need for Noah’s Ark). An early Gnostic script found in the Nag Hammadi Library says he is Jesus Christ. Islam and the Mormons have their own stories. Joshua 10 mentions a military alliance led by Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem. It’s another Jebusite name, with Zedek (Šaduq, Tzedek) being the name of a Jebusite god. Variants of this name appear in many references to a god of the region in western Semitic languages. The name Adoni-zedek was likely taken to mean master of Zedek. Kings often also served priestly roles, so the name could mean both master of the religion of Zedek or master (ruler) of Jerusalem. Judges 1 describes in a casual, matter-of-fact way the conquest of an empire. Adoni-bezek was an emperor, or a king of kings. Yet the tribes of Judah and Simeon dispatched this empire with a single sentence. Adoni-bezek wasn’t a proper name, but a title. He was the lord of Bezek. While that was the name of a city, I suspect the name also was used to refer to the entire empire in the same way that Rome refers to both the city and the empire ruled from it. Some say this is the same person as the Adoni-zedek of Joshua 10, or that this is a variant of that story. They might be successors to Melchi-zedek.

Gen 14:22 Abram equates the El Elyon of Melchizedek with Yahweh. By so doing, Abram declares they are the same god. Having this Jebusite priest of El Elyon use Israel’s name for God emphasizes this. As usual, we read only Israel’s side of the story.

Gen 15 In a dream, Abram challenges Yahweh’s promise of offspring with the fact that he (Abram) is childless. The answer was that his heir wouldn’t be just someone from his entourage. It would be his biological descendant(s). ANE tradition always has the eldest son as the heir. The dream continues with a vision of a solemn covenant-ratification ceremony. Both parties pass between the halves of sacrificial animals. The implication is likely that, if I fail to keep the covenant, may this happen to me. Note carefully who passes between the halves. Both are almost certainly symbolic of God, such as in Exodus 13:21-22. Neither is Abram! That’s why this is generally viewed as an unconditional covenant. (See also Jeremiah 34:16-17)

The meaning of verse 6, “And he believed the LORD and he counted it to him as righteousness” is clarified in 22:18, “because you have obeyed my voice”, and again in 26:5, “because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” That says the human requirements of this covenant had been satisfied.

Astronomical Measurement – The best current estimate is that the universe contains about 3×10^{23} stars. Allowing each person a square yard to stand would require a square about 310 million miles on a side, almost the distance from the sun to Jupiter. Surely an omniscient god who created the universe knew how many stars it contained. Do you really think this number was intended to be taken literally? By comparison, the current population of earth (about 7.132 billion) could stand within a radius of 27 miles.

Gen 16 the **Hagar** incident. There is no suggestion that Sarai or Abram or Hagar did anything wrong. This was the norm. Any children would still be descendants of Abram, thus entitled to covenant benefits. Yahweh even comes to Hagar's defense. Nonetheless, you begin to see Ishmael portrayed as a second-class citizen. As noted below, this is Isaac's side of the story. 16:12 is generally considered to be describing the permanent Israeli-Arab conflicts.

Gen 17 Yahweh says to Abram, “I am El Shaddai.” Again we see the names connected. We also see Abram's name changed to **Abraham** (Sarai to **Sarah**). This covenant, or this retelling, or this confirmation, or this different version, is now conditional. Now you must “walk before me, and be blameless”. It's also described as an everlasting covenant. Here it's first described as a henotheistic or monolatristic covenant. “I will be God to you” and “I will be their God.” We have another new requirement, circumcision. “Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring,” Marvin R. Wilson (in *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*) says that Egyptians practiced circumcision before the Hebrews. Another source (not yet confirmed) says that these Egyptians did this to captured Phoenecians and Hebrews, to mark them as slaves by a means less extreme (and less likely to be fatal) than castration. The Hebrews may have instituted it to disguise their immediate history as slaves. Again, note that slavery is accepted as a matter of course, even recognized here by Yahweh. Slavery was a normal and accepted part of life in that era. The texts provide indisputable evidence, not that Yahweh approved of it, but that the people believed that Yahweh approved of it. 17:20-21 again notes the great divide between Isaac and Ishmael. The rest of the chapter clearly shows Abraham following his instructions. This is Isaac's side of the story. All the rest of the book is about the descendants of Isaac. Islam has a different version for Ishmael's side of the story.

Gen 18 reiterates Gen 13:13, but still doesn't say what their sin was. It poses an important question in several ways. “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” “Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?” Will God behave in a way that they considered just? The answer was yes. The Psalms are full of demands that God act justly, and rectify any situation where the wicked prosper or the good suffer. This is how their god must behave. After all, that's what the covenants promised.

Gen 19 Lot offers typical Eastern hospitality to these men. Sitting at the gate typically represents a position of leadership and respect in the community. As patriarch of his clan, he was well within his rights to offer his daughters. It may seem repulsive to us, but it's their culture, not ours.

Gen 19:30-38 The scandal of Lot and his daughters, reminiscent of Genesis 9. The legend of the origin of the **Moabites** and the **Ammonites**. Make these tribes look bad before you slaughter them (Judges 3, 2 Samuel 8, 2 Kings 3, 1 Chronicles 18, 2 Chronicles 20 etc.) To attribute less-than-honorable parentage to ethnicities you hate is common practice in **xenophobia**.

Gen 20 another sister act. The text clearly asserts that no child of Sarah is a descendant of Abimelech. In v. 11, Abraham says, "There is no fear of El in this place." That place is in the negeb, the south. Verses 17-18 seem to be describing actions of El and Yahweh as different players. Yahweh closed the wombs, and El opened them again. Fascinating. But beware of the 'trap' that caught me in class in verse 4. In his dream, Abimelech addresses El as Lord (not LORD). Abimelech is using a term of respect, especially a respect for authority. In the dream, El threatens Abimelech, while affirming his innocence. Abimelech is interacting with the god of the visitor to his land. Perhaps there wasn't fear of El in this place before, but there is now!

Based on how Abimelech treats Abraham, and what we have read so far, what should we expect for Abimelech's future? Good or bad? Why? Does this explain why Abimelech should be afraid of El? Keep this in mind as we see what happens next. Note especially where Abimelech goes later.

Gen 21 **Isaac** is born, reiterating the special baby theme. Isaac is circumcised, as instructed. The great divide, redux. Hagar and Ishmael head to Egypt, to found the Arabs. Is that "great nation" descended from this Egyptian "slave woman" the same nation (Egypt) which will later enslave Israel? Ishmael takes an Egyptian wife. Or is it the descendants of Ham from Gen 10? Or both?

21:22 A non-aggression treaty with Abimelech. "Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the **Philistines**." From all we can tell, this was a time of peace. We haven't seen the last of the Philistines. Abraham called there on the name of Yahweh, the El 'Olam (of everlastingness). The name comes from the same root as Palestine.

The Sacrifice of Isaac

Gen 22 In these societies, a patriarch was well within his rights to kill his children, see my notes on Gen 19 and 49. Sacrifice of the first-born son was somewhat common in early ANE. This was not a sacrifice for sin. In many of the ancient cultures practicing **human sacrifice** (even down to the Mayans), it was considered an honor to be the sacrifice, giving yourself to provide benefit for your entire tribe. Abraham was not unwilling to challenge Yahweh (see Gen 15). Abraham does not suggest in any way that he is being asked to do something he shouldn't do. Not until later (perhaps the Deuteronomistic reforms of Josiah) did Israel stop child sacrifice. Exodus 13 requires a substitute sacrifice for a firstborn human or donkey. This Genesis 22 account might be their explanation for why they stopped the practice of human sacrifice, requiring the substitution specified in Exodus 13.

Attention to the names of God in this account shows Elohim requesting the sacrifice, but

Yahweh stopped it. In verse 19, “Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba.” This gives some support to the suggestion that we are reading an account blended from a tradition (Elohists) in which Isaac is actually sacrificed, and another tradition (Yahwists) in which he is not. Views of the meaning of this text vary widely. This may also be why Gen 22:2 (from the Elohist source) says, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love,” This text portion might be from a tradition in which Isaac had no brother. The justification for abandoning infant sacrifice is given in Exodus 13, namely the example of Egypt. These transitions demonstrate how a society can improve its moral standard, while justifying (rationalizing) it with earlier religious tradition. A written canon makes this improvement more difficult. Lecture 5 of the Old Testament Teaching Company course covers the subject in more detail.

I suspect that the descendants of Nahor (Abraham's brother) are listed here to show they are not descendants of Abraham, and perhaps also to show the genealogy of Rebecca and Laban.

Gen 22:15 An angel of Yahweh conveys another unilateral covenant with Abraham and his descendants. The reason: “because you have done this” [willingness to sacrifice Isaac].

Gen 23 Sarah dies at age 127. It's noteworthy because Sarah is an important figure in the line of Israel. 23:20 Abraham buys a field and cave from the **Hittites** in perpetuity to bury Sarah. Many other family members will be buried here.

Gen 24 begins with an affirmation that Yahweh is keeping his end of the covenant. The Canaanites (here meaning the inhabitants of the land of Canaan other than Abraham and his tribe) are already being portrayed as undesirable. They are considered descendants of Ham through his son Canaan.. Next is a rare case of a specific mate selection. Divination. He stacked the deck with Oriental hospitality customs. In standard folk tale style, heroes meet their wives at wells. Here we meet **Rebekah**, to become wife to Isaac. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. She would thus be Isaac's father's brother's son's daughter. I'm sure there's a name for that relationship. In the ANE, most marriages tended to be within tribes. The costly jewelry was probably the bride price. I think the bowing in verse 48 was part of this bride selection ritual rather than part of worship of Yahweh. Note that the woman has no choice in this.

Gen 25 a new wife, **Keturah**, and more descendants. Is their legal status specified? Abraham might have married her after the death of Sarah, though second wives were common, especially among the more wealthy. 25:6 Concubines were acceptable. The sons of the concubines were sent away and moved to the east. The sons of Midian may have become the Midianites we see in Judges 6:3. It's not clear whether Keturah was considered one of the concubines. Legal status of these descendants? 25:21 more “special baby”. Gen 25-26 tell Israel's side of the story. **Esau** and **Jacob** are born. Sibling rivalry began even before their birth. They are immediately contrasted. The name Esau means hairy, brutish, not quite civilized. Gen 25:29-34 begins to explain how treatment generally given to the eldest son are here conferred to the younger. Gen 25:23 is giving Rebekah the excuse to favor the younger. But what's the real reason God chose Jacob? Because we're reading the writings of Jacob's descendants.

All religions of the ANE required sacrifices to the gods. None required adherence to a moral standard.

Judaism was one of the first. So far, the only implicit moral law is that against murder. Evidence from the texts is that multiple wives and concubines were a routine and accepted part of these societies. We lack authority to declare it immoral for them, when they themselves did not.

Gen 26:6 Is this another sister act? Or just a misattributed legend? Where is Gerar? A Philistine town, probably south of Gaza, perhaps near Beersheba. We hear about the Philistines. We see Isaac getting filthy rich. 26:15 Some suggest the filling of the wells was to discourage nomadic herdsman from grazing their flocks in the area.

Gen 26:24 and 28:13 The promise reiterated. They were interlopers in Philistine land. 26:26-33 Shibah / Beer Sheba treaty with the Philistines. Obviously it didn't last. Esau married two Hittites.

Gen 27 the Jacob scam. Isaac gives to Jacob the blessing that was due Esau, the elder son. Gen 25:23 is Rebekah's implied excuse for perpetrating the scam. Besides the sold birthright, this was another explanation for favoring Jacob over Esau, the younger over the elder. Furthermore, Esau shall serve Jacob. I think 27:29 would prevent from Jacob and Esau from cursing each other. Rebekah doesn't like Hittite women. She is active, and dominates every scene.



Gen 28 another shun of Canaanite women. 28:9 Esau took a daughter of Ishmael as another wife. 28:12 **Jacob's Ladder**, his famous dream. This account is very significant, since it shows God in a dream narrowing the Abrahamic Covenant to the line of Jacob (excluding Esau). The 'ladder' probably would have conjured up the mental image of a ziggurat, sometimes considered a stairway to the heavens. It is likely not an allusion to the Tower of Babel, except perhaps in the limited sense that it's a 'wormhole' between the earthly and the heavenly domains. A 'gate into heaven' was a common idea in the ANE, see ESV note on 28:17. John 1:51 is likely alluding to this, though it's not clear to me what point the author is making there. Jacob names the place Bethel (house of El). He will return to this place of remembrance.

Gen 28:20 Jacob's deal. If he believed the covenants, why would he make this deal? Perhaps just to show Esau not making the deal? It seemed unnecessary. It now obligates Jacob to giving a tithe (perhaps a one-time gift). The deal sounds like Jacob is giving God an incentive to keep him safe. Perhaps this is instead a way of acknowledging what God will do for Jacob, and showing gratitude. Part of Jacob's vow is that Yahweh shall be my El. We see this happen in 32:9.

Gen 29 The land of the people of the east might be the sons of the concubines of Abraham, as noted in Gen 25. The well stone was likely there just to keep out the wildlife. More deception.

Gen 29:31-35 Birth to **Leah** of southern tribes (**Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah**)! The south is speaking here. 30 many sons by servants. Now the north speaking. 30:22 **Joseph** born to **Rachel**,

another special baby.

Gen 30:27 divination. The practice is named again in Gen 44, as practiced by Joseph. The practice is later forbidden in Deut 18:10. 30:32 genetic engineering. More deception. 31:3 another covenant. 31:19 Rachel stole gods. Jacob flees to Gilead, east of the Jordan, just south of the Sea of Galilee. 31:43-50 a truce at Gilead or Mizpah. “The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.” This is not asking for protection for a fond friend. It's not a benediction! It's asking divine police to keep us from killing each other.

Gen 32:9 the first time Jacob addresses El as Yahweh, see 28:13. Jacob now takes the El of his father as his own. Jacob sent messengers to Esau in Edom (east of the Jordan, south of the Dead Sea, the name means red). The wrestling match is the first time the name **Israel** appears in the Bible. See the ESV notes about this renaming. The new name seems to be saying that this scrappy character even fights with God! Jacob wrestles with a man. Hosea 12:4 (if it's talking about this) says it was an angel. I found a reference suggesting that at least some rabbis teach that this was the guardian angel of Esau. Both seem to be describing this as striving with God. This being obliged by blessing Jacob (Israel). To say the meanings of this account are ambiguous and uncertain is an understatement.

I think this story is part of the explanation for why Israel thinks they are especially favored by God over Esau and his line. They were sibling rivals even before they were born. They considered Esau to be the ancestor of the Edomites. Remember, we are reading the story as told by Israel, not by Edom.

Gen 33 Jacob and Esau 'kiss and make up'. Gen 33:4 probably inspired the language of the reunion of the prodigal son in Luke 15:20. See Gen also 27:29. Perhaps the wrestling match was about resolving the conflicts between the two of them. They made a non-aggression pact. Some references suggest something like this. Jacob settles at Succoth, probably just east of the Jordan and just south of Gilead, near **Shechem**. Esau returned to Seir.

Gen 34 shows Simeon and Levi taking revenge against the rape of **Dinah**, escalating it to a deceitful slaughter of all the males of the city of Hamor and Shechem. From the story, it wasn't even a rape. Clearly they did not yet hold to the limitation on revenge of “an eye for an eye”. If integrity were a virtue to them, it had secondary status. The effusive words from El in Gen 35 implicitly condone the violence and deceit of chapter 34. We will get further evidence in Ex 32:32, where God intends to wipe out the Perizzites and others. We will see these two brothers (Simeon and Levi) cursed by Jacob in Gen 49 for their violence. This opens the way for **Judah** to gain prominence in the south.

Gen 35:2, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.” This is the first mention I recall of “foreign gods”. A henotheistic relationship is first hinted about in Gen 17. This also reminds us of Gen 31, where Rachel stole her father's household gods. Both passages seem to use the term 'gods' to refer to some material manifestation or representation. Jacob is again renamed Israel. See also 32:28. Jacob has now adopted the El of his father for himself? The earlier covenants to Abraham and Isaac are now focused on Jacob (Israel). Again, the significance of this mention is probably that Esau is not mentioned.

The chapter begins with Jacob being told by Elohim to leave the Succoth / Shechem area and “go up to

Bethel and dwell there.” (Jacob was to build an altar there, where he had previously built a pillar.) This would be a wise move after their slaughter of all the males of Shechem. Verse 5 tells why they escaped with their lives. Jacob is running out of safe places to live. In Gen 35:16, they journey from Bethel toward Ephrath (Bethlehem). Why? In verse 1, God told him to dwell at Bethel.

Gen 35:22 Reuben's indiscretion. This is one of the two brothers who slaughtered all the males of the city to avenge a rape. This doesn't seem a great representation for those who claim the virtues of a permanent, external standard of morality. Gen 35:23 lists Jacob's 12 sons in one place. With the deaths of Rachel and Jacob, this marks the end of the narrative section that began with 25:19 (the generations of Isaac).

Gen 36 Focus moves to Esau. See where Esau (named **Edom** in 25:30, meaning red for the red stew) took his wives. Polygamy was the norm, not even noteworthy. Tribal identity is already being blended away. The use of 'chiefs' to refer to his sons (and probably some grandsons) tells us Esau is credited as the patriarch of 14 tribes. 36:31 lists some kings in Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites. Obviously this author knew about the later kings of Israel, starting with Saul around 1030BC. Abram / Abraham is best dated to somewhere early in the second millennium BC. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100, and lived for 180 years. Esau moves away from Jacob to Seir (Edom), east of the Jordan, south of Moab, south of the Dead Sea. I think this will be the last we hear of Esau. We will hear of Edomites, generally with a negative connotation.

Gen 37 Focus returns to Jacob. 37:3 transitions to the name Israel for Jacob. No clear significance is known for the Hebrew expression meaning a robe with long sleeves. The “robe of many colors” translation derives from a Septuagint translation. Joseph shares his imperialist dreams. His jealous brothers conspire to murder Joseph, then sell him as a slave to Egypt (via Midianites and Ishmaelites). We know how that will work out. Our pastors didn't have time in their recent sermon series, The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly, to even list all the bad! Or at least, bad by our standards. 37:36 begins the transition to the Egypt story.

Some use an extreme form of peshar to call Joseph here a type of Jesus. If the author wrote it with that objective, he did a terrible job. It was literally about Joseph's parents and brothers.

More sordid affairs in Gen 38. 38:8 see Deut 25:5-10. A consequence is the birth of Perez, yet another special baby! He and his sons are noted in 46:12. They may be the Perezites (Perizzites?) of Numbers 26:20. As we will see in Ruth 4, Perez is an ancestor of David.

Gen 39 Fast track promotions for Joseph, who presumably didn't even speak the language. The

Ancient Jewish Philosophy as Expressed in Tanakh,



story of Potiphar is taken from the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*. Potiphar acknowledges Yahweh as Joseph's god, and that Yahweh was responsible for Joseph's success and blessing, but does not worship Yahweh. The ancients did not consider their gods to be jealous. I don't think even Israel was henotheistic by this time. We see only the slightest of hints in that direction in the writings so far, and those hints may be anachronisms. In Gen 41, he achieves the position of vizier, second in command only to Pharaoh. 41:45 Joseph marries into a prominent Egyptian priestly family.

Unlike the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob stories, the Joseph story seems to be a unified story with a single author. It is generally considered of literary origin (not oral tradition), a bridge between the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob story of Genesis, and the Moses story of Exodus, and in the wisdom genre. "the majority of modern biblical scholars date the Joseph story in its current form to the 5th century BCE Persian era at the earliest." (Wikipedia) That's a view of textual and historical scholars, not of theologians.

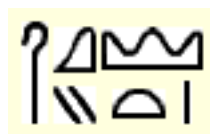
What in this story is so striking that it seems very out of place? Here is a special baby, born to Jacob by Rachel (his favorite wife), not just enslaved, but faithfully and honorably serving Hamitic peoples! That would have been a very foreign idea. The idea came from Jeremiah, see 29:1-7. This was a key part of how Judaism could survive and thrive in Diaspora.

Gen 40 dream of the pit. The pit? Remember 37:20? Imprisoned, the cupbearer and baker had no access to the magicians who typically interpreted dreams (see 41:8). Joseph had considered his own dreams as from God. Three days in the pit? We may see this idea again. Notice whom Joseph married. His marriage and his assigned name completed his integration into Egyptian culture and leadership (power). See Gen 47 for what Joseph does with this power.

Gen 41:16, 25, 28, 32 Joseph says Elohim is the one revealing the dream and causing the famine. Though Elohim is not an Egyptian god, Pharaoh chooses to act on this. Potiphar had already chosen to accept the indirect blessing from Elohim (via Joseph). At age 30, Joseph is suddenly integrated into the very top of Egyptian society with his position, name, and prominent Egyptian wife. Asenath was the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. **Ephraim** and **Manasseh** are born to her.

Gen 42 The scene changes back to Canaan. The story explains how all the descendants of Jacob got to Egypt. This had been forbidden in Gen 26, but belayed in 43:3. Joseph plays games. 43:23 Joseph lies about who put the money in the sacks. The Hebrew brothers were not surprised to see an Egyptian acknowledging their god. More extortion. Hebron to **Goshen** (Geshen) is about 200 miles, about the distance from San Jose to Reno or Visalia. Goshen was probably in the eastern region of the very fertile Nile delta. It would have been a good place to pasture herds. Joseph engineers their settlement into Goshen. I read a suggestion that "Apparently at this time Egypt was ruled by the "Shepherd kings" who had come in from adjoining Eastern countries and imposed their rule on Egypt. So the native Egyptians would not look highly upon shepherds, since they did not like being ruled over by non-Egyptians with the same occupation. This very fact (that they were shepherds) would help to keep Jacob's descendants a separate people while in Egypt."

(http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/agora/comm/01_gen/gen47.html) Perhaps this was the Hyksos. Josephus claims that these people were actually the brothers of Joseph. The Hyksos appeared in Egypt from around 1800BCE to around 1560BCE. Various efforts toward establishing chronologies by conservative scholars show dates for Joseph



of either around 1840BCE or 2000BCE.

Goshen was away from mainstream Egypt, so the Hebrews would likely be free to practice their own religion. They might also be less tempted to follow Egyptian religions (Matthew Henry commentary). From Ex 8:26, it might be the offering of the sacrifices of the sheep that would be to'evah to the Egyptians.

Gen 45:5 and 9 Joseph tells his brothers that the current state of affairs was orchestrated by Elohim. Have we seen any basis for how Joseph knew or believed this? If not, then this is the first expression of that idea.

Gen 46 Elohim belays an earlier order not to go to Egypt. The idea of verse 4, "I [Elohim] myself will go down with you to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.", is an anachronism. The idea first appeared in the Diaspora, with Israel (the southern tribes) in Babylon. It is expressed in Isaiah as "God with us". The God of Israel was transformed from a typical regional god of the ANE into a god of a people, wherever they happened to be. With this idea, Judaism flourished in Diaspora. This is another strong indication these texts were written during Diaspora, in Bablylon.

Gen 46:31-34 conniving, manipulation. Tell Pharaoh what he wants to hear so he will give you what you want. See 45:10 and ESV notes on Goshen. See also 43:32. The Egyptians were Hamitic, and the ethnic hatred of the Semitic peoples for the Hamitic peoples was likely mutual. See the Table of Nations (2200BCE) in the ESV Bible at Genesis 10 and Gen 9:20-27.

Gen 47 Joseph opens with his pity party. Perhaps this was a typical discourse introduction of the time. 47:11 is likely also an anacronism. Rameses didn't exist until the 13th century BCE. Perhaps the author is describing the place with a modern name familiar to his readers, rather than by the name it had at the time. Perhaps the author didn't know the name it had at the time.

Pharaoh accepts this engineered solution. He then recruits some Hebrew shepherds for his own flocks. Seems strange in view of the preceeding comments. 47:13 see 41:47-49 and 56-57. Joseph exploits the famine to enslave the people of Egypt and Canaan to Pharaoh, forcing them to sell themselves into slavery. 47:22 Only the priests keep their land. I wonder of Joseph's wife had any say in that. Joseph enacts a 20% tax on gross (not net) income.

All the people of Egypt are now broke, herdless, foodless, seedless, landless, enslaved, and encumbered with a 20% tax on gross. Pharaoh now has practically unlimited power. In this account, Joseph is credited with accomplishing that. That tax stands to 'this day' (verse 26), probably referring to when this account was written, most likely around 500BCE.

Gen 47:30 Jacob demands to be buried in Canaan, the promised land. Joseph is required to seal his promise with the hand-under-the-thigh ceremony, see also 24:9. It's a sign of a solemn vow. This burial will happen in 49:29-50:14. That text shows who is already buried there, and refers to its purchase in Gen 23.

Gen 48 Jacob rehearses the vision of El Shaddai and the terms of the (unconditional) covenant. He then

takes what seems to be an unusual action. He elevates his grandsons to the status of sons. They are to be heads of their respective tribes. See 1 Chron 5:1-2 and Gen 35:22-23. Because Joseph was designated firstborn in place of Reuben, he qualifies for a double inheritance. That means Ephraim and Manasseh each receive a share equal to that of each of the other sons of Jacob. Between the two of them we have yet another younger-over-elder anomaly. This account explains why Ephraim as a tribe was more prominent than one would expect for a grandson of Jacob.

Gen 48:6 (to Joseph), “And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.” Unlike Ephraim and Manasseh, the other sons of Joseph remain Joseph's sons.

Gen 48:15 Joseph pronounces a blessing on Joseph and his sons with a three-fold invocation to Elohim, Elohim, and the angel. See 28:15, 31:11, 13, and 24. In context, angel (messenger) seems to be used as a reference to a communication or an action by Elohim, rather than a more modern conception of an angel as a being.

Gen 49 Most of Genesis 49 is Jacob's last will and testament. In class, someone suggested that this was pointless and should be skipped. What do you think? Why did the author include this text? What did it mean to the people of Israel?

Only reluctantly do I ask for thoughts from texts we haven't covered yet. Did the tribe of Ephraim really have prominence? How did that prominence end up in the tribe of Judah? Why the criticism of Simeon and Levi? (That's from what we've already read). In spite of that, how will Levi come to be the tribe of the priests? Did either tribe actually ever get any land? (Hint: See Num 18:23-24, Num 35, Joshua 19 and 21.) Map 4 of the ESV Study Bible is one of many sources to see the geographic allocations attributed to the various tribes.

In his swan song, Jacob (Israel) lays down the law for his sons. Judah gets prominence, including military and political leadership. As 49:29 shows, Jacob as patriarch could command practically anything. It provides justification for David's conquering and unification of the united monarchy. Jacob demands to be buried in the family cave. Gen 50 Joseph takes a leave of absence to do this. 50:7 looks like Egyptian officials accompanied them (out of respect?), but the rest of the text seems to indicate it was the elders of the Hebrews. 50:15 The brothers lie to Joseph. 50:24 Joseph tells them they will not stay in Egypt, but Elohim will bring them out of Egypt, back to their own land. Segue to Exodus.

Exodus

In Exodus, note the “special baby” theme for Moses and compare it with Jesus in Luke and Isaac in Genesis. Chapter 3 introduces the Yahweh name. Note the Passover details in chapter 12. Take the detours to Leviticus 23:4-8 and Numbers 28:16-25. Note which days are a holy assembly or a holy convocation. Note the consecration of the firstborn in chapter 13. In chapter 19, note carefully the Sinaitic Covenant that the people agreed to. Take the detour to Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 for a good overview of the nature of the covenant. Note the minimal requirement of Exodus 19:3, that Yahweh your Elohim must be the head of your pantheon. In Exodus 21, note that slavery is routine, and that only slaves from among your own people have these protections. Back in Genesis 17, note who

was circumcised. In chapter 24, note the confirmation of the covenant. In chapter 25, note the tabernacle. Is this the first time there was a place for God? It was a tent, indicating that the tribes of Israel were still nomadic. In chapter 34, note another covenant or a covenant renewal. How's that for treatment of the tribes around you?

Approximate source assignment: J (1-24, 32), P (25-31, 33-40). It is considered primarily Yahwist, but with Priestly additions/changes. Does Exodus 1:7 sound familiar? Read Genesis 1:28. Population growth is not only a covenant blessing, it's a foundational commandment. This book begins by describing the birth of Israel as a nation.

Ex 1:8 "Now" belies a gap of perhaps 300 years after the glory of Joseph. The greater tribe of Israel was 70 descendants (excluding slaves) at the time of Joseph. The paranoia of verse 9 suggests a population significantly higher than 70. Does this kill-the-sons story sound familiar? The Slaughter of the Innocents attributed to Herod in Matthew 2 is, at the very least, a literary device to cause the reader to draw parallels between Jesus and Moses. There is no historical confirmation that the Slaughter of the Innocents ever happened. On that subject, evidence from archaeology is that the exodus, as described, did not happen. (Finkelstein, Israel and Silberman, Neil Asher "The Bible Unearthed" 2001 p 63) The 'special baby' theme for Moses will be echoed in Jesus. Any Jewish gospel readers would immediately think of Moses. Moses gets back into Hebrew territory and takes a Hebrew wife. The seed is planted: Elohim knows what's happening, and remembers the covenant. The account suggests about 80 years from the new pharaoh to the exodus.

Ex 1:11 This reference to Raamses is part of the reason I lean toward the later date of 1260 for the exodus (vs. the earlier 1446 date). See page 33 of the ESV Study Bible.

Ex 2:1 Our last view of Levi was not particularly flattering (Gen 34). Now, a descendant of Levi stands to be the messiah of Israel from Egypt, and the unquestioned channel for the Law (Torah) from God to the people of Israel. The descendants of Levi, once denied land, will become the designated priestly line. Go figure. Why do I express it that way? So you, the reader, will think about what's going on, and what the Jewish people are thinking when they do what they do.

Ex 2:10 Moses means drawn out of the water. It's a nice name to choose for someone who will draw Israel out of Egypt. I expect this was just enough time for Pharaoh's daughter Bithiah to serve as a wet-nurse, but it could have been longer. Unnamed in Exodus, Midrash identifies the Bithiah of 1 Chronicles 4:18 as this person. Though Bithiah called Moses her son, it was not by blood, so Moses probably could never have been a pharaoh. "In Acts 7:23, Stephen gives Moses' age at this time as 40 (reflecting Jewish interpretative tradition)." (ESV note on verse 11)

The protection of Moses parallels Isis, hiding her child from Set, who is threatened by the child, in a thicket of papyrus in the Nile Delta. The theme of Isis nursing her child is common in Egyptian art. (Wikipedia)

Ex 2:15 Moses sits down by a well. Dangerous! It risks finding a wife. See Gen 24:11 and 29:2. The reader would recognize this from the heroic folk tale genre. The hero is born under special circumstances, leaves home, finds his wife at a well, has a helper, faces a dramatic challenge and is

thwarted by an opponent, and triumphs over it. He receives a mark or brand and is transfigured with a name change. (Amy-Jill Levine, Teaching Company course 653, The Old Testament, Lecture 7)

Ex 2:18 says Reuel, a priest of Midian, was the father-in-law of Moses. Judges 4:11 says Hobab was the father-in-law of Moses. Based on cursory research, I think the most likely explanation for the difference is that the Hebrew for father-in-law and brother-in-law are very close in pronunciation and spelling, especially before diacriticals were used as vowel markings. Exodus 3:1 calls him Jethro. Some suggest that Jethro (meaning excellence) was his priestly title.

The Midianites are portrayed in Gen 25 as descendants of Abraham by Keturah. They may have been connected, religiously and politically, with the Moabites. They are thought to have worshiped gods including Baal-peor and Ashteroth. Other historians suggest worship of Yahweh originated in Midian. See Moses – A First Appraisal on page 49 about the Kenite Hypothesis. Ex 3 can be viewed as supporting this idea. Yahweh appeared to Moses in the famous burning bush, but then identified himself with the Elohim of Israel. This narrative seems to be defining the bush as the point where the Yahweh of Midian becomes identified with the Elohim of Israel. Ironically, Gen 37:36 says the Midianites are the ones who sold Joseph to Egypt. Most (all?) of the rest of Tanakh is not favorable toward Midian.

Any ambiguity about the status of Yahweh vs. Elohim is resolved in Exodus 3, culminating in verses 15 and 18. The key phrase appears 240 times in Deuteronomy, “Yahweh our Elohim.” This idea was clearly foundational to the author(s) of Torah.

The “many days” of Ex 2:23 is probably 40 years, see also Acts 7:30 and Ex 2:11 and 7:7.. It's a popular time interval.

Ex 3:7, 10 is the first time we see God referring to Israel as “my people”. Ex 3:20 God reiterates his intent to play the promised 'bully big brother' role on behalf of Israel. It's part of the covenant.

The name Horeb is used only in the Elohist and Deuteronomist sources, The name Sinai is used only in Torah by the Yahwist and Priestly sources. Most believe these are different names for the same place. There are many opinions about where this place is. We see the famous encounter between Moses and Yahweh. In 3:6, Yahweh identifies himself as the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We see a reiteration of Gen 50:24, with the first list of the doomed peoples of the land they are to conquer.



In Exodus 3:14, we see the “I am” declaration. It's an answer to the question (appropriate in a polytheistic world) of the previous verse, “Which god are you?” That's an appropriate question to ask

in a polytheistic world. I found a whole website aiming to explain this, at <http://www.exodus-314.com/>. I have scarcely started looking at it. [Wikipedia](#) also lists a variety of interpretations. They suggest that “The word Ehyeh is considered by many rabbinical scholars to be a first-person derivation of the [Tetragrammaton](#), see for example [Yahweh](#).” Moses is instructed to tell his people that Yahweh is the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Go talk to Pharaoh. It won't be easy. Eventually you'll plunder Egypt. He will be what he is. It's hard for us to infer pronunciation in a language lacking vowels.

The “land flowing with milk and honey” conveys an image of abundance. Amy-Jill Levine notes that these are renewable resources. Exploiting them doesn't require killing anything.

Ex 4 Moses's staff becomes his authentication. It explains the involvement of Aaron. Aaron appointed as proxy. The official chain of command and communication is to be God → Moses → Aaron → the people. 4:16 seems strange to us, “you [Moses] shall be as God to him [Aaron].” Most likely this is describing a relationship like Joseph is said to have had with Pharaoh. 4:22 Israel has firstborn status. This is covenant language. Israel is God's son. This is the antecedent of Deut 14:1, Psalm 2:7, and Psalm 89:26-28. Moses is to convey this analogy by threatening Pharaoh's firstborn son. 4:24 This strange story seems to be an emphasis of the importance of circumcision to the covenant. Presumably Yahweh, after all the preceding grand interactions, was about to kill Moses because his son wasn't circumcised. But his wife goes through a ceremony and makes it all OK. Moses then tells Aaron about his new job. Together, they tell the congregation, which believes them.

In infancy (perhaps somewhat beyond), Moses was nursed by his mother. After that, Moses was raised Egyptian woman. Like Sargon of Akkad, Moses was rescued by a woman. He spent much of his adulthood in self-imposed exile in Midian. While Moses knew he was a Hebrew, he may have known little about his people.

Ex 5:1, “Thus says Yahweh, the Elohim of Israel.” This is the epitome of a prophet. That's the role of a prophet. To hear messages from God, and tell them to the people. The request to pharaoh is, on the surface, a modest one. We're not told the nature of this feast. But it's portrayed as a religious observance. This new pharaoh does not know Yahweh. It has been probably 300 years since Joseph. Even then, Joseph identified his god as Elohim (not Yahweh). It's plausible that in 5:1, Moses uses el in a generic sense, or that pharaoh interpreted it that way. A ruler of Egypt, himself probably considered deity, had no reason to take orders from a god of another region. The Egyptians know these people as the Hebrews. That name probably refers to the Semitic peoples, described as descendents of Shem, sons of Eber, see Genesis 10:21. Verse 3 gives the people's reason to make this sacrifice: “lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” In verse 21 (for the first time) the Jewish foremen blamed Moses and Aaron.

Ex 5:22 Moses takes on the role of communicating from the people back to Yahweh. Moses complains to God.

Ex 6:1 Yahweh reiterates his intent to keep his covenantal commitment to play the bully big brother role.

Unification of Elohim and Yahweh

Exodus 6:3 a very explicit unification message! Here, Elohim introduces himself to Moses and explains that Yahweh had never told Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob his 'other' name of Yahweh. It's a further claim (with explanation) that Yahweh and Elohim were really the same god. Another reiteration of the covenant. Whenever you think about Yahweh vs. Elohim, read this text. As noted earlier, Moses may have known the Yahweh name from his time in Midian. Yahweh is now bringing Moses up to speed with what he missed during his 40 years raised as an Egyptian, and his 40 years as a Midianite. Moses lives another 40 years. These authors (and the traditions from which they write) like 40's. How long did it rain for the flood? This text may be this author's explanation for how the Elohim of Israel came to take on the name of a Midianite deity. It's something that early readers (or listeners to prior oral tradition) of Torah would have wondered.

I have been accused of overemphasizing the usage of these two names for the deity of Israel. We, as readers two and a half millennia later, are not free to redefine the meanings the authors intended to convey to their direct audience, or to impute our own reasons for why they wrote the way they did. If we wish to learn from the texts, we need to work to discern the author's meaning and, where possible, the author's intent. Any explanation we offer must be consistent with this text, and the many other places in Torah where great care is taken in how these names are used.

Ex 6:5 Remember whom the text credits with causing everyone in Egypt to become a slave of pharaoh? Joseph. The present difficulties of Israel are an unintended consequence of the earlier actions of Joseph. 6:7 You will see the "Yahweh your Elohim" phrase ad nauseum in Deuteronomy. "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am Yahweh your Elohim." The text shows Yahweh convincing Moses and the people that he is the god (Elohim) that they have been worshiping.

Ex 6:12 Moses tries to excuse himself again with, "How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?" The meaning is unclear, but it likely refers to 4:10 or to 4:24-26. Is this an admirable trait of humility? Read Ex 5:10-17.

Ex 6:14 This genealogy focuses on Levi (see my note above for 2:1). It's needed to lay the groundwork for Moses to play a central role for the nation (and religion) of Israel, and for Aaron to be the head of a permanent priestly line. Aaron married into a prominent line of the tribe of Judah. We will see Amminidab in the genealogy of David from Perez in Ruth 4:20. We will see his son Nahshon as head of that tribe (Numbers 2:3). Gen 38 shows Perez as an anomaly, explaining why he received prominence normally due to the firstborn. The chapter closes with a summary of its beginning.

Ex 7:1 is very strange to Christians who try to apply modern theology to ancient Israel. "And Yahweh said to Moses, 'See, I have made you like Elohim to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.'" Looking ahead, I think this refers to acts that Moses will perform as he acts on behalf of Yahweh. I think it parallels what Pharaoh effectively said to Joseph with, "I have made you like Pharaoh to the people of Egypt." In verse 3, Yahweh will do the signs and wonders. But as the drama

unfolds, the events will come by command from Moses. Ex 7:7 sets the timeframe in the context of the rest of the account. The date is now probably around 1260 BCE, for the later exodus dating. See my notes in the course syllabus. 7:8 Pharaoh asks for authentication by signs. The duel of the magicians begins. The side which always wins is the side writing the story. Egyptian texts have plenty of descriptions of magicians doing these feats. I can't find the reference now, but I recall reading a suggestion that, since many of these plagues correspond to gods of Egypt, they were chosen as insults to the gods of Egypt.

Ex 7:3-4 is very clear and unambiguous. “But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.” From the perspective of your doctrines of inspiration, is this true? Is this fair? What does it say about the nature of God? Is that true? How do you reconcile your answers with your other doctrines? Does God change? If your doctrines conflict, at least some of them are wrong. If reconciling your doctrines requires extraordinary measures, your doctrines probably conflict.



We should be able to agree that the text clearly expresses what the author(s) believed. Some texts (like 9:32) say Pharaoh hardened his heart. This may have been a difference in understanding between the Yahwist and the Priestly heritages. See also 1 Samuel 6:6. Most say God did it. Maimonides says God withheld the power of repentance. “At some point, it’s too late to file a plea bargain.” (<https://whatspshat.org/2014/01/03/heavyheart/> accessed March 14, 2017) Linguistically, the Hebrew words for heavy and respected share the same root. Perhaps this is saying that Yahweh respected the choice that Pharaoh made. (same source)

Pharaoh was an example of a precursor to the Jewish prophetic worldview. Perhaps it was an anachronistic insertion of that worldview into an account of more ancient times. People observed Israel (the northern tribes) being conquered by the Assyrian Empire. Rather than admit that God failed to keep his end of the Mosaic Covenant, they rationalized that defeat by saying that these tribes had disobeyed the covenant. Then their god (Elohim / Yahweh) was so powerful that he used the mighty Assyrian Empire (and by implication, overcame the power of the Assyrian gods) as a pawn to punish those northern tribes. But even though the God of Israel forced the empire to do that, the Assyrians would still be punished in the end. That's the idea they wrote into the Exodus account. Perhaps it started by Pharaoh hardening his own heart. But then God forced Pharaoh to finalize the deed, and God punished Pharaoh and his empire with the Passover.

Ex 9:6 “All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.” Did the Egyptians (the common people, as distinguished from Pharaoh) bear any culpability in what was happening to the Hebrews? Is it fair that the Egyptians should suffer? Many people today refuse to worship a god who does things like this. Does God change? Is this the same God of Christianity? Some early Christians didn't think so. The Marcionites considered the Hebrew God a tyrant, a

demiurge, and that the God of Christianity was a different god.

Ex 7:5 This story is still under the worldview of regional gods with regional influence. There is no claim that Yahweh is the only god, or that Egypt should worship Yahweh in any way. The message was that the god of Israel had influence over Israel. That included influence over nearby tribes, but only insofar as Israel is involved. The text clearly shows the sorcerers on both sides doing the same thing. Where there is a difference, those of Moses are stronger. The implication is that (not in general, but in this event) the god of Israel is stronger than the god(s) of Egypt. My daddy can beat up your daddy. That's exactly what God promised in the covenant (Gen 12:3, Ex 3:20, Ex 6:1).

Ex 7:8 the serpent is likely the crocodile, named by the ancient Greeks as the 'lizard of the Nile'. Calling it the Petsuchos, Egyptians worshiped it as the son of their god Sobek (shown at the right). When a Petsuchos died, it was mummified.

Ex 8:3 Heqet was the Egyptian frog-goddess of fertility.

The recantation in Ex 8:15 is an anachronistic presentation of a later idea. Early emperors required their captives to convert to the religion of the conquering empire. Later enlightened emperors allowed their captives to continue to practice their own religions with their own ceremonies and sacrifices to their own gods. Cyrus even allowed captives to return to their homelands if they wanted to.

Ex 8:19 The magicians attribute the signs of Moses to Elohim. 8:26 Moses acknowledges sacrificial practices different from those of Egypt. 10:3 identifies Yahweh, the Elohim of the Hebrews. It's possible that in passages like this, el is used as a generic word for a god. In that case, the speaker is distinguishing the god of the Hebrews from a god of Egypt (or from anywhere else). Nowhere is Moses or Aaron asking Pharaoh or the Egyptians to worship the god of the Hebrews. They have no criticism of the gods of the Egyptians, though their ambivalence shows up later. They ask only for Pharaoh to let the Hebrews worship their own god. There is no concept of evangelism here.



Ex 9:8 Finally Moses gets to do something on his own, without Aaron as proxy. 9:9 Tim G. said the boils would have made the Egyptian magicians unqualified to perform their duties. 9:14 We again see the suffering of innocent Egyptians, but now we are given a reason. See also the note on 10:2 below. It is for Yahweh to show off his power. 9:16 Another portrayal of Pharaoh as a helpless toy. 9:19 Oops. Presumably Egypt's livestock were all killed 10 verses ago. Anyone have an explanation? 10:2 An admission of the reason for all the drama. A typical additional reason is that nearby tribes think twice

about attacking a tribe with a legendary fierce god on their side. 10:26 apparently this was not a predetermined ceremony. Torah had not yet been dictated; the ceremonies had not yet been solidified. This is a natural heritage for nomadic herdsmen, whose herds were always with them. 10:29 Moses says his final goodbye. 11:2 The Hebrews ask for the spoils, adding insult to injury. Tim G (I think) suggests these may effectively be back wages for time in slavery. If so, why should their fellow slaves pay it?

Ex 12 The Hebrew calendar is calibrated to this date. The **Passover** ceremony is instituted. The description sounds like an established tradition overlaid onto a tradition of national heritage. From Wikipedia, "The origins of the Passover festival antedate the Exodus. The Passover ritual, prior to Deuteronomy, is widely thought to have its origins in an apotropaic rite, unrelated to the Exodus, to ensure the protection of a family home, a rite conducted wholly within a clan. Hyssop was employed to daub the blood of a slaughtered sheep on the lintels and door posts to ensure that demonic forces could not enter the home."

Ex 12:5 The lamb shall be without blemish. Clearly what we call perfection was not required. Enough qualified to provide a yearling male lamb for each household. 12:12 "on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments." This is a battle between the gods. Again, at this stage, there is not even a hint that there is only one god. It's the god of the Hebrews against the gods of Egypt. This is the first sign of direct criticism of, or conflict with, the gods of Egypt. 12:31 Maybe this is the final goodbye to Moses. 12:36 the plunder alluded to in 11:2. This is to show that Gen 15:14 was completed.

Population of Ancient Israel

600,000 men??? In Goshen? All this from herdsmen? Pi-Ramesses was one of the largest cities of ancient Egypt, with a population of 300,000. A rural population of herdsmen (just the men) twice this number? I found just one estimate of the entire population of ancient Egypt at around 5 million. Even by the Persian period, with more advanced technology, the population of all of Judea (Israel) was likely never more than 30,000 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_ancient_Israel_and_Judah#Persian_period). We should never be surprised to find exaggeration in legend, with numbers inflating with every retelling.

From a different view, Israel today has a population of 9.3 million, 0.12% of the 7.8 billion world population. New Jersey, the most densely populated US state, is less densely populated than Israel. World population is estimated at 50 million in 1000 BCE. If Israel had the same percentage, their population would have been about 60,000.

One overview of scholarship regarding the historicity of the Exodus can be found in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus#Historicity and of course anyone wishing scholarship more to their liking can find it. See also The Ethnic Cleansing of the Conquest on page 58.

Ex 12:40 430 years in Egypt. Gen 15:13 is given as an explanation for this. It's reasonable to consider the 400 years there as a round number. 12:44 A slave may partake in Passover only if he is circumcised.

Consecration of the Firstborn

Exodus 13 is the first formal presentation of the consecration (confiscation) of the firstborn. But it's certainly not the first time the idea appears. In Genesis 4, the sacrifice of Abel was acceptable because it was of the firstborn of his flock. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his firstborn (Isaac). Sacrifice of the firstborn animal and the firstborn child was a widespread practice throughout the ANE. It's implausible that Israel never practiced them, including infant sacrifice. You still see traces of it in Torah, though later edits tended to remove it or tone it down. Its mention this late in Torah is not a declaration that it was instituted after the Exodus. Instead, it's an explanation for one reason Israel considered it significant. Among other things, it was a remembrance of the firstborn of Egypt. When you sacrifice an animal, what does it always mean? Kill the animal! 13:15 makes that clear with a strong explicit connection with Egypt, "For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'" That didn't change until probably the Deuteronomistic reforms. You may redeem a donkey with a lamb. You must redeem a human.

To me, this is a great example of a triumph of social morality over religion. They came to realize that infant sacrifice was stupid and abhorrent, so they stopped doing it. Religion found a way to rationalize it. We see many more examples in the Bible of this happening within Israel, and even more as we examine Second Temple Judaism. First in Diaspora, now in the absence of a temple, Jews realize they do just fine without offering sacrifices. Christianity made that even more widespread by offering the region's first free religion. The universal sacrifice meant that no sacrifices would ever again be required.

We see the practices modified further in Numbers 3. I think this codifies a Deuteronomistic 'reform'. Consecration of the firstborn male humans was replaced by consecration of Levites to religious service. No longer does each herdsman sacrifice the firstborn of his own cattle. Instead, only cattle raised by Levites qualified as sacrificial animals. Agriculture made possible their transition from a lifestyle of nomadic herdsmen to one with permanent settlements and cities. This may have helped drive that tradition in sacrificial practice. Or it was another step by which the Levites consolidated their power. I think a rationale was expressed in Exodus 32:26, wherein only Levites stood publicly against the golden calf.

Some interpret the eighth-day instruction as a suggestion that, for humans, circumcision may have been a substitute for infant sacrifice. Remember who caused the slavery? Joseph. Why unleavened bread? 13:16 is a colorful exhortation to remember. It is not an institution of a requirement for a physical object like the ephod or the phylactery (Deut 6:8, 11:18 etc.). 13:17 a sudden transition to Elohim. Discussion returns to Yahweh in verse 21. We see the role of the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. 13:18 equipped for battle (but kept away from the Philistines). Why? We've seen no hint of battle during these 400 years, or even of any time back to Abram.

Ex 14 We don't know where these places were, or exactly what places they meant by the sea (or the Red Sea). The name red might have referred to the direction (south) rather than the color of anything. Some

scholars think this *Yam Suph* may refer to what is various places was called the Sea of Reeds. The word for reed is the same as the material of Moses's basket. See Wikipedia on “Yam Suph” for an overview of these ideas. Others (bible.ca/archeology) suggest the average Jew uses Red Sea to refer to the Gulf of Aqaba, the opposite side of the Sinai peninsula. As noted earlier, this story may echo Noah's flood. 14:6 Pharaoh went along with his army. In the (unlikely) event that he led the charge from the front lines, he would have been killed. Sometimes we can get confirmation or more details from peer writings of other nations or tribes. We can't do this with the Exodus, since there is no record of it outside of Torah. The parting of the waters echoes the creation and flood narratives. Some say 1 Cor 10:4 describes these pillars as Christ. The connection seems very weak. 14:10 Blame Moses. 14:6 would qualify as a miracle, since it is an apparent violation of natural law *on command*. 14:14 is the first expression of this nature. 14:19 The angel of Elohim is generally used as descriptive of an appearance or presence of God, rather than as some form of heavenly being of later usage. This is much more consistent with the other descriptions of the pillars, especially the first. The role shifts from leader to protector. For the rest of the chapter, the author very clearly expresses the cause of the events. 14:31 First appearance of the ideas of fearing or believing God. It is offered as explanation for why Israel feared / believed in Yahweh and in Moses.

Ex 15 as student asked, “Why on earth is there a song here?” Good question. This is the first instance we see of praise given to Yahweh. Besides a typical medium for praise, song is used as a memory aid and as a unifying practice in collective religious ceremony. This one is called Song of the Sea (*Shirat HaYam* or *Az Yashir Moshe*). It may well be the oldest chapter in Torah, perhaps even in the Bible. (Wright) If this was a song sung to music, as we think of it, we have no clue what it might have sounded like. 15:2 is a good example showing the Old Testament meaning of the word translated **salvation**. It simply means protection from my enemies.

Exodus 15:11, “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?”, uses ‘elim, a Hebrew plural form of ‘el. This is probably the generic term for gods. The Hebrew ‘elohim is the plural form of ‘eloah. This seems to be the form used to refer to the God of Israel, though sometimes (Ps 19:1, Isaiah 43:12 and others) use ‘el. The idea of Exodus 15:11 is one god among many.

Ex 15:15-16 A common purpose of fierce legends was to make potential enemies fear you. These verses are a clear indication that this song was a later composition, inserted here into the text. It was not sung as-is at the time. They certainly would not yet have known any effect of these stories on the Philistines or Canaanites. They were even told not to go that way. 15:21 the Song of Miriam is much shorter. Who says the women are the talkative ones?

Exodus tells us practically nothing about the first 300 years in Egypt. Likely they would have continued as herdsmen, largely independent of Egypt until a pharaoh came along who wanted some slave labor. Their society would be tribal, strongly patriarchal. Whatever the patriarch says is what is done. Anything resembling Aristotle's concept of rule of law is still a long way into the future. In Egypt, whatever pharaoh says is what is done. Disagreements between tribes were resolved by negotiation and by fighting. From this point on, the tribes of Israel are on their own, with no influence or control from Egypt.

Ex 15:32 Marah was probably near the northeast shore of the sea. Water described as bitter is usually

alkaline, but sometimes just brackish. It might be 'Ain Hawarah, which still has springs of salty and sulphurous water. There is a type of barberry which grows in the desert and is used to make brackish water less bitter. 15:25b might be simply an expression of the covenant. Scholars think it's more like a redaction, since the law at Sinai had not yet been given. 15:27 Elim might be about halfway to Sinai, about 45 miles from Marah. This is probably a reasonable distance for a 3-day journey. It's probably as far as they could go by carrying their own food and water. It might be Wadi Gharandel. "In Wadi Gharandel the water is very evil-smelling and bad-tasted in spring, but said to be sweeter in winter. There is a plentiful supply of water here." (The Topography and Geology of the Peninsula of Sinai (Western Portion), United Arab Republic Survey Department) Plentiful is a relative term. I doubt it could supply anywhere near enough water for a million people plus their animals and then replenish supplies for them to carry. To me, this is but one of many indications that the population claim of 600,000 is vastly overstated.

Ex 16 resumes the journey along the eastern shore of the sea between Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. The whole peninsula is about 23,000 square miles. Smaller than Maine, it's about the area of West Virginia. From Marah to Mt. Sinai is about 260 miles by road today. That's about the distance from Cupertino to Reno or Bakersfield. It's still dry and mostly barren. It's about the same distance from Mt. Sinai to the promised land, about a 6-hour drive today. More grumbling. Provision of manna. This is likely either an anachronism (since the Sabbath commandment had not yet been given), or it is portrayed as the origin of the idea of Sabbath. This becomes a key Jewish distinctive. 16:16 is the first hint of socialism. From each according to his ability; to each according to his need.

Ex 17 Grumbling about water at Rephidim (perhaps almost at Mt. Sinai). Strike the rock. Battle with Amalek (Gen 14:7, probably inhabitants of northern Sinai Peninsula). They bring a force strong enough to attack a million armed people? Hold my hands. First mention of Joshua. Unfair treatment of Amalek. After all, the Hebrews were the intruders. Here begins the theme of obliteration of other tribes. We will discuss this in more detail when we get to Joshua. Their willingness to fight and obliterate the Amalekites is justified by showing the unsavory parentage of Amalek in Genesis 36:12: Esau (who sold his birthright) through his son Eliphaz and his concubine Timna). The ethnic cleansing of the Amalekites is completed in 1 Samuel 15. Saul didn't finish the job, so he lost his job as king. Samuel finally finished it.

Moses – A First Appraisal

Finally, in April 2013, the pieces are starting to come together for me. I'm getting the big picture. Exodus 18 is a good time to look back at Moses and what these writings about him mean. I'll express this in the form of questions that the tribes of Israel would be asking. Among other things, these texts were written to show the answers to those questions.

1. Why is this Midianite hailed as the rescuer of Israel and the chief seer or medium of Israel? We don't like the Midianites. They are descendants of a concubine of Abraham, Keturah (Gen 25:4, 1 Chronicles 1:32-33). They sold Joseph to Egypt (Gen 37:36). We'll defeat them in battle (Judges 6-8, Numbers 31). A: Well, he's not really a Midianite. He's a descendant of Levi (Gen 2), brother of Aaron.
2. Why did no one know him as a child? A: He was raised Egyptian.
3. Why did no one know him as an adult? A: He self-exiled to Midian after murdering an Egyptian (Ex 2). There, he collected a wife, children, and probably their god. As noted at Ex

2:15, Moses married a daughter of a priest of Midian. My strong suspicion from Ex 3 and the other texts is that Reuel (aka Jethro, which might have been a title) was a priest of Yahweh. The name means friend of El. This marriage may have been the unification of Elohim with Yahweh. Ex 13 credits Yahweh with rescuing Israel from Egypt. Throughout Exodus, who has been talking with Moses? Yahweh, not Elohim. In Ex 18, Moses seems to be telling Reuel that his god rescued Israel. I'm sure I'm missing some subtleties in these exchanges, but that seems to be the focus.

4. Wait, we know Aaron as the head of our priestly line. How did this Moses get top billing? Moses didn't want to speak, so Aaron did all the talking.

Is Moses real or myth? That's impossible to answer conclusively. There is no reference to him outside of Jewish writing, not even in any Egyptian source. "His infancy parallels that of Sargon of Akkad: protected by women from execution by an evil king, placed in a reed basket, and rescued. Folktale motifs abound here. His infancy account recollects the primeval history. The term for Moses's basket is the same for Noah's ark (tevah). He escapes drowning, as does Noah. His name may suggest an anterior story. Exodus 2:10 provides a Hebrew etymology from "draw forth" (from the water). 'Moses' is a good Egyptian name, like Ramses and Thutmose." (Amy-Jill Levine, op cit, Lecture 8) Both Sargon and Moses had a mother of a priestly class.

A relevant Facebook comment, "This does *not* mean that Moses drew his motifs from the Sargon story. Instead, these and many other factors lead to the conclusion that the depiction of Moses in Exodus is primarily literary, not historical, drawing on common ANE hero motifs. The text is a heroic epic, depicting God's control over circumstances and love for His people."

... and now back to the story.

I think it took exposure to the Babylonian idea of monotheism for the Diaspora Jews to fully reconcile the unification of Elohim and Yahweh. This competes with the covenant as a key theme of Torah. Genesis 17 is probably the first textual hint of henotheism. To this point in the texts, we have no hint of monotheism. The Documentary Hypothesis (now better named the Documentary Theory) and its variants encompass the majority of scholarly analysis of Torah. The dates of composition / redaction / editing are placed around the time of the Babylonian Captivity. If you reject that, you abandon the use of key tools to help understand the texts.

The Kenite Hypothesis (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenite_hypothesis#Early_history), the "standard view among modern scholars", suggests earliest known worship of Yahweh was in Edom, Moab, and Midian. Judges 1:16 describes Moses' father-in-law as a Kenite. Some historians suggest the Kenites are descendants of Cain who settled in Canaan. (Amy-Jill Levine, Teaching Company course 653, The Old Testament, Lecture 3)

Ex 18:2 Perhaps Moses sent his wife and children back home for their protection. 18:15 Moses is acting in the role of a seer. The people come to him to inquire of God. Moses chose leaders and delegated this particular task with a hierarchical organization. This wasn't government. This was just determining an answer from God for a question of practice. Likely they already had tribal

'government'. This may be the justification for a religious rather than a civil hierarchy. Much of this writing may be for the purpose of explaining and justifying why we do things the way we do. 1 Samuel 9:9 seems to try to bridge the gap in terminology in a parenthetical expression, "(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, 'Come, let us go to the seer,' for today's 'prophet' was formerly called a seer.)"

Ex 19:3 "while Moses went up to Elohim, Yahweh called to him out of the mountain." This is the same mountain, and the same situation, as Exodus 3. Yahweh claim credit for the action against the Egyptians. Yahweh offers the conditional Sinaitic Covenant. All the people of Israel agree to be bound by the terms. By showing only Israel accepting this covenant, this author may be laying another block in the foundation of their justification for slaughtering anyone else.

Ex 19:6 "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The priests rule the people and give the orders. This was not unusual in the ancient world.

Ex 19:9 Yahweh promises an audience with the people, but then makes it a private event for only Moses and Aaron. There are to be no other witnesses. Deuteronomy 5:4 says it actually was face to face for the people. Deuteronomy 34:10 mentions "Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." The mountain becomes untouchable.

At this point, I begin using Harmony of the Law – Volume 3, by a name most find familiar: John Calvin (Calvin, Harmony). But I won't use it much, since it's not the kind of 'harmony' appropriate for this study. We will examine Exodus 34, covering the publication of the second edition of the tablets (also a private ceremony), and Deuteronomy 5, the account via the Deuteronomist source.

Ex 20 begins with a powerful statement of identity. "And Elohim spoke all these words, saying, 'I am Yahweh your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'" A concise codification of (part of) the new obligations of Israel under the contract they just accepted. They are very clearly portrayed as dictated directly by God to Moses and Aaron, with no other witnesses. No one seems to care that this makes the claim to divine origin untestable.

Ex 20:3 is the prime henotheistic requirement. El was head of the Canaanite pantheon. Verse 3 could be construed as saying nothing more than this. Verse 5 rules out that idea. 4 is another Jewish distinctive: no material representations of any god or (just for good measure) anything else. Perhaps this is an anachronistic injection of the hedge concept. To make sure I won't make an image of a god (an idol), I won't make an image of anything. Such images are conspicuously absent from the tabernacle. The Hebrew word *Pacal* means to hew or to carve. *Charash* and *Pathach* are used for engrave. I don't know if this is a significant distinction. Apparently Solomon made some exceptions for the temple in 2 Chronicles 3 as he built the temple to include cherubim and an altar with a metal sea and gourd figures, oxen, etc. Perhaps they were acceptable if they were poured / molded instead of carved. Perhaps some were acceptable if they were not representations of other gods. I know of no other god of the ANE who is jealous. Today jealousy is not considered a positive moral attribute. Even in the Roman Empire, I think Judaism (and later Christianity) is the only monotheistic or even henotheistic religion.

Ex 20:5 shows this jealous god punishing a man's (or a tribe's) children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren for his misbehavior. This will be repeated in Ex 34:7, and is probably a corporate rather than an individual threat. The response by Jesus to the question about the man born blind shows that by Second Temple Judaism (or at least by the first century), at least some of the Jews had abandoned this idea as it applied to individuals. It certainly doesn't appear in Christianity, though many modern Christians think it does. For more on moral progress beyond this, see Deut 24:16 notes.

For the most part, Deut 5 is identical to Ex 20 (at least in the ESV). Deuteronomy gives a different reason for Sabbath (another Jewish distinctive). Ex 20 reflects the Yahwist tradition with "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Deut 5:15 reflects the Deuteronomist tradition with "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

Ex 20:7 is almost certainly more than today's simple epithets. It might refer to swearing by a name of God to affirm the truth of your words. Making oaths of this type was at times a prominent part of Jewish culture. 20:16 is also more than simply lying. It's accusing another in court of wrongdoing and asking that they be punished. Similarly, 20:17 is almost certainly more than simply wanting goods. It's most likely a declaration of property rights. It's fine to want a nice house like your neighbor's. It's not acceptable to steal it from him. That idea is congruent with all the rest of Torah. Objection to simply wanting goods is not.

Ex 34 begins with "and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke." but then says a lot more than Ex 20. Not just more, this list is very different, despite being the same words. No amount of rationalization is enough to reconcile these two versions of the Decalogue. The actual, simple explanation is that Ex 20 represents the Elohist tradition (called the Ethical Decalogue) or a Priestly version of the Deuteronomist from Deuteronomy 5, and Ex 34 the Yahwist tradition (called the Ritual Decalogue). I suspect this might be the most intensively redacted area of Torah. The Wikipedia article on Ritual Decalogue provides useful tools for comparisons of these three renderings of the Decalogue. In verse 17, "You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal." the Hebrew word is that used in 32:4 about the golden calf.

Ex 20:22 seems related to 20:4. The altar for (at least future) sacrifices is to be made of dirt. We saw Israel wanting to offer sacrifices back in Ex 8. An altar can be made of stone but not hewn stone. There is clearly no temple. Worship (sacrifices) was not centralized.

Ex 21 covers treatment of Hebrew slaves. Apparently there were fewer restrictions on what you could do to a foreign slave.

The typical reason for a man to sell himself into slavery was debt. We saw Joseph institute that on behalf of Pharaoh on a grand scale. If I can create value by my own labors, I pay off my debts. If I can't, then I make a contract with my lender. I commit to give to my lender whatever labor I can (as an alternative to repaying the debt), in return for room and board. How does this compare to someone who can't (or won't) create value on his own, but instead chooses to get a 'job'? Or someone who doesn't do

that, but instead demands society support him in return for nothing?

Ex 21:7 is likely the practice of selling a daughter as a wife or concubine of a wealthy man. The practice was routine and acceptable, but the master has certain responsibilities toward her. Laws about murder and assault begin to include limitations on revenge. This is a key milepost in the moral trend away from revenge. Manslaughter punishment is limited to self-imprisonment in a city of refuge (Numbers 35). Escalation is forbidden with the famous “eye for an eye”. This benchmark of moral progress was already encapsulated in the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi of about 1772 BCE. It's very plausible that Babylon is where the Jews got this idea. It's permitted to beat a slave nearly to death, as long as he survives a day or two. If you knock out his eye or tooth, you need to set him or her free. The ox rules establish a principle of liability law. The principle of a slave as property is established and reinforced. 21:22-25 is in this context of treatment of slaves. It most likely refers to a pregnant woman slave. If you cause a premature birth and the child dies, you have to pay for it, just as you would if you bought it as a slave. It's still common law today. You break it, you buy it. This chapter is a good demonstration of why the Bible is a terrible foundation on which to build a moral standard.

Ex 22 defines restitution as the primary punishment for theft. Property rights are affirmed. Judges will be involved in applying and interpreting these laws. At least by this time, Homo sapiens has developed the mental capacity to generalize. We are the only species to do so, as far as we know.

Ex 22:16 If you seduce a non-betrothed virgin, you must buy her and marry her. In some areas, this moral judgment is only recently abandoned. 22:18 Kill any sorceress (witch, someone who casts spells). But only female ones? 22:22 Mistreatment of widows and fatherless and oppression of the poor are the most common complaints of the prophets. 22:29-30 This command to sacrifice your firstborn son, oxen, and sheep has no provision for redemption. Thus it requires child sacrifice. The version in Ex 13 requires the substitution of a lamb for a donkey or a human. That change probably happened as part of the Deuteronomistic ‘reforms’ of Josiah.

Ex 23 What happens with the things brought in accordance with these commands? Some is burned (usually the parts people don't eat). The rest feeds the priests. Ex 23:20 I suspect this 'angel' may refer to any seer / prophet who will be directing Israel and its leaders concerning whom to attack and when and how. Keep this in mind as you read of the battles and how they are directed. See what kind of meaning for 'angel' makes the most sense. Do not assume all usages translated angel refer to the same concept. The word used here is malak (Strong's 4397) – to dispatch, as a deputy; messenger; prophet, priest, or teacher. Who will fill this role for Israel? Joshua. 23:22 is part of the covenant. What are the benefits promised for obedience? God will be an enemy to your enemies. Food, water, health, wealth, fertility, and land. But you must remain strictly henotheistic. We see many expressions of jealousy. This is how they justified to themselves attacks on the residents of the lands they are invading, including the slaughter and the ethnic cleansing. 23:24 pillars, Deuteronomy 16:22, perhaps the ziggurat of Genesis 11.

Ex 24 describes another signing of the contract by the people, or is another mention of the original signing. 24:2 shows there are no witnesses. 24:7 the Book of the Covenant is almost certainly an anachronism. Most likely they didn't even have writing at this time. Again, the Hebrews accept the covenant. Ex 24:9-10 they saw the Elohim of Israel.

Ex 24:9-10, “Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel.” People desperately wiggle and squirm in efforts to rationalize this with 33:20. Still, Moses alone directly received the 'law and the commandment', with no witnesses. For all practical purposes, who wrote the Book of Mormon? Joseph Smith. Did he have witnesses? He claims 3 (all of whom eventually left the group) or 8 (all of whom were eventually excommunicated). The appearance to the elders and the signs of fire and smoke seem to be the only authentication offered to the people and the elders that Moses correctly brought the law. Another usage of 40.

Ex 25-31 are from the Priestly source. The 'contribution' is described as a voluntary tax for the building of the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. It's a radical departure from anything we've seen so far. Now we see why they had to plunder the Egyptians! Oops! We already have images of cherubim, traditional guardians of holy places. Perhaps this is from a different tradition, one in which images are acceptable. “Archaeological finds from non-Israelite societies suggest that these sometimes looked like



winged bulls or lions with human heads.” (ESV notes) This reminds me of a sphinx, like the Great Sphinx of Giza (photo from Wikimedia Commons). 25:31 ESV notes suggest the golden lampstand was a “symbolic tree, recalling the tree of life in Eden.” It seems incongruous to be giving instructions like this to tribes wandering in the desert. All they have is stuff they plundered from the Egyptians.

Ex 25:17 The mercy seat (kapporet) is also translated as atonement cover. The most prominent place is given to the 'testimony', a representation of the law. 27:21 is speaking most directly about the oil for the lamp, but seems to apply to the entire tabernacle and its service, by extension. “Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel.”

As you read Ex 18:1, list the required qualifications to serve as priest in Israel. Write them down before you continue reading. You must be a descendent of Aaron. You must be male! There is no requirement here for anything like moral purity or sinlessness. This is the institution of the **Aaronic priesthood**. Moses and Aaron are of the tribe of Levi. 28:3 The work is to be done by the 'skillful'. In class, someone suggested this meant wise of heart. To me, the usage of the word throughout this passage suggests the word really means skillful. 28:11 seems to be more graven images. The effusive display of wealth in the required priestly garments is either a testimony to the exalted role of priests, or it's a money grab reminiscent of modern televangelists. It's permissible to flaunt this wealth 'donated' by the people because God said to do it.

Ex 28:30 introduces the **Urim and Thummim**. The class chose to postpone more detailed discussion of these when we encounter them in use. As I see their usage, my view (and apparently the view of most scholars) is that these are objects of divination, more specifically cleromancy. A modern example is rolling dice. See Wikipedia for some examples of cleromancy. I also encourage looking up biblical usage of the word divination (the word used in the ESV). There was a time when Israel was forbidden to do this. But not at this time, or not according to this (Priestly) source. 28:42 is an early indication of the propensity of the Jews to cover up the human body. Islam has carried this to an even greater extreme. I read a suggestion that excessive clothing was relatively unique to the Jews. I'll stay alert for confirmation or refutation. 28:43 confirms priests must be descendants of Aaron, as does 29:9.

Next, Ex 29, is a lot of slaughter for a bloody consecration ceremony. Why kill the bull? See 29:35-37. 29:26 The contribution to support the priesthood. When a contribution isn't voluntary, I call it a tax. 29:28 says this tax is permanent. 29:22 speaks of a permanent burnt offering, while everything else seems to be talking about just the consecration ceremony. 29:27 The wave offering reminds me of the first century practice we see as meat offered to idols. Same idea, but here it's offered to Yahweh. 29:33 is the first mention of atonement. 29:37 and 30:29, "Whatever touches the altar shall become holy." In any other context, one would call this a magic altar. Perhaps the meaning here is that if something touches the altar, it may not be used for any other purpose. I think it's more likely a necessary counterbalance for all the other laws which say what is ceremonially impure / unclean, and how they can get that way. For example, if I touch an unclean person, I become unclean. 29:38 describes the daily offering. It's not specific here, but it would be consistent with other texts if this was what the priests lived on. 29:42-43 Who meets at the tent of meeting? See Ex 33:7-11. 29:45-46 declare God's intent to keep his side of the covenant. The text continues with a preview of perpetual required sacrifices.

Ex 30 begins with incense. Incense had religious usage throughout the East. It was used in Egypt around 2400 BCE, and in China at a probably similar time. See Wikipedia on the religious use of incense. Perhaps its real purpose was to cover up the stench of all the gory sacrifices. 30:9 Only authorized incense and offerings are permitted. 30:11 Remember the data path? God – Moses – Aaron – people. This text institutes a poll tax (corvee, **head tax**, capitulation tax, not a voting tax). Which source are we reading? The Priestly source, of course. The priests are setting their own salary. This is a professional priesthood. Take their word for it, it was commanded by God. The amount is half a shekel of the sanctuary per adult age 20+.

Shekel

The silver **shekel** was the most common coin of the Hebrews. In today's value, 11 grams of silver is about US \$7. Silver is much cheaper today than it was then. The earliest coinage in the region appeared after 600 BCE. The term shekel means weight, and was a unit of weight. We find the word first used in the Akkadian Empire around 2150 BCE. It's also used in the Code of Hammurabi around 1700 BCE.

When would Moses take a '**census**'? When he wants money for the priestly bureaucracy. The tax is neither progressive nor regressive. It's a flat tax. The penalty for non-payment is a plague (30:12). This was, literally, atonement money. A modern term for the practice could be extortion. Compare to Catholic indulgences. The penalty if a priest doesn't wash his hands or feet is death. 30:22 specifies the

exact recipe for holy anointing oil and for incense. Perhaps a purpose was to cover up the stench of burning flesh. Penalty for counterfeiting or use by an 'ordinary' person is expulsion from the tribes. 31:1 Yahweh hires specific artisans from the tribe of Judah. No competitive bidding. 31:12 Re-emphasis of Sabbath ("above all"), a distinctive of Israel. There's no way all this would fit on two stone tablets (24:12, 30:18). Ex 34:28 and Deut 10:4 say this is just the ten commandments (ten words). Even if they had a written language at this time (nomadic tribes don't need one), these tablets could plausibly contain symbols representing the ideas. The MacArthur Study Bible notes that "written with the finger of God" was a figurative way of attributing the law to God.

Ex 32-34 revert to the Yahwist source, so don't be surprised at discontinuity in thought. Placement of the golden calf story here seems to be showing that Aaron had not yet received the prohibition of graven images. But see my notes at 1 Kings 12:28. Bull worship was common, and Israel is given instructions for sacrificing them. Aaron seems to make weak excuses and blame the people. The Priestly source has just finished establishing the permanent Aaronic priesthood. Now the Yahwist source shows Aaron doing badness. Perhaps they think less highly of Aaron than the Priestly source. The Deuteronomistic source mentions the Levitical priesthood but never the Aaronic priesthood. Yet it includes an explanation (pleading by Moses) that the punishment wasn't greater. Moses vs. Aaron may have been a long-standing point of contention. This story may be intended to defuse the tension by showing badness by Aaron minimized by grace from Moses, and that the penalty could have been much worse. It's also a threat. If you do this again, you won't get leniency. Then Moses tells some Levites to go slaughter some people (about 3000 men). Is Yahweh jealous that the people are giving some credit to Elohim for the rescue from Egypt? Perhaps this was the original message of this story. I think the explanation that best fits the text is that the priests who offered the (apparently) unauthorized sacrifices were descendants of Aaron. They had been set apart as priests earlier in the cellulose (the text, as we have it assembled). Thus it is natural that they would be the ones offering the sacrifices. Moses apparently commands those Aaronic priests who did not participate in this feast to slaughter those who did. It's not clear why Aaron survived. It also seems to show why they need atonement.

Ex 32:4-5, 'And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"' – the word translated gods is *elohim*! I think Aaron is speaking of Elohim and Yahweh, the god[s] of Israel, not any other gods. The only badness by Aaron is making images. And again, this story may be saying that prohibition had not yet been given. I just found a reference to someone else who already thought of this. (Coogan, M. A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in its Context. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009. p.115.)

Ex 32:6 In context, 'rose up to play' is likely the singing and dancing typically done after the eating and drinking in a religious feast. That's the interpretation of Philo. Nothing in the context suggests anything we would call sexual impropriety.

Fundamentalists holding doctrines of inspiration have a field day with Exodus 32:15-16. They have a text saying plainly that this law was literally written by God. It's a shame we don't have them today. Since it's very unlikely these nomadic tribesmen had writing at this time, I expect the stones contained pictures or symbols the people could use to remind them of the verbal law. Otherwise, there's no way Moses could have carried them down from the mountain. Ironically, those same Fundamentalists have

discarded wholesale the vast majority of this law. In 32:19, Moses literally broke the law. Perhaps that's the origin of this phrase.

Ex 32:32 is the first mention of a **book**, without saying what it is. The only meaning that seems plausible in the context is that if you're in the book, you're alive. 32:35 seems to be an implementation of this threat, with Yahweh sending a plague on the people. It's an example of 32:34, "I will visit their sin upon them."

Ex 33 Yahweh threatens to back out of his commitment to dwell with the people on the trip. 33:3 is God's anger management. I think this is the first thought of an angel as a being or a personality, not just the action of God. If the punishment of verses 5-6 sounds light, ask a teenage girl to go a day without jewelry. Actually, it's a traditional sign of mourning or penitence. I would not use the word repentance this early in their history. Verse 11 speaks of the end of an era, Verse 20 supports this idea. "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." **Joshua** is introduced. Moses intercedes and Yahweh relents.

Ex 33:19 (see Romans 9:15) It's my universe, and I'll do what I want with it.

Ex 33:20,23 See Genesis 32:30, Ex 24:9-11, and Deuteronomy 5:24. Perhaps this meant from now on. Perhaps this is a change in views about seeing God. Or perhaps this is simply a contradiction. Notice the angst you feel, the cognitive dissonance, as you desperately try to rationalize this conflict with your doctrines. The change may also be an explanation for the absence of visual evidence for Yahweh.

Ex 34 shows the publication of the law, second printing. 34:6 If this is slow to anger, I'd hate to see fast to anger. Effusive language of mercy, grace, slowness to anger, and love is promptly contradicted by a reiteration of the threat to punish children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Perhaps the 'slow to anger' language is an explanation for why God doesn't immediately inflict the threatened punishments. This seems to be the first mention of this particular rationalization of the apparent failure of their philosophy embodied in the Mosaic Covenant. It explains why, sometimes, bad people don't suffer. God is being patient (longsuffering). 34:7 reiterates 20:5, and is probably the reason nearly everyone then living was not allowed to enter the promised land. God may forgive, but holds a grudge. Note that all the language here applies to Israel as a body of people. They have not expressed a concept of an individual being punished for his individual sins. 34:13 orders the people to cut down the Asherim of the peoples they drive out. These are sacred wooden poles used in the Canaanite religions to honor the Ugaritic mother-goddess Asherah, consort of El. Remember, we are reading from the Yahwist source. Jealous Yahweh will drive out the non-Hebrew Canaanites. The Elohist accounts showed lots of intermarriage. Yahweh says there should be none. More statements of law. Another 40 days. The first printing was broken. I wonder if this story of the first tablets is the etymological origin of the phrase 'to break the law'. Much to the dismay of those Fundamentalists rejoicing prematurely over 32:15, 34:27-28 tell us Moses wrote this second printing. I wonder why Moses didn't need the veil the first time. Perhaps because the first description was from P and the



second from J. 34:28 said Moses was there 40 days and 40 nights without food or water. The known record for survival without water is 17 days, but that didn't include climbing up and down a mountain carrying stone tablets. 34:29-34 I think the veil and the shining face were intended to convey the message that Yahweh spoke to Moses at the tent of meeting just as he did on Sinai. That would save Moses a lot of climbing. 34:32 is presented as the first time Moses tells the people the details of the law. Perhaps this is why the penalty for the golden calf incident was not more dramatic.

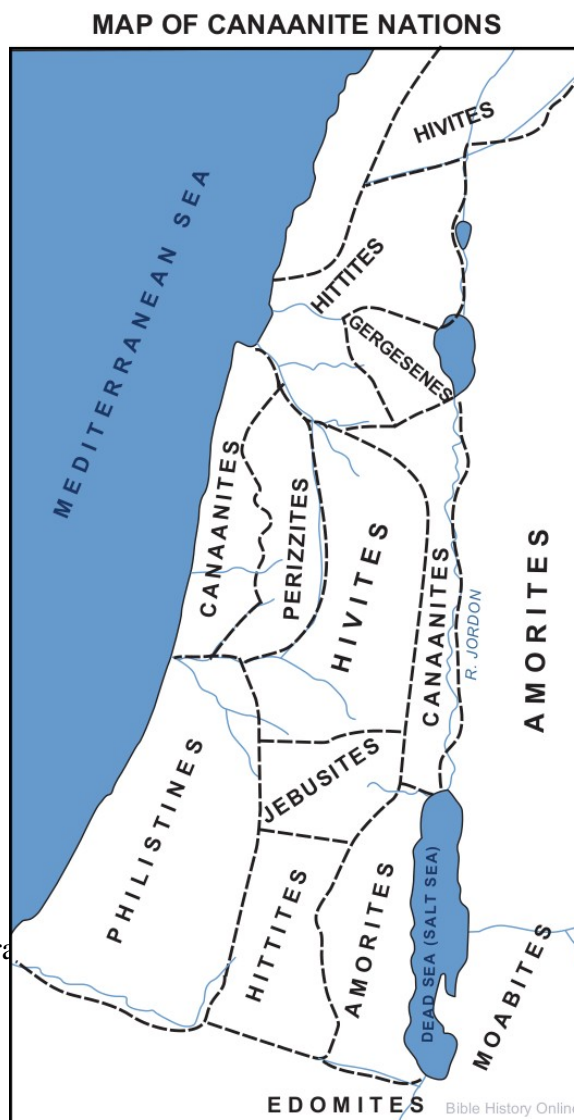
Ex 35-40 are from the Priestly source. Emphasis on the law. Dialog resumes just where the Priestly source left off in chapter 31. Compare Sabbath (here at the top of the list) with 30:12 and the 'above all' in 31:12. 35:4 (from P) describes the contribution as voluntary, though earlier texts (also from P) say it is not. Perhaps this voluntary part was just for building the tabernacle etc. 35:10 *every* skillful craftsman. 38 Bronze is a good material for burning things. This is toward the end of the Bronze Age. The bill of materials for gold alone was 29 talents * 75 pounds/talent * \$1314/ounce * 16 ounces/pound or about US \$46 million at today's prices (October 2013). With 603,550 men, that comes to US \$76.22/man. Today, Israel has a gold reserve about 1000 times that size. The US has about 7100 times that size in Fort Knox. Construction finally finishes in 39:42, and they did it all right. Ex 40 begins usage of all that stuff. 40:16, "This Moses did; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did." We see things like this often. Israel did not consider the commands of God impossible to keep. After all that has gone before, Moses can't enter. The end of Ex 40 seems to jump back to the desert journey. Yeah, almost forgot about that. 40:36, "throughout all their journeys", shows they were still nomadic tribes. It's why their place of worship was a tent/tabernacle, not a building.

The Ethnic Cleansing of the Conquest

Exodus 3:17, 23:23, 33:2, and 34:11 all express the stated intent of God to drive out / blot out the current inhabitants of Canaan. Deut 7:1 says God will clear away these nations. Deut 20:17 commands the people to devote them to complete destruction. Joshua 3:10 etc. says God will drive them out. See the map on page 67 of the ESV Study Bible, and <http://www.bible-history.com/maps/Map-of-Canaanite-Nations.pdf>.

Let's see who these peoples are.

1. Canaanites. While this could refer generically to any inhabitants of the land of Canaan, it is a specific allusion to the descendents of Cain who murdered his brother, Genesis 4:8. Genesis 4:16 says, "Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden." We know no geography, but the point was that it wasn't Eden. While they might have this in mind, the more direct reference is to Canaan, son of Ham, grandson



of Noah. We saw earlier the bad things said about Ham. Remember what Genesis 10:15-20 say about the descendants of Canaan: “Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.” The ESV notes say Canaanite sometimes refers to all of these.

2. Jebusites. They inhabited and built Jerusalem before David conquered it.
3. Perizzites. They lived where Abram and Lot lived before they split their herds, Gen 13:7. They inhabited the fertile regions S and SW of Carmel. Numbers 26:20 say the Perezites are the descendants of Perez (a son of Judah), whose unusual birth is described in Genesis 38:29. Per Ruth, Perez is in the line of David. Despite the similarity in the names, I suspect the Perezites are not the Perizzites.
4. Amorites. Gen 14:7 shows them inhabiting Hazazon-tamar (Engedi), west of the Dead Sea, near Masada and Qumran.
5. Hittites. In Gen 23, Abraham buys a tomb for Sarah from them. It seemed like a very amicable, business-like transaction. I see nothing negative about them until we get to Kings / Chronicles, besides their descent from Canaan and therefore Ham. Yet they are on the hit list. Perhaps that’s from their history as part of the Hittite Empire.
6. Hivites. Joshua shows them making peace with Israel, though there seems to be some deception in Joshua 9. Still, they’re on the hit list.
7. Girgashites. Nothing bad is said about them either, except they descend from Canaan and Ham. They’ll be kicked out as well.

By all appearances, Israel intends to drive all these peoples out of their homeland, and slaughter at least some of them, just because they think their god gave them the land. The consolation is that evidence from archaeology shows that this violent expulsion never happened. The later proposed date for the exodus (ca 1260 BCE) is near the time of the **Bronze Age Collapse**. This could be Israel’s legend for how the Hebrews emerged from the ensuing chaos.

Ancient tribes sometimes included myth / legend about the power of their god to discourage nearby tribes from attacking or conquering them. It’s presented as evidence to persuade Israel that their god is capable of meeting his commitments to them under the Mosaic Covenant.

Lecture 12 of course 653 The Old Testament from The Teaching Company covers the topic of the conquest, exposing literary motifs not apparent in English translation or not likely to be recognized without an understanding of peer literature. It also presents the various models for how this event might have happened.

Exodus Review

Write a list of things we have seen repeated over and over again in Exodus. Enumerate key themes of the text. Also list surprises you got from your study, things you learned that you didn't know before, and views you changed as a result. Briefly describe the covenants. In my view, there are four, the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic. What are the terms for each party? Were the covenants kept? How do you know? How do the authors of these texts answer these questions? If your answers

are different, explain and justify any differences.

Leviticus

It's Mosaic Law, in agonizing detail. This should not be surprising, since it's from the Priestly source. The literary genre is law. Read it. It's relatively mature priestly thought, composed ca 500 BCE.

Questions to Guide Your Study

As you read the text, please keep these questions in mind. Keep a notebook at hand to record your observations and bring them to class.

1. Notice how each section is introduced and concluded; Ask these questions for each section:
 1. Who is speaking? To whom?
 2. Whom is being addressed? To whom do the instructions apply?
 3. What is the instruction?
 4. Why?
2. What are the major offerings and how are they described? Who provides them? Who offers them? How often? Which are required and which are voluntary? Who kills the animal? Who does the sacrifice? Who gets the leftovers?
3. Who were the priests and where did they function?
4. What's so special about blood?
5. What were the required feasts?
6. When you get there, how does chapter 26 relate to the covenant?
7. Any surprises? What did you learn that you did not expect?
8. Which activities and sacrifices are related to sin? How is the term atonement used?
9. Which are instructions to the people and which are just for the priests?
10. What does it mean to be clean or unclean? What difference does it make? How can something become clean or unclean?
11. As used in this book, what does holy mean?
12. Ask these questions at each new section:
 1. Who is speaking?
 2. To whom?
 3. Addressed to whom?
 4. Applies to whom?
 5. What?
 6. Why?
 7. Exceptions?

Lev 1 seems to remove Aaron from the role of middle-man but keeps him as the patriarch of the priestly line. It shows Moses receiving these instructions at the tent of meeting, supporting Jewish tradition that Moses received some of the teachings of Torah at Mount Sinai and some at the tabernacle.

Whole Burnt Offerings: 1:2 seems to give only two choices, an animal from herd (likely oxen) or flock (sheep and goats), with slightly different treatment. The offerer does the killing. All these are

domesticated, though the earliest domesticated animal is believed to be the pig. We have seen practically no mention of hunting. This shows at least the northern tribes were still nomadic herdsmen. 1:3 Unblemished did not mean perfect. It was not an impossible standard. 1:14 allows an offering of birds, probably as a concession to the poor (5:7-10, 12:8, 14:21-32). In this case, the priest does the killing. We'll see later that these are offered every morning and every evening. This is enough for the whole people. Apparently the skins go to the priests. The outer layers of the tent of meeting were ram's skins and goat skins.

Grain Offerings: 2:1 describes a grain offering. Grain was likely the first domesticated plant, genetically engineered (actually, by selective breeding) for high density of nutritional energy. Corn may have been the earliest. Only part of the grain offering (the **memorial portion**) is burned. The rest (most of it) goes to the priests. Only that portion is described as **most holy**. 2:11 No **leaven or honey** in the offering. The honey surprised me, but perhaps it is forbidden because it is used in conjunction with the leaven (yeast) for fermentation of alcohol for beer. Salt, yes! Reread this chapter to see if these sacrifices were required (if at all) of each person or man of Israel, or just of Israel as a whole (more typical). More killing of animals.

Peace Offerings: Lev 3 Male and female. They offered the fat, blood, and some organs. Ritual sacrifices usually offered the parts people didn't eat. By implication, the priests get the rest of the meat. But Lev 19 seems to indicate that the offerer keeps the meat. Significance of the blood may be nothing more than that it represents the death of the animal.

Kinds of Sin

Be alert to what this author from the Priestly source means when he uses the word sin. I see two classes:

1. Ritual, violations of love Yahweh
 1. Sabbath – penalty is death, Ex 31:15
 2. others – sin offering
2. Moral or societal, violations of love they neighbor. I think it meant things earning jail time, not the pious displays of self-righteousness, bragging that I'm so sensitive to sin that I discovered four sins I committed today, and of course confessed them all.
 1. Restoration / restitution to the victim
 2. Sacrifices to Yahweh

From the Jewish Encyclopedia, "Under the Jewish theocracy, wilful disregard of the positive, or wilful infraction of the negative, commands of God as proclaimed by Moses and interpreted by the Rabbis."

I continue to look for clear definitions and delineations of these words as used by these authors. I fear these meanings have become muddled with the passing of time.

Sin Offerings: 4:2 **unintentional!** Repeated emphasis that only an anointed priest will do. It's a closed union shop. That means Aaron and his four sons offered all the sacrifices for all of Israel. Even if that were really a million people at this time, five priests was enough. Their idea of sin was clearly not that of some modern Christians, saying everyone sins many times a day. New here, and unique to Judaism, are sacrifices for the purpose of **atonement**, for forgiveness of transgressions against a moral law. But as I note elsewhere, look at all the references to atonement to see if it really always refers to sin. Other peer religions offer sacrifices just because they are required, and don't even incorporate any moral law.

More gruesome animal slaughter. This is a racket! The more people think they have sinned, the more income the priests get! Now I see the motivation for Calvin and Paul to teach the total depravity of man. Chapter 4 concludes with the effect of all the sin offerings. "And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven." Lev 5:16 requires restitution. 5:17 Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Lev 6 seems to transition to **intentional sin** like deceit, robbery, oppression, and swearing falsely. 6:8 might be instructions for the sin offerings or might be for all the burnt offerings. 6:12 speaks of a fire burning continually on the altar. This forms part of the imagery in later apocalyptic literature. Males only. 6:18, "Whatever touches them [male descendants of Aaron] shall **become holy**." 6:23 The priests can't eat their own offerings. 6:26 makes clear that the priests eat the sin offerings, but they must eat it in a holy place.

Time for a quiz

From what we have read so far, who brings offerings? Who offers the sacrifices? Anyone else? Are they all animals? Are they all for sin? How are they offered? (Wave offerings appear shortly.) Are all required? What happens with the stuff brought as offerings?

Guilt Offerings: 7 also called trespass offering. It's not clear how it differs from the sin offerings, but it seems to be more serious. Perhaps it's for violations which harm another person. Are these intentional? 7:19 talks unclean things, but we still don't know which those are. That comes later. "... that person shall be cut off from his people." What does this mean? Ostracism? Isolation from his family? Eviction from Israel? Is God threatening premature death? Is God demanding capital punishment? Texts demanding capital punishment (like Leviticus 20) use very clear language. That's one reason I think this isn't talking about death. I think it is demanding (or justifying) persecution of people who put Israel at risk for being judged by God as breaking the covenant. Societies have all kinds of ways of pressuring its members into conformity with its behavioral norms. That's what I suspect this means. 7:22 prohibits eating the fat of a certain class of animal. 7:25 tells us what those animals have in common. **Waving the offering** reminds me of the first century meat offered to idols. These offerings are summarized at the end of Lev 7.

Lev 8 looks like the actual consecration ceremony. 8:8 Aaron (and perhaps also his sons) are told were to keep the **Urim and Thummim** we heard about in Exodus 28:30, though there they seemed to be for Aaron exclusively. The class had agreed to postpone discussion of them until we see them used. Here, I'll at least list references. Deut 33:8, Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 14:41 and 28:6, Ezra 2:63, and Nehemiah 7:65, and perhaps also 1 Samuel 23:9 and 30:7-8. 8:35 another 'do or die' ultimatum. Lev 9 closes with a demonstration of the glory and fire. Deuteronomy 21:5 and Numbers 6:23-27 show the possible nature of these blessings of the people.

Microcosm of Ancient Jewish Philosophy

Leviticus 8-9 display a central idea of the philosophy of ancient Israel in microcosm. To this point, Leviticus has covered rules for the sacrifices required of Israel. Chapter 8 shows the consecration of the priests actually happening. It takes 7 days (completeness). The chapter ends with a declaration that "Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded by Moses." The very next day (chapter 9) shows a complete representative set of sacrifices. Moses tells the congregation, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." The chapter concludes by showing that's exactly what happened. The message is cause and effect. Do the sacrifices and get the blessings. These

chapters are written (or told to the listener) as evidence that the covenant works. It's described the way results of a science experiment would be described. Acceptance of this as evidence requires acceptance of this text as true. The message is that God has accepted the sacrifices.

Lev 10 begins with two sons of Aaron, **Nadab and Abihu**, offering 'unauthorized fire' and being killed by fire from Yahweh. At the very least, this follows the practice that goes back at least to the Hittites (and perhaps Mesopotamians) that ritual sacrifices must be pure. That is, offered exactly as required by the gods. See Exodus 30:9. The unauthorized fire could refer to practices foreign tribes use to worship their gods. 10:9 suggests they may have been drunk. Moses taps his uncle for replacements. 10:6, 12 shows Aaron has not yet run out of sons. At least **Eleazar and Ithamar** remain. According to Exodus 6:23, that's all. Keep neat and tidy or I'll kill you. Remain under house arrest inside the tent of meeting or I'll kill you.

Lev 11 Finally the rules of **clean / unclean animals**. It makes paranoia look tame. The dietary restrictions seem to apply only to the people of Israel. I think their primary purpose is the uniqueness of Israel. See also Numbers 19:20 etc. These tabus may have been very ancient, perhaps from before people in the region began cooking their meat. Their original reasoning (if it was based on reason) may be lost to antiquity. This reminds me of a story. Mom, why do you always cut off the ends of your roast? It's what my mom did, ask her. I don't know, ask my mom. Great-grandma, why? So it would fit in my pan.

Lev 12 a bit of gender bias and the practice of male genital mutilation.

Lev 13-14 are about a skin disease called tsara'at (usually translated leprosy). It's a generic term, not Hansen's disease. Some of this is good medical observation and practice of quarantine.

Please read Leviticus 14 and note the ceremonial practices with no plausible medical benefit. Make your own decision. Is this **superstition** or not? In your own mind, make a case for your decision so that you can defend it to others.

Lev 14:21-32 is one of many places where the required sacrifice is adjusted by ability to pay. "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." (Karl Marx, *The Criticism of the Gotha Program*, 1875). The rest of the ceremony is about the same. Next comes the cleansing of an infected house. It begins "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession," which reminds us they are still wandering in the desert and have no houses. Perhaps until this point they never did have houses, just tents. The continuation is interesting. "and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession," At least in this case, Yahweh claims credit for infecting the house. Some translations suggest Yahweh is responsible for the sign of the infection, not the infection itself. But he follows that with instructions for how to clean it up. 49-53 again seems superstition. Verse 53, "So he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean." is yet another indication that atonement is not just for sin.

Lev 15 is full of euphemisms about genital / sexual issues. "from his body" is often a euphemism for genitals. Again, I can't tell if it's superstition or medical practice regarding venereal diseases. Some strict Jewish sects (such as the Essenes) forbade sexual intercourse on a Sabbath. Compare this to Lev

18:19 and 20:18. To me, things like this chapter seem to show that atonement is not just for sin. It is first mentioned in Exodus 29:33.

Lev 16 talks about the whole **Day of Atonement**. 16:10 Azazel, with varying opinions about what it means. The best and most authoritative explanation I've found is here: http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1846869/jewish/The-Scapegoat-Atonement-and-Purification.htm. I think its purpose is a psychological fresh start, a clean slate. We did some bad things this year, but we weren't conquered by yet another empire, and we're not all dead, so I guess we dodged the bullet. We do this ceremony so we can officially start the year with zero demerits. 6:29 It happens annually on the tenth day of the seventh month, forever. I also think this was one way of explaining why they were not promptly punished when they disobeyed Torah. If you obey Torah now, you will be blessed. Why do good things happen to bad people? This ritual day is called a Sabbath, though it does not always fall on Saturday. That meant that Sabbath restrictions were to be observed on this day also. The **Hebrew month** was a lunar month, beginning when the crescent moon was first visible at sunset. Later, different sects of Jews would argue about whether a particular month started on one day or the next. That was important, since it determined the timing of feasts and temple ceremonies. Some of the months were given Babylonian names. They occasionally added a 13th month to limit precession and keep the spring events in the spring. Lev 16:29 afflict yourselves: "This term expresses self-denial and self-mortification, connected with fasting and prayer." (ESV notes) The chapter ends with another affirmation, "And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.", that it was not impossible.

Lev 17 emphasizes that the sacrificial system was a closed union shop. Only the designated priests were allowed to offer the sacrifices. Only the high priest was allowed to do certain things. This caste system was reflected in the architecture of the tabernacle, the later temple, and even their description of Mount Sinai. The first part of the chapter seems to suggest an offering must be made when any ox, lamb, or goat is killed. Perhaps that was true. I think it is more likely restricted to the killing of an animal for the purpose of sacrifice. I think the natural assumption upon seeing someone offering a sacrifice somewhere else would be that he's offering it to some other god. Jealous gods don't like that. 17:7 shows that the tribes formerly offered sacrifices to goat demons. I'm starting to look more into this. Compare with the Azazel. Don't do it any more, ever. If you're living in Israel, you may not sacrifice to any other gods. Who are these "strangers who sojourn among them"? At the very least, it would be the slaves. 17:10 Don't eat blood. No blood pudding / blood sausage for Israel. It's ok to eat what dies on its own (probably not a good idea) or something torn apart by beasts, but when you do, you become unclean. Perhaps this is because the blood was not properly drained. Even sojourners among them must abide by these restrictions. They can't sacrifice to their own gods while they are among Israel.

What has the vast majority of the text so far discussed? Sacrifices. Slight mention of restitution seems incidental to the main subject of sacrifices. The other topics are skin disease and dietary restrictions. This is all ceremonial law.

Lev 18:1-5 begins with another strong demand for henotheism. The emphasis is on *my* rules. The rest of the chapter covers sexual taboos and restricts **sexual intercourse** (note the euphemisms). For example, to

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“uncover the nakedness” of a man seems to mean to have sex with his wife. Unlike the laws granting certain protections to a wife, these taboos are a separate section, not in the context of property law. Though only verse 18 specifically mentions marriage, it is commonly believed that this whole section restricts marriage with close blood relatives and then close marriage-related relatives. Notice this: To whom are these instructions given? Who makes the sexual decisions? Except for 18:23, all these instructions are to men. Is there any OT example where a woman makes a marriage choice? It covers various close relationships like incest. 18:18 You can't marry your wife's sister while your wife is still alive. Recall the kinsman redeemer and also the NT question about whose wife will she be in the afterlife. You can't sacrifice your children to **Molech** (Moloch, an Ammonite god), but it doesn't prohibit sacrificing your children to Yahweh. The context of the Molech instruction suggests this is talking about sacrificing your children to service as temple prostitutes rather than sacrificing by fire. Recall that Israel didn't like the Ammonites, and insulted them by claiming less-than-honorable parentage for them via the scandal of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 9. Archaeology has found little or no evidence for Molech or of any bull-headed Phoenician god. No male homosexuality and no bestiality. Doing these things would make you unclean and that would make the land unclean. 18:24 Interesting that foreigners who did these things made themselves and the land unclean. They had no reason to follow practices dictated by the God of Israel. Perhaps the main point is in verse 28, where God threatens to kick them [Israel] out of their land just as he kicked their predecessors out of the land. It is used as an excuse to evict them. This section concludes with the famous, concise henotheistic statement of the unification of the gods of the north and south: I am Yahweh your Elohim.

The demand of holiness in Lev 19 reinforces the henotheistic nature of the covenant. A common definition of **holy**, as used here, is set apart, unique, distinct. We see it expressed clearly in Lev 26:12, “And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” No one else will be your god. No one else will be my people. This was a unique relationship in the ANE. Keep your distinctives by obeying Sabbaths. Worship me exclusively. This reminder includes reminders of a few key rules: revere parents; Sabbaths; no images.

I find some significant differences between the KJV and the ESV in this chapter. I think they are more than could be explained by translation, so I suspect differences in the textual base. Lev 19:5 Leftovers for one day only. They didn't have refrigeration, and I haven't seen any indication that they preserve by drying, salt, or anything else. If this was indeed a health or sanitation observation, the phrase “bear his iniquity” could mean suffer the natural consequences of his action. Since this is addressed to all the people of Israel, it seems to indicate that the meat of the peace offering stays with the offerer. This also reminds me of the NT meat offered to idols. 19:9 (with a tiny bit in 19:3) introduces **civil law**, the **Golden Rule**, love your neighbor as yourself. The fact that civil law is scattered among the **ceremonial law** shows that Israel was not making a point of any clear distinction between the two categories. Israel was required to obey all of it. Instead, it represents a summary, an abstraction, an encapsulation, a generalization of the law. I discuss this more in my Gospels notes on Matthew 22:36-40. Nearly all of the instructions require good treatment of fellow Israelites. Sojourners traveling with you receive less protection. Foreigners get no protection. Bleeding-heart liberals would be disappointed to read 19:15, which prohibits partiality either for or against the poor.

Leviticus 19:19, “You shall observe my statutes,” seems redundant. From chabad.org, ' [The term] מִצְוֹת, “statutes,” refers to the decrees of the Divine King, which have no rationale.' Apparent limits on

selective inter-breeding, or even crop mixing. This is an example of category confusion. It seems to forbid what Jacob did with Laban in Genesis 30. 19:17 What does it mean by hate? It should be the opposite of “reason frankly”. Throw away fruit for the tree's first 3 years. Forbidden is, literally, uncircumcised. The ESV notes compare this to a child before his 8th day. Offer the fruit the next year. After that, it's yours. Some ceremonial practices are stuck in here among the civil law. It is likely they all refer to Canaanite practices, emphasizing the requirements of distinctiveness and henotheism. By accepting the covenant, the people had already signed the blank check to do whatever their god told them to do. 19:18 makes clear that **your neighbor** means your own people, Israel. However, 19:33 extends at least some protections to sojourners. Similarly, the restrictions on vengeance apply only to your own people. But compare 19:33.

Jewish thought (see chabad.org) suggests this passage is about a specific instance of a Canaanite handmaid, partly a handmaid and partly a freed woman, betrothed to a Hebrew slave. She has been only partly redeemed, thus her marriage is only partly binding. It would be inappropriate for us to generalize from this specific case. “Assigned to” or “designated for” is a description of ownership and/or betrothal.

Leviticus 19 concludes with “I am Yahweh your Elohim” and uses it in some form 16 times in this chapter alone. The usage began in 11:44, and hammers the demand to separate yourselves. Lev 20 Israel is required to impose the **death penalty** for anyone who gives any children to Molech, curses father or mother, adultery, male homosexuality, bestiality, a medium (one who communicates with the dead), or necromancy (magic communication with the dead for divination, including things like examination of sheep entrails). Incest or intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period receive lesser punishment, cut off from your people, or childless. 20:27 imposes the death penalty for anyone who practices as a medium or necromancer, stronger than the penalty for consulting one in verse 6 and 19:31. That instruction ends with, “his blood is upon him.” That means the penalty of Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,” does not apply to the people imposing capital punishment. No one seems to know why this verse is here rather than immediately after verse 6.

Do you ever wonder why all the fuss about clean/unclean animals, people, and practices? Lev 20:25 answers that question.

Lev 21 prohibits priests from contact with the dead. Exceptions are made only for their closest relatives. 21:5-6 prohibits priests from adopting the mourning and burial practices of foreign tribes. Chief priests can't marry a prostitute, a defiled woman, or a divorced woman. By implication, others may. If a priest's daughter becomes a prostitute, the priests are ordered to burn her with fire. 21:10 places additional restrictions on a high priest. He can't let down his hair or tear his clothes (a symbol of mourning). He must marry a virgin of his own people (Israel). That's one way to make sure his children are actually descendants of Aaron. Clearly they did not believe in celibacy of the priesthood. 21:16 service limitations of an Aaronic descendant with a blemish (physical defect). They can still eat the food allowed for the priests. This sounds like their version of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). The list of blemishes indirectly gives an idea of what they meant by an unblemished sacrificial animal.

Lev 22 limits access to holy things. A priest's guest or employee may not eat, but his purchased slave may. You can't steal from the priests. 22:17 rules on freewill offerings and offerings to fulfill vows. 22:26-28 seem puzzling, but again, they may refer to fertility ritual practices of nearby tribes. The chapter ends with words difficult for us to appreciate or even understand. "I am Yahweh who sanctifies [separates] you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your Elohim: I am Yahweh." Remember it was Yahweh (not Elohim) who delivered Israel from Egypt.

Lev 23 enumerates the appointed [required] feasts. Guess how many. This calendar was one of many distinctives of Israel. Sabbath; Passover; Firstfruits; Weeks; Trumpets; Day of Atonement; Booths. 23:22 "your land" refers to Canaan, Palestine, Judea, the promised land they had not yet received. The repeated expression "in all your dwellings" is likely an anachronism. By the time this was written (during or after the Babylonian captivity, Diaspora), Israel had the idea to continue to worship the God of Israel even when they were no longer in the land of Israel. The first is [in the ESV] a Sabbath, not the Sabbath. The name is derived from 'seventh'. A holy convocation is a set-apart public assembly. The harvest feasts include limitation on gleaning.

The Hebrew calendar was a lunar calendar, with each month beginning at the new crescent at sunset. Occasionally an extra month was added so the harvest feasts could stay around harvest time. With this in mind, on what day of the week did Passover begin?

Lev 24 specifies the eternal flame and the bread for the tabernacle. 24:10 This was apparently the first instance of blasphemy, already prohibited in Ex 20:7 and 22:28. Or this was the first instance by a mixed breed (Israelite mother and Egyptian father). It required divination by the seer. Yahweh spoke directly to Moses on the subject. All the congregation shall stone [any blasphemer] to death, including any sojourner. Definitely not full freedom of speech.

Lev 24:17 states the groundbreaking principle of **an eye for an eye**. Inflict on the perpetrator the harm he inflicted on you. But it prohibited escalation. That was social progress. Capital punishment is clearly prescribed for murder. The people did it.

Lev 25 The Sabbath Year; the Year of Jubilee – You can't plant or harvest, but you can eat the food. See also Isaiah 5:8. redemption of property; specific support and definition for the poor ("cannot maintain himself"). His status is a bit higher than that of a slave. You are required to support him. There are clear distinctions between an indentured servant (of Israel) and slaves you buy from nearby tribes and sojourners. By implication, you can rule over the latter ruthlessly. Rules for redeeming an indentured servant. 25:14, 17 suggest the second greatest commandment, the Golden Rule. 25:20, 41 The 'brother' is a fellow Israelite. 25:26 But who can make idols? God. Who are those idols? Humans.

After a brief reminder about idols, images, and Sabbaths, Lev 26 moves on to the next section of the covenant in the style of the vassal suzeranty treaty: blessings for obedience. Compare to Deuteronomy 27-29. Look carefully at what Israel was legally entitled to expect. Next come the cursings for disobedience. This was the fodder for the prophetic worldview. If any of these bad things happen to you, you must have disobeyed. Read them carefully. It's nasty, but it's not hell fire and brimstone. All of the punishment is right here and now, right here on earth. The covenant closes with the summary, "These are the statutes and rules and laws that the Lord made between himself and the people of Israel

through Moses on Mount Sinai.”

Lev 26:2 speaks of sanctuaries, referring back to Exodus 25:8.

Lev 27 appears to be an appendix, out of context with the rest of the book. From the ESV notes, it seems to be about a non-Levite who makes a dedication vow. They can't fulfill the vow by serving on the temple grounds, since they are not descendants of Aaron. So they pay money. This establishes the amount of money, calibrated to the price of a slave. It establishes a tithe and concludes with another closing summary.

Numbers

Note any differences in ideas or writing style. The terminology of camp and tent show a nomadic lifestyle. How would you explain a relatively unified collection of nomadic tribes numbering 603,550?

In one sense, Numbers seems to continue where Exodus stops, and is often considered a continuation of Exodus from the Priestly source. As noted in the syllabus, I'll use a date of 1220 CE for the exodus. It's at the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Fragments of Numbers derive from the Yahwist and Elohist sources, but the bulk derives from the Priestly source. That's why it fits so well where it is in our Bible, right after Leviticus. So in that sense, it's more accurate to say it continues Leviticus rather than Exodus. I think it's more likely an independent narrative covering some of the same subjects. I think it reflects somewhat later Jewish thought, but not as late as the Deuteronomistic.

The Jewish calendar began with what event? Passover. It is now a year and a month later. This narrative seems to omit the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Since their covenant obligations have been freshly dictated to them, the covenant is very much on their minds. What are the terms?

Num 1 Was this census optional? Note that it is done by clans, by the father's houses. It was fully patriarchal. Here, a man was defined by male, over 20, and able to go to war. The latter two are somewhat redundant. Who chose the representatives? How do you know? Why is Levi separate? The priesthood was the line of Aaron, not all of Levi. None of Levi went to war.

Num 3:1-4 gives the generations of Aaron and Moses (brothers). 3:13-29 gives the generations of Levi. Where do Moses and Aaron fit in? Israel, Levi, Kohath, Amram (who married his father's sister Jochebed). Presumably this was before the law was given.

Num 3:13 is a key transition! See Ex 32:25-29 and my notes. The **golden calf** seems to be the reason given for the transition. From Exodus 11:4-15, each firstborn of the cattle was to be sacrificed and each firstborn son was to be dedicated to sanctuary service. The transition in Numbers 3:11-13 is probably saying that, because of the golden calf incident (Ex 32), the firstborn of Israel were no longer worthy, only the sons of Levi (Ex 32:36). That seems to be the explanation by this source. Num 3:46 shows this as a redemption transaction. The firstborn males of Israel are being redeemed by the male Levites. Because the former outnumbered the latter by 274, the difference is made up in cash. Now all of the service of the tabernacle is genetic. We'll be able to tell who is qualified to serve. See my notes on Exodus 13.

The Aaronic line is not only dedicated to the priesthood, it is given ruling authority over all the line of Levi. It is described as ownership, even as slavery (3:9). Num 4 is the inventory of this property. Again, the golden calf is the justification. We finally see a purpose of the telling of that golden calf story. 3:17-20 says the priests give orders to the Kohathites, with imperfect obedience to those orders punishable by death imposed by God.

Num 3:38 is an order to impose capital punishment, whereas 4:15 and 20 is a death threat by God.

Statistical Abstract of Numbers 3

603,550	Males (excluding Levi) from age 20 years (from Numbers 1:46)
22,273	Firstborn males from age 1 month
3.69%	Percent of males which are firstborn (approximately)
27	Average male children per mother

A common practice of Israel and others might help explain this apparent extreme data. They often slaughtered all the males of a conquered tribe, and then took all the females for themselves. Still, with a birth rate like this, they should have no trouble making their quota of sands of the sea / stars in the sky.

Num 5 begins by evicting the lepers. Next quantifies restitution of 120% for violations of civil law (someone wronged). 5:11-31 instructs a man who suspects his wife of infidelity. It seems likely from the rest of the passage that she is pregnant. This arguably (but not definitively) portrays the wife as the property of the husband. She is required to call down a curse of barrenness (childlessness, perhaps also miscarriage) upon herself if she is guilty. How do you know whether she was guilty? If she later bears children, she wasn't guilty. If she has a miscarriage, she was guilty. How do you think and feel about this? Note that there is no problem if it's the husband who goes astray. See Genesis 20:17-18. Like a placebo, a curse has precisely the power over you that you grant to it. The potion may not be quite so harmless. Perhaps it's just the dirt that people and their animals walk on. Perhaps it's from where the bloody sacrifices are offered. If 'guilty', she becomes an oath and a curse. That is, her name would be used as an example of a wicked woman. Perhaps this does represent moral progress, since the husband can't simply kill his wife if he suspects her of adultery.

Num 6 discusses the (apparently voluntary) Nazirite vow for a specified time. Verse 2 says it could be a man or a woman, but the rest of the text is all 'he'. The chapter ends with Aaron's blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Bless refers to the blessings (benefits) of the covenant. Keep (guard) refers to the specific parts about protection from your enemies and from wild animals. The face talks about Leviticus 26:11, "I will make my dwelling¹ among you, and my soul shall not abhor you." Peace is a broad term of general well-being. It also is a general term for the benefits of the covenant.

Num 7 refers to the construction, anointing, and consecration of the tabernacle. The offering is described in mind-numbing detail. The wagons and oxen were the moving vans for the tabernacle and all its acoutrements. 7:9 makes it clear the holy things must be carried by hand. It looks like a fixed offering per tribe, independent of the size of the tribe. As one example, at an August 2014 silver price of \$22/oz, the silver in the 130 shekel plate (11 grams per shekel) would be worth about \$1100 today. It's much easier to mine and refine today. 7:89 leaves no doubt that Moses heard the voice of Yahweh in the tent of meeting.

Num 8 sets up the lampstand (**menorah**), about 4.5 feet tall. The cleansing and consecration of the non-Aaronic Levites uses water sprinkling. That reminds all non-Baptist Christians of baptism. These Levites receive a full-body shave. At this point, none of them have taken the Nazirite vow. The text repeats the explanation of the consecration of the first-born, and the substitution of the Levites for them. 8:23-26 limits Levitical service of the tabernacle to ages 25-50. I suspect this is a compassionate retirement provision from the heavy duty of moving the tabernacle. I think it also suggests they expected the tabernacle to be always moving, following the tribes of nomadic herdsmen. Presumably they didn't yet know they would be wandering the wilderness for 40 years. Instead, this suggests they expected to be wandering forever.



Num 9 shows the first instance of the Passover remembrance celebration. Each memorializes the original event in Egypt, with the death of the firstborn of Egypt. 9:5, “according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the people of Israel did.”, is yet one more of myriad places where we are told that the people of Israel obeyed Torah. Again, it was not impossible! In 9:6, Moses is presented with another what-if situation. Law can never be complete. It must always be applied and interpreted by people. This issue probably progressed through the delegates to be resolved by Moses. As usual, Yahweh speaks to Moses, with no witnesses. The result is that those on long journeys and those who happen to be unclean by contact with a dead body to have their own Passover celebration a month later.

Num 9:13 sentences anyone breaking this law without excuse to be 'cut off from his people'. I now think this means they are kicked out of the tribes of Israel. I think it's a way to deal with an individual breaking the terms of the Mosaic Covenant to be excluded, so that the remaining tribe can still be viewed as keeping the covenant. The covenant is defined in corporate terms, not individual.

From here, look occasionally at the resource, *Parallels between Exodus and Numbers*, on page 71.

Pillar of Cloud and Appearance of Fire

Numbers 9 describes the cloud (which took on the nighttime appearance of fire) as a form of on and as an indication of the presence of Yahweh in their midst. I think it might have been the smoke from the menorah and the incense and other offerings, and the light from the menorah and other lamps. It told them when to pack up and move and when to stay put. In Numbers 12, it participates in the divination of judgment against Miriam.

Num 10:11 Israel finally leaves Sinai. It has been almost a year (cf Ex 19:1). 10:8 also shows their expectation of a perpetually nomadic lifestyle. 11:2 shows only Moses prayed. In Numbers 11, everybody is complaining! Moses then embarks on a woe-is-me rant to God. He receives no criticism for this. This, like the tone of the imprecatory Psalms, were typical Jewish forms of speech. They were not at all considered improper. As noted in the section below on The Spirit, 11:25 shows a partial and temporary delegation of the role of prophet.

The Spirit

As Yahweh commands (authorizes) Moses to delegate in Numbers 11, he describes what will happen. Moses is to choose 70 elders (all male, of course). “And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.” Compare this to the delegation of Exodus 18.

Most Christian translations (but no Jewish translations) capitalize Spirit, presenting not the text, but an interpretation of the text. The claim, of course, is that it refers to the Christian idea of the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word הָרוּחַ (ruwach, Strong's 7307) means wind, breath, life, anger, and many other meanings by extension including spirit of a rational being. In Torah, when you see 'spirit', it's nearly always this word, and if you see 'breath' it's often this word.

Usage of this word in Torah is exemplified in Genesis 1, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said ...” (again with Christian translators presenting the same interpretation). Better interpretation would be the life of God, or the action of God. The paradigm throughout Genesis 1 is God speaking with authority, causing action.

This is an extended example of a process of understanding what a Bible text means.

Now look at the context of Numbers 11. Yahweh heard the complaints of the people. As noted earlier, the path was likely by way of Moses. Throughout Torah, the data path is always Yahweh – Moses – [usually Aaron] – the people (and less often, the reverse). Moses complains about the burden of that task. What is that task? Conveying the words (breath) from Yahweh to the people (and back). That's what Moses is delegating. That's what Yahweh is authorizing these 70 [a favorite number] elders to do. Moses had the original assignment, and that assignment was permanent, lasting until he died. Verse 25 shows that the assignment to the elders was somehow not permanent. Perhaps that meant the delegation was not permanent. That's consistent with the rest of Tanakh. Perhaps it just meant that the authority of a particular elder was not permanent. More likely it meant that in the future, prophets would be appointed by Yahweh on a case-by-case basis, rather than by a board of elders. [Think about this in the context of church organization.] The rest of the chapter introduces and uses a name for that role: prophet. Verse 29 makes clear what was meant by Yahweh putting his spirit upon men, “Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit [sic] on them!” This was appointing and authorizing them to act in the role of prophet. The term prophet is used in an analogy in Exodus 7:1. The data path of Moses – Aaron – Pharaoh is like that of Yahweh – Moses – the people. As Deuteronomy 34 describes the death of Moses, it shows the role of primary prophet of Israel being passed on to Joshua. It also reiterates and explains why no one else saw Yahweh face-to-face, and in general, why no one else could command signs and wonders.

Numbers 11:26 shows that 70 were registered and called to the camp, but only 68 showed up. The other two are still authorized. We see an early view of Joshua, called only son of Nun. Num 13:8 shows Nun to be of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua could never be a priest. This poses a challenge for those who believe Jesus (Joshua) was a priest, such as (only?) the author of Hebrews.

Numbers 11:31 shows the “answer to prayer” for meat. From the ESV notes, “Quail (small partridges) migrate north across the Sinai Peninsula in the spring and return in the fall.” This was a natural phenomenon. The passage portrays this event as supernatural, caused by the direct intervention of Yahweh. The smallest gathering was about 60 bushels. Be careful what you ask for. They got the quail, but Yahweh “struck down the people with a very great plague”. So much so that they named the place *graves of craving*. The plague was selective, killing only the 'rabble' who were craving. I think (as do the authors of the ESV cross-references) this refers to the mixed multitude of Exodus 12:38, Leviticus 24:10, and Nehemiah 13:3. Again, I think things like this killing of people who angered Yahweh is the image invoked by the phrase “fear of Yahweh”. It meant fear. They move on to Hazeroth, perhaps somewhere around the western shore of the Red Sea (now called the Gulf of Aqaba), right across that gulf from Midian.

Numbers 12 shows the conflict (perhaps between different exodus traditions) about who was the prophet, Moses or Aaron. This unique text shows Yahweh speaking face-to-face with all three, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (a woman, no less!). It shows how Yahweh communicates through prophets, and how Moses was unique. “Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord.” Moses wins this round. After they wait for Miriam to become clean (7 days), they resume their trek to the wilderness of Paran, probably at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Num 13 shows Caleb making an optimistic report, while the other spies bring exaggerated reports of the dangers. 13:33 says they saw the Nephilim (sons of Anak) of Genesis 6:4. Since the Nephilim (who might be the descendants of the gods mating with humans) should have been wiped out by the flood, the spies might simply be drawing an analogy between the fierce warriors they saw and the legendary god/man figures. Or, the Yahwist tradition believed some Nephilim survived, but the flood story (woven from both Yahwist and Priestly sources) has them wiped out.

Num 14 begins with more complaining. In 13:10, the glory of Yahweh appears to all the people. This also is new. Yahweh over-reacts and responds with a threat to destroy them all and start over again with Moses. Moses intercedes on the basis of the reputation of Yahweh. The judgment of 14:22, “none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers.”, explains why there were no witnesses to the exodus, and why no one has seen the glory of Yahweh. All died in the wilderness. Future generations would just have to believe what Caleb told them. This is another instance of poetic justice. Let the punishment fit the crime. They liked the number 40. 14:19 is also an example of an age of accountability. Those age 20 and over were punished. The use of the word *maggepah* (plague) shows the bad spies (all but Joshua and Caleb) were killed by an act of God, just as the Egyptians were. The chapter concludes with an object lesson for

what happens if they don't follow the divination of the cloud/fire. It explains their defeat by Amalekites and Canaanites. They are driven to [Hormah](#), on the southern border of Canaan (Joshua 15:30), probably in the land of the Amorites, 30 miles southeast of the bottom of the Salt Sea (Sea of Arabah).

Num 15 begins with a review about sacrifices, perhaps with some new instructions. It continues with provisions for atonement for unintentional sins. There are some differences from Lev 4, though both are likely from the Priestly source. Verses 30 and 31 cover intentional sin, “But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.” Again, I think this meant they were evicted from the tribes of Israel, allowing the corporate body to remain obedient to the covenant despite individual violations. The divination of verses 32-36 show this excommunication was not intended to lessen severe penalties (the death penalty) for things like breaking Sabbath. Though Exodus 31:15 prescribed the death penalty, the previous verse allowed for some ambiguity in interpretation. The immediate instructions on tassels show they were intended as reminders of the threat of death. This shows what the fear of the LORD really meant, not the euphemisms we like to make of it. That will be emphasized in chapter 16. The chapter ends with the now-familiar declaration that Yahweh and Elohim are the same god.

The judgment in Num 16 against Korah, Dathan, and On is an example of divination to demonstrate who the official priests really are, and a threat to any who would usurp this role. It's how the priests stay in power. Legend and bluffing about things like this can be as powerful as action. The next chapter shows the unsurprising result of the divination. The man in power wins.

The leader from Levi seemed to receive greater punishment than the other three, from Reuben. This is another example of the principle we saw earlier. If evildoers are removed from the congregation by either death or excommunication, the remnant can remain pure. Malachi warns the priests that this could happen again in 3:3-4 with, “he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.”

This could also be a backstory invented by the priests of Aaron to justify their claim that they are the rightful priests, not all the descendants of Levi.

Bearing Their Iniquity

Num 18:1 uses a puzzling expression. Similarly, 18:23, “But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity.” The expression is used in Exodus 28:38. This seems to be a self-imprecation. If the priests or Levites do something wrong, they (not the people) will be punished. By implication, if they are not punished by God, they aren't doing anything wrong. It sounds like, “May God strike me dead if I'm lying.” Perhaps in Ex 28:38, it means they are bearing (carrying) the guilt of the people which is being covered by their sacrifices. Leviticus 10:17 seems to support that. See also Ezekiel 18:20. As introduced in Isaiah 51:17, the priests and prophets (Jerusalem) receive the punishment for the iniquities of the people (53:5-6 and 53:11), echoing this idea from Numbers 18.

In Num 16:20-24, Yahweh threatens to destroy the entire congregation. Moses and Aaron successfully plead on the basis of verse 22, “shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?” Moses then proclaims his own authority by condemning only the wrongdoers and their families to death by being swallowed up by the earth, and then 250 carrying incense. When the people complain about these killings, Yahweh again threatens the entire congregation with destruction. After Moses and Aaron again plead for compassion, Yahweh answers by killing another 14,700 by plague. The survivors are supposed to be glad it wasn't complete genocide of the tribes. In 17:13, the people express their natural fear, “Are we all to perish?”

I think that sets the context for chapter 18 as Yahweh says to Aaron, “You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood.” That does seem to be saying that, from this point forward, Yahweh will direct his punishments onto the priests rather than onto the entire population (verse 5). 18:23 extends this to the Levites as well as the priests.

Num 18:8 shows Aaron held the purse strings. By showing that only the clean may eat the best of the offerings, 18:11 expresses the idea reiterated in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are ye pure.”

In any other context, Numbers 19, the ashes of the red heifer and how they were to be used, would be considered superstition. Hebrews 9:13 is a reference to this.

Num 20:1 **Miriam** dies at Kadesh. She is arguably the leading woman of Israel. “It has often been noted that the leading woman of the NT was also called Miriam (English, Mary).” (ESV notes) There are about 18 archaeological sites people believe might be Kadesh.

Num 20:14 Moses requests passage through Edom; denied. From Gen 32:9, it's where Esau settled. The Kenite Hypothesis suggests the worship of Yahweh originated in this area of southern Canaan, including also Moab and Midian.

Num 20:10 Because the people complained, Moses and Aaron would be punished. 20:22-29 Aaron dies. 27:14 Moses passes the reins to Joshua.

Num 21:2 “Israel vowed a vow to Yahweh” This took me by surprise. We have seen Moses and Aaron as the chief actors in the drama. Now suddenly it's Israel? My first thought: This is probably a change in source. Lo and behold, it is. 21-24 are from the Yahwist source.

The chapter begins with an incident demonstrating behavior considered morally deplorable by modern civilization. If you give us victory over the people of this land we are invading, we promise to slaughter them. Israel had advanced beyond this heinous behavior by at least the fifth century BCE. Morality is a societal construct. People's standards change. The name Hormah means destruction. Israel had already been defeated in this area, Num 14:45.

Next is another incident of people complaining honestly that there is no food or water, complaining probably about manna, people punished by serpents, Moses intercedes. Under instructions from

Yahweh, Moses makes a bronze (probably copper) serpent image and sets it on a pole. John 3:14-15 almost certainly refers to this. Apparently Israel came to worship this image, 2 Kings 18:4. I thought they were told not to make images, perhaps in a different source.

Israel has now invaded and conquered most of the habitable land east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. They sing about their conquests and slaughters. More of the same. This seems a good point to reiterate the complete absence of archaeological confirmation of this conquest of Canaan. We see Israel setting initially in Shittim, near the Jordan and Jericho.

Num 22 Moabites and Midianites fear the hoardes of Israel so they try to pay a shaman to invoke curses on Israel. An eighth century BCE inscription found in Jordan reads, "Balaam the son of Beor, the man who was a seer of the gods." A fascinating dialog ensues. From Midian, it's no surprise that his god is Yahweh (v. 8), but then Elohim tells him not to do the curse. A seer shouldn't be surprised to get a vision from a different god, especially from the god of this invading mob. This account might be presented here to reiterate a major message of Torah, that Yahweh and Elohim are the same god. The angel (messenger) of Yahweh intercedes more forcefully, sword in hand. The context gives no basis for interpreting this as a theophany rather than a more routine vision / dream. More altars and sacrifices and repeated attempts. The sage Balaam makes many oracular proclamations, all favoring Israel. The final (uninvited) oracle comes in Num 24, where Balaam predicts that Israel will conquer them all. We soon see that happening. We are given no clue how Israel knew about any of this.

Num 25 reverts to the Priestly source for the rest of the text except chapter 32. Accordingly, the focus shifts from battle to worship. It shows people of Israel 'whoring' with the daughters of Moab. This directly and primarily refers to their worship of the gods of the Moabites, most particularly Baal of Peor. Baal was the chief fertility god of Canaan. Since only men were punished, there is some chance the men had sexual involvement with the temple prostitutes of Baal. Verse 8 shows severe punishment for bringing a Midianite woman into a family. The Yahwist source shows no such hostility to Moses when he does the same in Exodus 2. Acting on his own initiative, Phinehas murders both the man and woman. His punishment is lavish praise from Yahweh and the promise of an eternal priesthood for his descendants. He is one of the two surviving sons of Aaron.

Num 26 Yahweh demands another census (thus more money into the priestly coffers). Judah is the biggest. The total of men age 20 and over is 601,730 from verse 51. Presumably attrition of the 603,550 of Num 1:46 from death and battle and slaughter by Yahweh are fully compensated by birth, perhaps intermarriage from other tribes (unlikely), and conquest of slaves. But slaves probably wouldn't be counted in that number. Verses 64-65 tell us that everyone who had been condemned to death in the wilderness (Num 14:22) has already died. With 27:13-14, this confirms that Israel is poised to enter their promised land. I don't see a specific time reference here for the traditional 40 years. Next, Yahweh orders Moses to apportion the land among the tribes, with size proportional to the population from this census.

In Numbers 27, I see a powerful example of moral progress by a society. Since so many men of Manasseh were slaughtered in the Kohath affair, this tribe, and especially these women, would receive a disproportionately small inheritance. Remember, the census was of men. These innocent women were being (inadvertently) penalized for the sins of the men. When a good society discovers inequity in its

traditions, it changes them, and finds a way to rationalize the change. Here, Moses is still around to consult with Yahweh, who generalized the situation and gives them a body of law as a solution. Demonstrating another axis of moral progress, daughters (women) are at the head of the succession order. To this point, we have not seen women with this degree of privilege in a very patriarchal society.

In 27:12, Moses is reminded of his own punishment. He gets to see the land but not enter it. Apparently accepting his fate, Moses asks for a successor leader for the congregation. Yahweh orders Moses to commission Joshua son of Nun as his successor. Presumably his own sons Gershom and Eliezer are ineligible because they died in the wilderness. We never hear anything about them. Joshua receives only some of the authority of Moses. The era described in Num 12:8 comes to an end, “With him [Moses] I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD.” The death of Moses is noted in Deuteronomy 34:5. At the time of that Deuteronomistic writing, there had not been another like Moses. That text implies the passage of a significant amount of time between the death of Moses and this Deuteronomistic writing. From here on, Eleazar the priest carries the sole responsibility for divination, using the Urim (and presumably also the Thummim). These were mentioned in Ex 28:30 and Lev 8:8, and will be discussed more at 1 Samuel 14:41-42.

With Num 28-29, the context suddenly jumps to offerings. They seem to be combined here into a single schedule. I leave as an exercise for the student the task of confirming that all the details of these offerings are consistent with the earlier specifications. Perhaps these are the last instructions from Moses to his successors, to make sure they properly complete their most important tasks, the sacrifices. The presumption is a land rich enough to fund this sacrificial system. From ESV notes, the total annual national sacrifice was 113 bulls, 1,086 lambs, over a ton of flour, and 1,000 bottles of oil and wine!

In Num 30, Moses instructs tribal leadership (civil government) with some arcane rules about vows. His final act in Num 31 is to preside over the attack on Midian. They killed every male (including the kings) without a single casualty (v. 49), enslaved the women and children, and plundered the cattle, flocks, and goods. Then they burned all the cities and encampments. Oh, remember that sage of the gods who refused to curse Israel? They killed him too. Some gratitude. His prediction was correct. Not fully satisfied with the slaughter, Moses ordered the execution of all the survivors except for the young virgin girls, which they could keep alive as slaves. They had to ceremonially purify all the booty.

Num 32 is probably from the Yahwist source. Now we see the 40-year tradition. Perhaps this is a flashback? Perhaps only the southern tribes had this fixation on the number 40. The tribes of Gad and Reuben settle east of the Jordan, but the men still go to war. More conquering.

Num 33 back to the Priestly source for their brief version of the exodus, joining the 40-year party. Be sure to destroy the symbols of their religions. Drive out ALL the inhabitants. Borders are defined in Num 34. See the ESV map on page 320 for an estimate of how these borders might work out. This is the first division of the land by tribe. In verse 13, Moses commands that the land be divided using the lot as a tool for divination. 2.5 tribes have already petitioned for their allocation and received it. Verse 16 shows Yahweh appoint specific men to perform the land division. Here, Canaan is used to refer only to the land west of the Jordan.

Num 35 is where the Levites, denied a tribal region, are given cities with surrounding pasture land. After all, they are required to raise the animals for the sacrifices. Perhaps they are isolated to preserve purity. Anyone outside the walls but within 1000 cubits is in Levitical pastureland. These cities are dispersed, and include the cities of refuge. I think this also acknowledges the fact that, before Josiah, religion wasn't centralized. Joshua 21 reports the completion of the establishment of these cities. The distinction between murder and manslaughter is made here. The avenger of blood (see Deut 19) is the go'el ha-dam, the next of kin responsible for imposing the death penalty for murder. These cities of refuge were a form of self-imposed imprisonment, with the term limited by the lifespan of the high priest. This is an example of moral progress within Israel. This legal structure declares manslaughter a lesser crime than murder. It provides a judicial process (the congregation with witnesses) to decide guilt, and protects the accused. It limits vigilante justice by the family of the victim.

Num 36 concludes the book with more accommodations to the daughters of Zelophehad. This seemingly isolated and irrelevant topic has a couple of interesting features. Daughters as heirs is new. Usually it's sons, with the eldest son getting the biggest share. The judgment prefers incest to transfer of wealth between tribes. Why doesn't this account show Moses consulting Yahweh? Was that assumed? Or, since this was a civil rather than religious matter, was a consultation unnecessary? Yet the congregation considered this ruling as a proclamation by Yahweh. Perhaps this is an early indication (or an anachronism) of priests speaking for Yahweh.

Deuteronomy

This book marks our first foray into the **Deuteronomistic** texts. The Deuteronomistic history refers to Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Deuteronomistic redactions probably occurred in Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea. The English name is a transliteration of the Greek name meaning second law, which was a mistranslation of the Hebrew from 17:18. It is a retelling of the law (literally, second law) from the perspective of the 'reforms' of Josiah. Many think it was actually written (not just 'discovered') by Josiah during the seventh century BCE, perhaps ca 640 BCE, as a propaganda campaign to bolster his own political authority.

The ESV notes show how this book fits the structure of a vassal suzerainty treaty. My notes on the Mosaic Covenant cover this in detail. This section is organized according to that structure. Many think it was written (not just 'discovered') by **Josiah** (641-609 BCE) during late seventh century BCE. Final edits likely occurred after the return from Babylonian captivity in the sixth century BCE. The legal code is reorganized into four distinct components: religious, governance, civil, and criminal. The boundaries in the texts aren't strict. The law for the sanctuary supersedes that in Exodus 20:24, suggesting Deuteronomy was written long after the exodus. Its law includes the reforms of Josiah, suggesting it was written to grant divine sanction to Josiah's reform actions. A major aspect of these reforms was the centralization of worship (therefore power) in Jerusalem, discussed at Deut 12. Some of the reforms are noted in 2 Kings 23.

My objective is an understanding of this central idea of Jewish religion and philosophy, the Mosaic Covenant, as they understood it, and as they expressed it. It's their law, their contract, their religion, so they are authoritative on the subject. Christianity has no authority or ability to change what ancient Israel believed. Understanding the texts means understanding what they believed, not what Christians

believe.

Preamble and Historical Prologue

The title of the superior party is always the unification title from Exodus 20:2a and many other places, “I am Yahweh your Elohim” (Exodus 20:2a). The scene for the presentation of this covenant is set in the conquest narrative, as a pause before crossing the Jordan into Canaan. This literary work weaves presentation of the treaty into that conquest narrative. The brief mention in verse 4 of the conquests they had already made assure the party of the second part that the party of the first part is capable of fulfilling its obligations. See Joshua 9 and Exodus 20:2b, “... who brought you out of the land of Egypt ...”. This is also an example of Yahweh keeping his part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Throughout the history of Israel, the leaders need to keep reminding the people that Yahweh is capable of keeping his end of the contract. This claim will be repeatedly challenged by events on the ground, over their entire history.

Deuteronomic Legal Code

These regulations and stipulations typically form the bulk of such a treaty. Chapters 12-26 cover this. They typically require loyalty of the vassal to the lord, and restricts additional alliances. The **Decalogue** (the **Ten Commandments**) of Exodus 20:3-6 and Deuteronomy 5 is a concise, memorable excerpt. A concise overview can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomic_Code.

The Ten Commandments and the Morality of Ancient Israel

It is inappropriate to assess or judge the morality of ancient Israel by just this memorization of a few key points. Instead, one must study Torah itself to discern their moral code at the time of writing, or at least what the priests wanted it to be. Then follow the ‘histories’ to see how the code was (or was not) observed, recognizing that authors made some attempts to record things they no longer practiced, and to downplay things they no longer considered moral (like human sacrifice). Anachronisms also slip in here and there. Honesty requires recognizing that societies tend to improve their moral codes over many generations. Study reveals that progress within Israel over the course of Tanakh. It’s ok to admit that ancient societies considered practices acceptable that modern societies consider immoral, such as human sacrifice, slavery, lower privilege for women, and so on.

Religious Law (12-16)

Governance (16-18)

For most of Torah, little is said about governance. We know the earliest cultures of the ANE were those of nomadic herdsman tribes. Their society was strongly patriarchal. Whatever the patriarch says must be obeyed. That was universal, thus unnecessary to explicitly state in the writings. We see evidence of that throughout the writings. Moses imposed a new regime. He became the autocratic dictator. The basis of his power was the direct transmission of information and commands from Yahweh (though there were no witnesses). We already noted an impending change. Joshua is given a subset of the roles played by Moses, that of general or chief executive officer. He would lead the military conquest. The religious roles had already been delegated to the Aaronic priesthood (for the Deuteronomistic source, the Levitical priesthood). At the advice of his father-in-law, Moses had delegated most of the interpretation of religious law, though he retained the supreme court role when needed. Part of Israel's acceptance of the covenant was the acceptance of rule by the priests. From the introduction to the

offering and acceptance of that covenant in Exodus 19:5-6, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” In a way, the priests would be the kings.

An outsider observing the Hebrew society would describe the patriarch of each tribe as its king. Moses had authority over all of them. Earlier empires of Assyria and Persia used this governing structure. Daniel 2:37 applies the term to Nebuchadnezzar. “You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory ...” That term, of course, is king of kings.

Deuteronomy 1 formalizes a hierarchical structure of military and political leadership, as well as a judicial system charged with impartiality. Moses still retains the role of supreme court. “‘Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.’ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes.”

Civil Law (22-24)

Criminal Law (22-25)

Safe Deposit and Public Readings

Deuteronomy 10, Yahweh orders Moses to write the Decalogue on replacement stone tablets to keep in a wooden ark. The order for public readings is given in 31:10-13, “At the end of every seven years ... you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.” Joshua 24 shows this reading used as a formal renewal ceremony.

Witnesses

Typically these are the gods of all the parties. Given the jealousy of the God of Israel, the Mosaic Covenant uses the people as both signatories and witnesses, and also monuments like stones. This is covered in Deuteronomy 32, with another example in Joshua 24.

Blessings and Curses

Deuteronomy 7:11-24 and 28:1 vs. 28:15ff are summaries, while chapters 27-28 cover the subject. Exodus 23:22, “But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.” Throughout my notes, I show texts describing events as examples of the blessings. Later, the prophets will proclaim the curses.

Deut 1 includes delegation similar to those of Ex 18:18-26 and Num 11:14. This part includes tribal leadership and judicial practice. Moses retains ultimate authority.

Deut 2 begins with explicit reference to Esau and his descendants (Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites).

Deut 4:15-24 attempts a rationale for the prohibition against making images. The people did not see Yahweh at Horeb (the name for Sinai in the Elohist and Deuteronomist sources). By implication, you don't know what Yahweh looks like. So don't make any image. From the context, the specifics are likely typical images used by foreign tribes to represent their gods. Deut 4:25-31 continues with a threat and a promise. Did any of this ever happen? How do the Assyrian captivity of Israel and the Babylonian captivity of Judah fit this picture? This text was written to explain that part of Israel's history. Yahweh your Elohim is next compared to the other gods. 4:39 restates the identity, Yahweh is Elohim. "In his Aramaic translation, Onkelos paraphrases this verse to avoid potential misconceptions on the part of the reader. ... Onkelos clarifies that it is G-d's shechinah ("presence") that is in Heaven and rules on the Earth below." (Orthodox Union, <https://www.ou.org/torah/nach/oneone/deuteronomy-439/>) The context immediately before makes it clear that this is not a statement of monotheism. That came later.

Next follows the part of the preamble describing the declaration of the covenant in the past. See p. 325 in the ESV Study Bible. Chapters 5-11 are General Stipulations.

Deut 5:4 clearly says Yahweh spoke with Israel face to face; 5:25 explains why Yahweh no longer does this. The people asked him not to. These two chapters are the Deuteronomist explanation for why no one since Moses has ever seen or heard God. See also Exodus 20:19 and Deut 18:16. 5:29 clearly expresses the covenant mindset, "that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!"

Deuteronomy 5-6 form a concise and memorable overview of the law. The unification of Yahweh and Elohim is stated no less than 14 times in chapter 6 alone. Chapter 5 includes the explanation for why no one (after Moses) ever saw or heard God. The **Shema** of verse 4 is recited twice daily (mitzvah) by observant Jews.

Verse 4:

שְׁמַע, יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד.

The complete Shema includes verses 4-9, Deut 11:13-21 (consequences of obedience vs. disobedience), and Numbers 15:37-41 (the prayer shawl (tallit) with four fringes (tzitzit), and is read weekly.

The chapter gives the reasons for obeying: longevity; prosperity; population increase; land. Conspicuous by its absence are protection from, and victory over, your enemies. Israel was done with their conquest phase. Especially in Diaspora, they learned that political independence was not essential to the preservation of their religion and culture. They would forget that lesson by late first century, and pay dearly for it.

While the entire book covers the entire scope of the Mosaic Covenant as a vassal suzerainty treaty, this chapter focuses exclusively on the obligations of Israel expressed as commandments. Israel must know these commandments and do them. They were to immerse themselves in learning and rehearsing the rules throughout each day, not just weekly or annually. No Christian does this. Note that this was

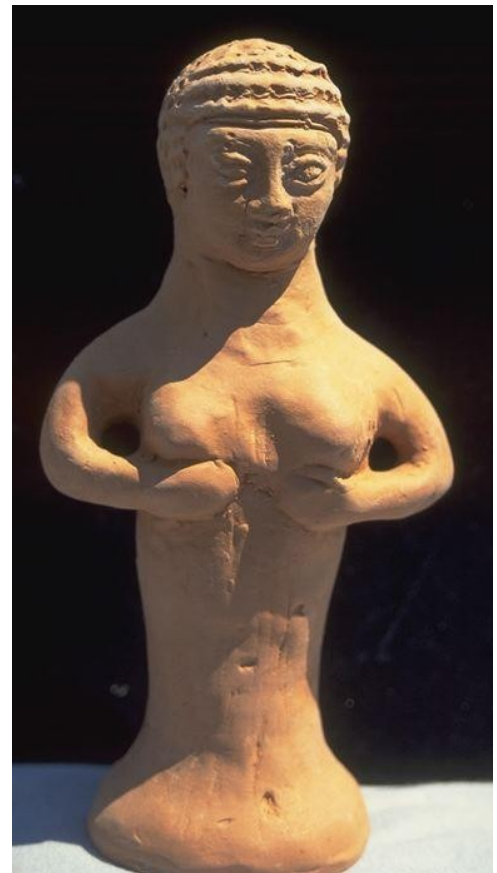
specific to Torah.

Israel considered this covenant to be permanent, unchangeable. Genesis 17:9, 'And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.'" This idea is sealed in 12:32, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.", as well as in 4:2. In the civilized world, the legal principle of rule of law is: Obey the law, as amended. Central to something even as broad as the US Constitution is recognition of the need to amend it, and a formal process for doing so. That's how we were able to abolish slavery, permit women's suffrage, address other voting disparities, and even experiment with social engineering (prohibition). It lets us correct our mistakes. Prohibition was the only amendment to be repealed. With a moral code as part of their religion, and a written form of the code, it was difficult for Israel to improve their moral standards. Yet they found ways.

The jealousy of Yahweh is emphasized. Only Israel was monolatrous. In 6:20, the people are given a rationale to offer to their children as encouragement to follow their instructions. In this text, credit for Egypt goes strictly to Yahweh, with Elohim notorious in its absence. 6:25 defines righteousness, "And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us." That was their understanding. Righteousness was obeying Torah.

Deut 7 begins with another enumeration of the nasty 7. See 'The Ethnic Cleansing' in my notes on Session 1 about why Israel didn't like them. "then you must devote them to complete destruction." (7:2). Other sources show that they had already been intermarrying with these tribes (including no less than Moses). The **Asherim** were wooden poles or trees, cult objects for the worship of the fertility goddess **Asherah**, consort of Baal and/or Yahweh. Moses and Aaron likely carried her sacred poles (the staff of power) until she was purged from Hebrew scriptures around 500-400 BCE. People of Israel worshiped the goddess Asherah for a very long time, despite the objections of Josiah. 7:10 destruction if you hate (disobey) me. There was to be no sickness. "There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock."

In Deut 8, another entire chapter is devoted to promotional material about why they should obey Torah. Is this the first instance of a death threat if they don't obey? They will live if they do obey. Shortly (verse 20) the threat becomes more explicit. Verse 11, "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God", what would it mean to forget? The answer is here (not keeping the commandments and rules) and in verse 19, "go after other gods and serve them and worship them."



Deuteronomy 9 expresses three major ideas many think are uniquely Christian. See if you can spot them before reading on here.

The Anakim of Deut 9 (the giants of chapter 1) are likely the Nephelim. Apparently the Deuteronomistic source doesn't think the flood fully wiped them out. Israel is charged with finishing the job. Deut 9:5 diverts blame for the impending genocide (חרם, *hērem*) away from the people of Israel. "it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you." It's also an early expression of the Jewish idea of grace. Their righteousness isn't what is giving them the land. Their very existence after Horeb and Sinai are mercy. The involvement of Moses in preventing their destruction is mercy. Verse 9 quotes Moses as saying, "I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water." That length without food is plausible, but not without water. Terminal dehydration happens within a few weeks, and usually within several days. 9:18 exacerbates the absurdity, saying he did another 40 days, presumably without even an intervening meal. He continues, "And the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly." There's no way Moses (especially a dehydrated Moses) could have carried stone tablets containing all of the law, so most think this refers to the ten commandments of 5:22 and 10:4. I think they were simple, symbolic reminders, since it's unlikely these tribes had writing at that time. Indications of Hebrew writing can be found around 1000 BCE at the earliest. The prominence of the popular number 40 is another indication that this literary account is legendary. Verse 12 shows the apparent contradiction of Israel in trouble for breaking a commandment they had not yet received. Legend is never expected to be thoroughly comprehensive and consistent.

Golden Calf

The **Golden** Calf incident deserves a separate section to emphasize its significance. The priests of Yahweh / Elohim were monolatrous; the people of Israel weren't. We'll see that throughout the history of Israel. Otherwise the writers wouldn't need to keep waving this flag. If you haven't figured it out already, we are reading the writings of the priests. But not just the priests, the Deuteronomistic priests. This text presents their side of the story. The Elohist and Priestly sources had their say in the Exodus account.

The Deuteronomist [an abbreviation for the author(s) of the Deuteronomistic texts] wrote Aaron almost completely out of their history. Deut 9:20a, "And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him." Except for his death (10:6 and 35:20), Aaron is never again mentioned. The priesthood is always described as Levitic, never Aaronic. 18:1 is an example. The Deuteronomist here presents his explanation for that. Aaron lost his credibility and his role because of his participation in this incident. This may have been the primary justification for the Deuteronomistic 'reforms'.

Deut 9:20b, "I prayed for Aaron also at the same time." The natural inference is that it took nothing less than the pleading of Moses to save you. Don't expect this to happen again. Part of the appeal to Yahweh was, "Think of your reputation." We never see anyone else praying. Only prophets or shamans do this. It's not for the common people. Much later, in Diaspora, Jews began to consider prayers as a form of replacement for sacrifices.

Deut 10:8 cites the sanctification (setting apart) of the Levites, but adding a specific duty, carrying the ark. 10:16 is an analogy, not a replacement for physical circumcision, see 30:6. The emphasis is in v.

17ff on social justice is new to the Deuteronomistic source. Genesis 46:27 does say that only 70 people (not counting slaves) of Israel entered Egypt with Joseph. 10:22 declares that the population component of the Abrahamic Covenant has been completed.

Deut 11-12 continue the persuasion to obey Torah. 11:13 emphasizes the conditional nature of the Mosaic Covenant. Israel always had a choice. 12:8, “You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes,” is not anarchy. It's just the original decentralized worship. Likely each tribe managed its own sacrifices.

Jerusalem

Deut 12:13-14 portends the centralization of worship in **Jerusalem** by **Josiah**, king of Judah 641-609 BCE. Conquered by David from Jebusites around 1000 BCE, later expanded by Solomon, Jerusalem would fit easily on Valley Church property of 4.28 acres. It didn't reach 1/3 of an acre until around 1540 (now called Old Jerusalem). The summary of the three major week-long feasts in Deut 16 required the annual attendance of all (adult?) males, or perhaps everyone but the wives. From the exodus accounts, that ranges from 600,000 to 2,000,000 people. To fit into Jerusalem, they would need to stand tightly packed 5-20 people high. All of Israel was about the size of the US state of New Jersey, our 4th smallest state. The state with the highest population density, NJ houses 8.9 million today. In the more agrarian economy of 1790, it housed only 184,000 people. They could pack onto Valley Church property without stacking. No record of Josiah exists outside of Tanakh.

Verse 21 is a concession to those far from Jerusalem. Verse 22 says don't deny food to someone ceremonially unclean. Verse 30 says don't even learn about the competition.

Christian Bibles end chapter 12 with verse 32, “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.” That helps preserve the power of the incumbent priests. I have read that Jewish Bibles have this instead as the first verse of the next chapter. In that position, it would show our chapter 13 as expansion of the idea to not add to, or take from, the commandments of Moses. If you were a serious, observant Jew of Second Temple Judaism, with this idea as a key part of your religious philosophy, how would you respond to the ideas you were beginning to hear about this new religion about Jesus? Of the many popular portrayals of Jesus, and things said about him, what ideas would you entertain and what would you reject? This would easily explain why Jews refused to worship Jesus as a god. By the first century, they were firmly monotheistic. Paul would certainly have been found guilty of this.

That command prevents them from ever changing the law. We also saw this in Deuteronomy 4. Moses, who defined the law, is about to die, so he seals the law from future changes. “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.” Be alert to ways that Israel, over the course of their history, managed to raise their standards of moral conduct, choosing not to follow parts of this law, while maintaining their position that this treaty remains in effect. Note how they rationalize their choices.

Deut 13 includes a familiar test of a prophet or a 'dreamer of dreams' with an unfamiliar twist. Even if they pass the prediction test, reject them if they promote other gods. If that happens, it's a test from your god. So kill that pawn of Yahweh. Oh, and even if a close friend or relative tries to sell you the competition, kill him. Perhaps this even allows you to bypass the due process of getting 2-3 witnesses. Many atheists, often more knowledgeable of the Bible than Christians, offer this as a prime example, saying, "If this is the nature of the god you serve, I want nothing to do with him." That was also a complaint of the Marcionites, who therefore concluded that Jesus must have been a god different from the God of Israel. Oh, and if it happens in one of your cities, slaughter every human and animal in that city and burn it, and never rebuild it.

Imagine Paul on trial for violating Deuteronomy 13. As the prosecuting attorney, how would you accuse him? As the defense attorney, how would you defend him?

Son of God

Deut 14:1 is one of several texts in Tanakh referring to Israel as sons of God or children of God. Others include Exodus 4:22-23, Psalm 80:15 Psalm 89:27, Isaiah 1:2 and Hosea 1:10 and 11:1. 2 Samuel 7:14 uses this term to refer to Solomon. The idea is referenced in Psalm 2:7, where a king of Israel threatens foreign kings who would dare challenge Israel. This is bravado, like the stories of the conquest of Canaan.

To be called a son of God was by no means an attribution of deity.

Deut 14 forbids Israel from the ceremonial / cultic practices of its peers. Kosher laws are stuck in the middle of these, suggesting to me they may have had a similar origin. Why is this restriction in Deuteronomy 14:21, "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."? How does the greater context of this sentence help you interpret it? 14:22 (reiterating 12:6) begins the description of my favorite tithe, also new with Deuteronomistic law. Spend 10% of your annual income on a big party. Invite the Levites, since they don't own land. That one will have to be in the place where Josiah will centralize worship (Jerusalem). Every 3 years, take another tithe and hold a party in your own local area for the Levites, the sojourners, the fatherless, and the widows. You had better do it, if you want Yahweh your Elohim to bless you.

This seems to conflict with the provisions for the firstborn sacrifice in Exodus 11:4 and Numbers 3:11-13. Do you sacrifice it or do you eat it yourself? Perhaps Josiah changed only the venue where the donor's share is to be eaten, and makes it a big communal party. See also Deut 12:15-16.

Deut 15:4, "But there will be no poor among you;" is part of the common motif of Utopian descriptions of the future benefits of obedience. Mark 14:7 shows Jesus acknowledging that it didn't work out that way, "For you always have the poor with you." But, see Deut 15:11.

How do the economic/legal reforms of Deuteronomy 15 define neighbor? 15:12 limits the length of servitude of a Hebrew slave. Unless of course he or she wants to stay your slave forever. 15:18 is an interesting economic data point. The effective wages of a slave were half those of a worker. Perhaps that is just the amortized purchase price.

Deut 16:18 commands Israel to implement a civil judicial system. A very large share of the later rants of the prophets will be about violations of this one little section of Deuteronomistic law. We see some similar moral principles in Exodus 22-23. There, conflict resolution seems to be left to the priesthood. Deut 16 seems to replace this with a secular legal system. See my notes above on Deut 7 about the Asherah. Deut 17 prescribes stoning for serving the competition. Take note as you read the histories, to see if this was ever put into practice. Deut 17:8 prescribes an appeals court or supreme court (the priests). Disobeying a priest carries the death penalty. We see who held ultimate power in Israel. Jerusalem was thus the center of criminal judicial power as well as religious power.

The section beginning at Deut 17:14 about kings is very interesting. I think it was most likely written after Israel had kings, probably even to counter the extremes we will see by David and Solomon. It requires literacy, also an anachronism. It was post-facto permission. This reflects the 'reforms' of Josiah. Note that Josiah is the one who is said to have found these ancient texts, presumably lost or misplaced. More likely he is the one responsible for getting them written in the first place.

Deut 18 specifies the priesthood's share of the taxes (the sacrifices). Variations in these details show that their sacrificial practices varied over time. 18:8 says the priests can also receive income from the 'sale of his patrimony'. No one knows exactly what this meant. Some suggest it was whatever he could earn from his personal property and perhaps his personal labors outside of priestly duties. 18:10 codifies the new prohibition against child sacrifice, and new rules against divination, fortune-telling, and so on. Thus they could no longer use the urim and thummim. This, and much of what we see in Deuteronomy, resulted from the reforms of Josiah, some of which are noted in 2 Kings 23. Now I'm beginning to wonder whether even the very practice of monolatry began with Josiah.

Deut 18:15 Moses describes his successor (**Joshua**) without naming him. The transition happens in Deut 31 and 34:9-12. The book of Joshua begins with Joshua acting the role of prophet. He reiterates the reason no one ever hears God speak except for the designated prophet. See Deut 4-5. Two tests of a prophet are mentioned. If he speaks in the name of other gods, or if what he says does not happen, then kill him.

Deut 19 chronicles the continuing moral progress of Israel as they further restrict revenge. **Manslaughter** is defined. The penalty is self-imposed imprisonment in specific cities of refuge. See also Numbers 35. Murder still incurs the death penalty. 19:14 introduces **land property rights**. These would be meaningless for nomadic tribesmen. 19:15 covers **false witness**. The text makes clear this is more than simple dishonesty or lying. The earlier restriction on revenge (eye for eye) is restated.

Deut 20 covers **rules of warfare**. Since the priest here is acting in the role of a prophet, if you are defeated, you should kill the priest. That's not specified here, but seems implied by chapter 18. Within Canaan, slaughter everything living. Outside of Canaan, offer peace first. Here, 'peace' means slavery instead of slaughter and plunder. No justification is given for attacking someone outside of Canaan, but if it happens, it's something God is giving you. But don't kill the food trees.

Deut 21 covers paying for unsolved murders. The nearest city must offer a new heifer in a ceremony to appease Yahweh. 21:10 covers taking a wife from your captives. This was another form of legal intermarriage with people outside of Israel, but only women. 21:15 protects the rights of the firstborn,

even if it's from one of his wives that he no longer loves. 21:18 death penalty for a stubborn and rebellious son, disobedient to his parents. I wonder if rebellious daughters get a free pass. Or whether killing a rebellious daughter was so routine and accepted that it didn't need to be mentioned.

Deut 23 defines the outcasts. In context, to enter the assembly meant to become part of Israel (rather than a foreigner or just a sojourner). As we saw earlier, many violations of Torah could get you kicked out of the assembly. Israel viewed the 'assembly' as meaning those people participating in the Mosaic Covenant. They would be entitled to the blessings. But if they disobeyed, all Israel risks being punished. They were understandably selective about whom they allowed into the assembly. The crushed testicles and cut-off male organ of verse 1 most likely refers to those who were made eunuchs as part of the worship of some other gods. The Edomites were said to be descendants of Esau. The 'evil thing' of verse 9 probably refers only to ceremonial cleanness. Your Porta-Potty must be outside the camp, but only for solids. Women can be prostitutes, but not cult prostitutes. The 'wages of a dog' may refer to a male prostitute. Charge interest only to foreigners. Once again, verse 20 gives the reason for following all these rules. Hint: It's not because it's morally right. Eat your neighbor's grapes and grain (by hand), but don't take them with you. This may have helped foster social cohesion.

Deut 24 begins with a tiny bit of protection for the woman in divorce. This is in the context of property law, since the wife was property. Don't miss the significance of the first few words, "When a man takes a wife and marries her..." You never see a woman taking a husband. Generally, women have no choice in these matters. The divorcing husband can't take her back later, because she is now damaged goods. This is more like a model for slavery than for what we today think of as a marriage. Verse 7 is too late for the brothers of Joseph. Verse 16 parallels the change in their view that God does not punish someone for the sins of his ancestors. Neither should you. The chapter ends with a bit about gleaning. They imposed rule of law, with justice and fair business dealings. That makes for a good society. Historically, Israel has had one of the best. There are notable modern exceptions, though.

Moral and Philosophical Progress

Exodus 20:5, in the Decalogue, states, "I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." That idea was advanced by Deuteronomistic law with Deuteronomy 24:16, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin." Later wisdom literature (Job) shows further progress. A person doesn't always deserve blame when bad things happen to him. We still see this in Second Temple Judaism, in the response attributed to Jesus about the man born blind, though it still posits a supernatural cause for the blindness.

Deut 25:17 The remark about Amalek attacking the laggards from the rear is not in the Exodus 17 account. Call him a bad guy, and blot out his memory. But as we shall see later, his tribe was not eradicated.

Deut 26 Indoctrinate your children and each other every year. Another re-affirmation of the covenant.

Deut 27:10 seems to mark the entry into Canaan as the beginning of the covenant period. Just like a

modern real estate transaction, the people needed to sign every line, with witnesses. 27:11 sets up a dramatic antiphonal chorus. The children of Jacob (Israel) are split across two mountains (Gerizim and Ebal) with the people below. Blessings and curses are shouted from the mountains, as prescribed in 11:29. The people respond to each with 'Amen', probably meaning so be it. If these mountains are where we today think they are, they are about 2 miles apart, too far for the staging of this drama. The sons of Israel don't seem to be divided by mother. It's a strange mix of curses, so I suspect this story is not meant to be a comprehensive restatement of the law. I think this is the first we see of **cursings on individuals**, not on Israel as a whole. This is likely another change in ideas during Diaspora.

Deut 28 Here we go again! Obedience:blessings::disobedience:cursings. Read all the details. This was Israel's understanding of the Mosaic Covenant. At least, according to the Deuteronomistic source. It was also the philosophical foundation of the later prophetic worldview.

These chapters talk much more about the cursings than about the blessings (54 to 14 in verse count in chapter 28). They may be a precursor to Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic literature. Or they may be a rewriting of those worldviews into this nominally historical narrative. Or they are simply anachronisms.

Deut 31 covers the transition of power and the role of prophet to Joshua. 31:9 contains the single anachronistic statement upon which all claims of Mosaic authorship of Torah are based. This would be the 'writing' that Josiah said he 'discovered' but likely actually wrote.

But why Joshua? Moses had two sons. Gershom, the firstborn, meant sojourner. Despite the stories explaining why they should listen to Moses (a Midianite), Israel may still not have thought of Moses as one of their own genetic descent. Zipporah was daughter of a Midianite priest. Both Gershom and Eliezer promptly disappear from the written tradition.

Deut 32 begins with the swan song of Moses. This Song of Moses could well be the oldest material in the Bible, perhaps dating to the mid-13th century BCE. In the oldest ms we have of this text, verses 8-9 read, "When Elyon divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he established the borders of the nations according to the number of the sons of the gods. Yahweh's portion was his people, [Israel] his allotted inheritance." Some early mythology of the region said Yahweh was a son of El. This song is about Israel (the people of Yahweh) and the lands allocated thereto. Other nations, with other gods (other sons of El), were allotted other lands.

Review

How much of this is instructions to all the people (versus just the priests)? How does the answer differ among the accounts in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy? For the people, how hard or complicated was it to keep? Is any of this impossible to keep? How much of this law was civil and how much ceremonial? Can you make a defensible case that none of this was superstition? Can you formulate a clear definition of sin as the word is used in this book? How does that differ from common modern Christian definitions of sin? What happens to Israel if they keep the terms? If they don't? How does this affect an afterlife?

This contract was with the tribes, not with individuals. If you are part of the tribe, by birth, marriage, purchase, or otherwise, you are bound by it. The contract specifies what the God of Israel expects from

you if you choose to be part of the tribe. Christians say they worship the God of Israel. Explain and justify how what the God of Israel expects from you is any different from this.

After you have considered these questions, test your answers with a quick read through Leviticus and see if your answers are consistent with the text. Justify any remaining differences and/or adjust your answers.

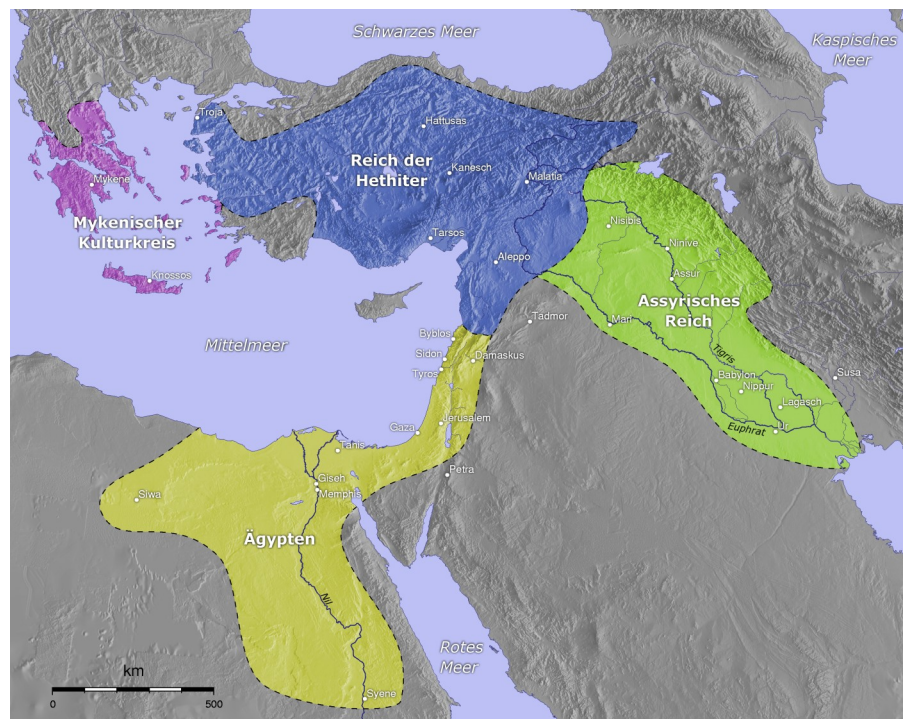
Joshua

Torah left Israel on the verge of entering their promised land. Joshua covers that entry. It's from the Deuteronomistic history source, which may or may not be the same as the Deuteronomistic source used for Torah. Chapters 2-11 (the conquest) are probably the earliest part, from the reign of Josiah (640-609 BCE). "... the book was not completed until after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and possibly not until after the return from the Babylonian Exile in 539 BCE." (Wikipedia). Strong textual evidence includes the many references to a monument "which stands there to this day," and the many references to "in the place that he should choose". The author knew full well that this was Jerusalem, but he was writing a narrative of much earlier history. In this case, 6-8 centuries later. Even John Calvin rejected the idea that the book was authored by Joshua. Textual analysis shows multiple authors. No archaeological evidence supports this narrative as historical. The message is that Yahweh keeps his end of the covenant contract. The implicit message of the bravado of the conquests to potential enemies is to scare them out of attacking Israel. This is propaganda encouraging nationalism, isolationism, and xenophobia. Stay away from foreign gods means stay away from foreign nations and tribes.

Canaan is used generically to refer to the entire region of Israel and the inhabitants of that land, but also specifically to some sub-populations of that land. How did Israel justify and rationalize their genocide of all Canaanites? The usual way, by asserting less-than-honorable parentage. Genesis 9 shows the cursing of Canaan (thus all his descendants), son of Ham.

The account begins with Yahweh telling Joshua to enter the land. The method of communication is not mentioned; that isn't the point. Around 1300 BCE, the

Egyptian, Assyrian, and Hittite Empires occupied the described geography. At its peak, the Hittite Empire included nearly all of Turkey. Though the claimed territory is larger than anything Israel ever occupied, I don't think the claim would have included Turkey. The rest of the text suggests they weren't



talking about anything outside of Canaan. We see new geographical references (sunset, sunrise).

1300 BCE	Egyptian, Assyrian, and Hittite empires
1240 BCE	Approximate setting of the story (late Bronze Age)
970 BCE	David's reign ends
931 BCE	Solomon's reign ends; north/south split
687 BCE	Assyrian conquest of Israel (north)
609 BCE	Josiah's reign ends
586 BCE	Babylonian conquest of Judah (south)
593 BCE	Return to Israel under Cyrus
3 rd -5th cent CE	Babylonian Talmud, first claim of authorship of these texts

Joshua 1:8 suggests the law was oral, despite the (probably anachronistic) mention of 'written'. As I have suggested, I think it's unlikely they had or used writing at this time. Nomadic herdsman didn't need it. Slaves in Egypt didn't need it. "Wherever you go" in verse 9 was limited to Canaan. Or this is an anachronistic reference to the idea in Diaspora of "God with us." 1:16 shows the people accepting the terms of the covenant and the autocratic authority of Joshua.

Joshua 2 begins with the reconnaissance mission to Jericho. The map on the right is from <http://www.christians-standing-with-israel.org/>. The ancient locations for these cities is often guesswork or unknown. The text explains why Rahab wasn't slaughtered along with everyone else. That seemed to be an acceptable violation of their marching orders. We see no negative connotation to the role of prostitute. Her house seemed to be the inn where travelers stayed. Verse 15 says it was built into the city wall. It's plausible that this was between the inner and outer city walls, where poorer people tended to live. That's also a good place to house visitors, offering them some protection, while protecting the inner city from the visitors. Her location and occupations meant that she knew everything and everyone. She would be the first to hear the news from incoming visitors. The text gives no indication that the people thought there was anything wrong with her deceit. The author of Matthew places Rahab in the genealogical line of David. It's rare for a women to be even mentioned in a genealogy. As if to confuse us, wisdom and prophetic literature sometimes use Rahab as a reference to Egypt. The last sentence, "all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us," and others like it are an indication



that these stories were told for the purpose of bravado, to make them sound fearsome, so others wouldn't attack them.

Joshua 3 marks the entry into the land, including another water / dry land miracle, triggered by the presence of the ark. It is described as a sign that they will have victory in battle, as well as to 'exalt' Joshua in the tradition of Israel. 3:11 and 3:13 include a unique and challenging phrase, lord of all the earth. Here, the word translated lord is not Yahweh. Though there seem to be some textual variants, the phrase seems to refer to the ark of the covenant, not to Yahweh. It's used a couple of times in prophetic literature. In the unlikely event that the author used this ambiguous phrase to refer to Yahweh, it would be an anachronism. Until Deutero-Isaiah, we see only occasional examples of limited power of Yahweh over other demographics. Only then do we see the idea of monotheism.

Joshua 4 begins with the placement of memorial stones in the Jordan. The phrase in verse 9, "and they are there to this day" is an obvious indication that this text was written much later than the events described. Verse 20 seems to show the stones being moved to Gilgal.

Joshua 5 tells of a painful time for males born in the last 40 years. They were circumcised at that time. By this act, Yahweh "rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." They observe passover. Joshua has a vision which some call a theophany. I don't think it's described that way. The image seems to be of an agent (or just an agency) of Yahweh in charge of military force on behalf of Israel. Removing the sandals is another parallel aimed at conveying the authority of Joshua by comparing it to that of Moses.

Joshua 6 shows the conquest of **Jericho**, with the thorough genocide of all the humans and animals, but theft of the valuable metals. As promised, Rahab and her family are preserved. The name Jericho has been applied to a number of settlements in the general area. Some posit the curse of verse 26 as the reason that a particular settlement location was never rebuilt. The fame of Joshua is established.

Joshua 7 explains the **defeat at Ai** as resulting from inadequate battle staffing plus disobedience by **one man** of Judah in taking unauthorized **plunder**. That idea is new to this author! In Torah, blessing/cursing of Israel is determined by the obedience of corporate Israel, not by any individual in Israel. It carries the prophetic worldview to a ridiculous extreme. Israel is suffering, therefore Israel must have disobeyed. Worse, perhaps just one person disobeyed, but we don't know who it was. Here, they use divination (likely urim and thummim) to find the guilty party and kill him. Worse, they don't stop there. They kill his entire family tree, all his descendants. This was escalation on a massive scale. Torah had already prohibited it in other areas, with the 'eye for an eye' limitation on escalation of revenge. I suppose Israel thought Yahweh was entitled to escalate if he wanted to. Penance was accomplished by burning the booty and killing the perpetrators. Actions like this were common in religious communities all over the planet. We call it superstition when done by anyone but Israel. The penance was acceptable, Ai was conquered, genocide was complete, but this time they kept the livestock. Time for another altar and another recitation of the terms of the covenant. These names (Jericho, Ai) are important to the literary tradition of Israel. Compactness of expression lets a later author conjure a complete philosophical idea with the simple mention of Ai.

Since the practice of pillage and plunder are later accepted and practiced with no harmful side-effects, the capital offense here was not the plunder, but disobeying the priests and dictator. Perhaps the people

observed that when they practiced plunder, they didn't suffer. Then they abandoned their superstition against it, motivated by its profitability. I'm sure they weren't the first to adjust their moral code to accommodate a profit motive.

Joshua 8 What was the role of the Javelin in verse 18? Did it have magical powers like the rod of Moses? No, it was just a signal to the troops. Look at the map. Ai and Gibeon were likely within about 5 miles of Jericho. People would have noticed a million people milling around in the neighborhood of Gilgal / Jericho. The author's message about the Ai story should be obvious. Disobey, and you'll lose. But even then, if you repent, and then obey, you will win.

Joshua 9 explains why certain cities were made slaves instead of being slaughtered. 9:14 complains that they didn't ask counsel of Yahweh. But there seemed to be no precedent or previous instruction that they should do so. They were told the mechanism for divination (Urim and Thummim) in Numbers 27:21, but not when they should apply it. Depending on the translation and interpretation, the curse of 9:23 seems to apply ambiguously to all of them or some of them. The last two sentences seem to say it's limited to the tasks of "cutters of wood and drawers of water" for Jerusalem, and probably just to support the sacrificial system for burnt offerings and ceremonial washings. Perhaps that was just the tax portion of their small vassal suzerainty treaty with Israel.

Joshua 10 covers the southern campaign, beginning with a military alliance led by **Adoni-zedek**, king of Jerusalem. See also my notes about Melchizedek under Genesis 14. It's another Jebusite name, with Zedek (Šaduq, Tzedek) being the name of a Jebusite god. Variants of this name appear in many references to a god of the region in western Semitic languages. The name Adoni-zedek was likely taken to mean master of Zedek. Kings often also served priestly roles, so the name could mean both master of the religion of Zedek or master (ruler) of Jerusalem.

The text continues to speak highly of the people of Gibeon and these other cities. They used intelligent trickery to avoid conquest and destruction. Now they parlay that legal protection into a plea for mutual defense. Apparently Yahweh approved. After imprisoning the kings while the soldiers finished the battle mop-up, Joshua publicly killed them all, hanging them on trees. No wonder Israel came to think of hanging on a tree as a curse. More brutal ethnic cleansing follows, now described more briefly. The central and southern campaigns are completed.

Referring to the legend of the sun standing still, Joshua 10:14 provides a working definition of a miracle, while claiming its uniqueness. "There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel." A miracle is a direct intervention by God, perhaps violations of physical laws, on command. Surely this author was familiar with the legends of the exodus, though perhaps he rejected them. The Book of Jashar, mentioned only here and in 2 Samuel 1:18, no longer survives.

Joshua 11 moves on to the northern campaign. The Goshen of 11:16 and 15:51 is probably not the same as the Goshen wherein they dwelt in Egypt. Instead of killing the horses, he tortured them by hamstringing them (11:9). That's cutting the Achilles tendon, rendering them lame, unable to forage for food or defend themselves. They would die slowly of dehydration and starvation until killed by predators. These acts are at best nauseating to any modern moral sensibility of the civilized world. This

led Marcion to conclude that Jesus could not possibly be the god of Israel, whom he viewed from texts like this as a brutal tyrant. We have no textual or other evidence that Israel used horses at this time or before, though they had been used in warfare since 3000-4000 BCE. By this time, their use was widespread.

In Joshua 11:11, Hazor was the only kingdom (city) burned during the northern campaign. Perhaps they vented their rage against the leader of the northern alliance, despite the profit motive of plunder. The chapter concludes by saying that Joshua completed the task assigned to him, conquering the land. This is one of many statements that Israel had fully obeyed their instructions. "The land had rest from war." Well, of course, there was no one left to fight besides those who survived through deceptive contracts.

The expression in 11:20 of the idea that Yahweh manipulated the Canaanites to enable their annihilation is an anachronism. Israel did not acquire this idea until Babylonian Diaspora. They said their god was so powerful that he could manipulate great empires to do his bidding. Here, they rewrite earlier legends to incorporate their modern idea. 11:23 shows that the authors of the Deuteronomistic history thought Canaan was all the land that Israel was supposed to get. Though chapter 12 concludes by crediting Israel with defeating 31 kings, 13 opens with "... there remains yet very much land to possess."

Joshua 14 revives the nearly-forgotten Caleb, uniquely granting his line a specific sub-allocation of the lands of his tribe. But he'll have to deal with the Anakim. Texts in this source tend to refer to them as ordinary people, not the demigods of earlier mythology, Numbers 13:33 and Genesis 6, offspring of matings between gods and humans.

Joshua 15:19 shows riparian water rights were always important. Judah claimed a lot of land. These several chapters comprise their legendary explanations for why tribes occupy the land they occupy. They also justify stubborn refusal to give up land. The argument is used to this day by Zionists, who assert that their god gave them their land, so no one else could possibly have any right to it.

Joshua 17 explains an exception to their strong patriarchal practices by granting an inheritance to daughters. This was codified in Numbers 36. 17:13 restates their practice of enslaving fellow residents of the land of Canaan. 17:14 cites another exception for Joseph, thus why Joseph owns too much land.

Joshua 18-19 conclude the apportionment of the land. The written descriptions are likely an anachronism in the story. See the Syllabus for notes on the earliest known Hebrew writing from perhaps 1000 BCE. It's also plausible that some people among them knew Egyptian hieroglyphics, or that these writings were some other forms of symbols or pictures for the purpose of representing a geographic area.

The scenario best matching the text is that of a group of people from among the remaining tribes exploring the lands. I can imagine a committee meeting with Joshua in which all the parties negotiated territories, what would be a fair division, and what kinds of lands were best suited to the favorite activities of each tribe. We already saw that in play for the lands east of the Jordan, and continue to see it in these chapters on the allocations. In that case, Joshua would use divination merely to confirm what they had already decided would be a good division. It seems less likely here that the divination was in

the form of a mere roll of the dice.

Numbers 13:8 shows Joshua son of Nun to be of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua is honored by an exclusive sub-allocation within the lands of Ephraim. Away from major population areas, some consider this an indication of Joshua's retirement from active duty. 19:51 shows that Eleazar, Aaron's son who succeeded him at his death, participated in the allocation process, along with Joshua and the tribal patriarchs. He would have been the only authorized user of the Urim and Thummim.

Finishing touches are made to the allocations with the cities of refuge (ch. 20, see Numbers 35) and 48 cities with pasture to the Levites (ch. 21). The chapter concludes with yet another statement that, to this point, all had been fulfilled as promised. "Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass."

The whole of Joshua 22 is an anachronistic explanation of a remembrance monument. Remember, this is the Deuteronomistic history, written after the reforms of Josiah centralized worship to Jerusalem, perhaps even written by Josiah. The explanation is that this edifice was a monument, a landmark, a remembrance, and a property boundary marker, not an altar [for sacrifices]. While Israel just received the carrot of the Mosaic Covenant, Joshua reminds them of the stick. The emphasis shows what this author considered to be the primary requirement of the covenant: monolatry.

By nature, tribes and herds always have an us-versus-them mentality. We've repeatedly seen how foreigners are portrayed in a negative light. But here we see Reuben, Gad, and ½ of Manasseh shown in a semi-bad light. Saul and David try to unify these disparate tribes, north and south, by creating legend of common ancestry and common religion. This section admits to bigotry against the Easterners.

Of course they had their own altars. But they conceded monopoly power to the western priests to forestall full-scale war. That's not a healthy neighbor relationship. 22:22 pits the god of Israel against the god of Judah. In 22:27, the 'witness between us' was a police guard. The author ends the chapter with another assertion that Yahweh is Elohim.

In chapter 23, the aging Joshua reminds Israel there's still work to do. There are more nations [tribes] to drive out. This statement of etiology reminds the reader of the explanation for why there are still Canaanites living among them. 23:7 and 12 make clear that the priests are requiring xenophobia for the purpose of preserving their monopoly on their priestly roles by insisting on monolatry and forbidding intermarriage.

Every vassal suzerainty treaty requires regular rehearsals and recitals of the treaty. Joshua 24 provides that, including the famous recommitment by the people to remain bound by the treaty. 24:32 shows Israel was obedient, "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel." **Obedience was not impossible.** 24:2 admits that the early patriarchs were polytheists. 24:23 suggests this is still the case, though one could argue that 'among you' could mean just within your geography (in the tribes not yet driven out) rather than their consistent usage of the phrase to mean among Israel (such as Genesis 35:2, Exodus 13:2, 17:7, 23:25, and especially 29:45).

Joshua 24:19, “But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.” We have never before seen this idea, and it contradicts what we have already seen. Yahweh consistently promised forgiveness and restoration after repentance. This looks more like a Pauline idea. I’ll be on the lookout for explanations. Perhaps this is from the Jahwist source?

Eleazar the priest was a son of Aaron, so in Joshua 24:33, in whose land is he buried? The Levites didn’t get land. But they did get parts of cities. See Numbers 13:8, 16. Perhaps that was assigned in Joshua 22:13.

Judges

What idea is this author trying hardest to communicate? Of what is he trying to persuade his readers and listeners? Who acts as priest? What systems of governance did they have for national/tribal, civil, and religious matters? Was there any leadership above the level of tribe?

The text is the product of a long period of writing, redacting, and editing, finishing during (or just before) the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century BCE. It continues the Deuteronomistic history body of writing. The type scenes are apostasy, punishment, repentance, and rescue.

But this isn’t the book. It’s the movie based on the book, in the best of Hollywood. It’s serious politics told in drama, comedy, and song. Or it’s blockbuster Hollywood entertainment with some serious political messages woven into it.

Judges begins with an attempt to establish continuity with the book of Joshua, which ended with the death of Joshua and of Eleazar the son of Aaron. Who performed the divination of 1:1? The text doesn’t say. Divination was still standard practice. The author of this text didn’t know, and that wasn’t the point of the story.

This first chapter describes in a casual, matter-of-fact way the conquest of an empire. Adoni-bezek was an emperor, or a king of kings. Yet the tribes of Judah and Simeon dispatched this empire with a single sentence. Beyond being a symbolic act of humiliation, permanently visible, cutting off the thumbs and big toes made the king incapable of leading an army or even participating in battle. Adoni-bezek wasn’t a proper name, but a title. He was the lord of Bezek. While that was the name of a city, I suspect the name also was used to refer to the entire empire in the same way that Rome refers to both the city and the empire ruled from it. Some say this is the same person as the Adoni-zedek of Joshua 10, or that this is a variant of that story. They might be successors to the Melchi-zedek of Genesis 14, see my notes there.

He then copies the story from Joshua 15 about Caleb offering his daughter to his nephew as a prize for military conquest. It’s as a wife, but I’m not sure the status of a wife was much better than the status of a slave. The word sometimes translated dowry in Exodus 22:16 is better translated bride-price, since it is paid to her father. It’s in the context of property rights law, and from the previous chapter, laws about slaves including a daughter sold as a slave.

Judges 2 begins with a new explanation / rationalization for ethnic hatred of people living in the same territory whom they considered to be bad or inferior. It's still the excuse for ethnic cleansing and violence today. The entire Middle East is saturated in this mindset, the greatest and most persistent barrier to peace and egalitarian cooperation today.

Angel of the LORD

We have the first use of the phrase angel of the LORD (malakh Yahweh, מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה) in Deuteronomistic writings. It means messenger of Yahweh, as malakh Elohim means messenger of Elohim. It is a personification of a perceived communication from a god, whether by dream, vision, or a prophet acting in his prophetic role. These phrases appear often (around 150 times) in Tanakh. From context and usage, it seems to me each is a reference to a generic messenger, perhaps unique to the instance, but not unique in Tanakh. In March 2017, Stephen Fox in the Old Testament Hebrew Facebook group confirmed that understanding. Then David Levin, a rabbi (and high school classmate) reconfirmed it. “For it to refer to a single messenger it would need the letter heh in front of the word malach meaning the malach. In Hebrew and especially in the Tanakh, if the letter heh is not included prior to the word (hamalakh) it indicates that there are likely others.”

Judges 2:10 introduces the transition from Joshua 24:31. What a transition! According to this author, the party's over. The time of obedience has ended. “And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.”

Like adonai, **Ba'al** (Ugaritic: 𐎠𐎡𐎴;[5] Phoenician: 𐤁𐤏𐤋; Biblical Hebrew: בעל), began as a title of honor, meaning lord. Over time, this generic word was applied by northern Semitic people to gods. Still later, it referred to **Hadad**, storm and rain god, variously said to have Dagan (grain god) or El as a parent. See the stele of Ba'al, right, image from Wikipedia. These deities appear in texts with various names such as Ba'al Hammon, Ba'al Berith, and Ba'al Zebub (Beelzebub). In Torah, we've already encountered people and places bearing the names of this god, Ba'al Hanan (Gen 36:38-39), Ba'al Zephon (Ex 14:2,9), Ba'al Peor (Numbers 25:3,5) and more.



If this Judges account is true, then clearly Israel was not even monolatrous, much less monotheistic. They were polytheistic like everyone around them. This was confirmed in Joshua 24:2 and suggested in 24:23.

Judges 2:16 portrays the judges as people acting the role of savior. “Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.” As you read the text, see if the judges are any different from prophets or kings or some combination of them like Moses.

Judges 3 claims a purpose for those populations Israel didn't annihilate or drive out. Despite the hatred of the priests and their authors, the people do what people always do. They integrate with the societies around them. Today, we have countless stories of Israeli-Palestinian couples falling in love. They are sad stories, since they tend to be ostracized by both sides. Same for racially-mixed marriages in the US. Or Catholic-Protestant marriages. These couples know the stupidity of their centuries-old ethnic hatreds. Some demographics still have not learned this lesson. True to tradition, Israel created legend showing these Moabites (and their neighboring Ammonites) as products of incest between Lot and his daughters.

I feel sorry for those who do nothing more than read this in English. You wouldn't know that *eglon* means fatted calf, so you'd be puzzled why the audience broke into laughter as soon as they heard the name. And you'd miss the obvious clue that this was parable, myth, legend, rather than history, just as you missed that the first man was named man, so you wouldn't even think of the early Everyman morality play you learned in school. You miss not only the understanding but the beauty of the literary craft. You'd miss the sexual innuendo of Ehud getting Eglon alone, then reaching under his garment with his left hand, the hand used for handling genitals. Had you read even the most rudimentary informed commentary, you could at least spot the trickery of hiding the weapon where the right hand couldn't access it readily.

Judges 3:7 is *Déjà vu* all over again. You lose battles because you fail at monolatry. Then a gory scene, true to its Old English etymological origin with 'gor' (dung), perpetrated by Ehud, their deliverer. In their view, this is what a deliverer would do. The chapter ends with Shamgar, who also saved Israel.

In chapter 4, Jael did Sisera with a tent peg through his temple. She is glorified in the *Song of Deborah and Barak* in chapter 5, suggesting that they found this grotesque betrayal of trust to be morally acceptable. Based on grammar and context, this song is also considered to be one of the most ancient texts of the Bible, from somewhere in the 12th century BCE. Others suggest the same criteria indicate authorship no earlier than the 7th century BCE. While Jewish victory hymns were common, not so those about women. Don't expect a perfect match between the narrative and the song.

See my notes on Exodus 2:18 for my thoughts on the various names for the father-in-law of Moses. It's not clear how much these Kenites were considered to be Hebrews rather than Midianites. Numbers 10 says that they were at least friendly. How can people from antagonistic ethnicities be friendly? See my notes above on Judges 3.

In Judges 6, the Midianites take their turn as agents of punishment of Israel. If they had been enslaved, the Israelites might not have even had swords. The familiar story of **Gideon** (renamed to **Jerubbal**) covers three chapters. People of the ANE sometimes incorporated the name of their god into their own name. Here, Jerubbal is portrayed as a mockery of Baal, but considering the rest of the story, one has to wonder. They took the heads of two Midianite princes as trophies. At least they weren't elephants. Gideon kills the men of Succoth because the city wouldn't feed his troops. After declining an offer to make him king, he asks only earrings. With the large quantity of gold, he makes an ephod. The text says that didn't work out well. Perhaps simple jealousy of an ostentatious display of wealth. Perhaps because only the high priest was supposed to wear one. But when Micah did it (17:5), that was fine. In several ways, this story reminds me of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

A prolific fellow, per 8:30-31, “Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he called his name **Abimelech**.” Polygamy and concubines were common and morally acceptable, especially for prominent men. None outdid David and Solomon. A concubine (thus her children) held a lower status than a wife. Next comes the story of Abimelech, from Gideon and a concubine. It’s unlikely he had only one. I think only one is mentioned here because of Abimelech. The seventy pieces of silver from 9:4 is a familiar price for a scoundrel. Judas was bought for only 30. Abimelech is the first person called a king in Israel, though I can’t tell for sure if he was in charge of all of Israel, or even of all the northern tribes.

Judges 8:33, “As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god.” **Baal-berith** (Baal of the covenant) is in clear distinction from **El-berith** (El of the covenant) of 9:46. The latter probably refers to Genesis 12:6-7. In Canaanite mythology, El was the father of Baal. Sometimes geographies (like Shechem) have complex histories. Thus a reference to Shechem could have widely varying meanings. The treachery, slaughter, and drama continue.

Judges 9:45, “And Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed the people who were in it, and he razed the city and sowed it with salt.” This was probably a symbolic action viewed as a curse. Salting farmland would render it incapable of growing crops. Salting a city would be a token gesture, since it wasn’t farmland. It probably meant a curse that it would never be rebuilt or inhabited. It was later rebuilt.

Judges 9:16 – When the leaders of Shechem saw the destruction all around them, they left the house of their god (9:27) and entered the house of the competing god (9:46). If your god can’t protect you, go to the house of your god’s father. Looks like that didn’t work. Then a woman crushed Abimelech’s skull with a millstone. Defying biology, Abimelech asked his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’” That superstition persists to this day with the Muslim superstition that a man killed in battle by a woman gets no virgins in heaven.

The chapter ends with an expression of karma. In its simplest form, karma “refers to the spiritual principle of cause and effect where intent and actions of an individual (cause) influence the future of that individual (effect).” (Wikipedia) Today, we say, “What goes around, comes around.” Paul expresses that in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Judges 10 begins, “After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, son of Dodo, a man of Issachar.” To save Israel meant to save Israel from their enemies. It was physical, not spiritual. People did it. And from the perspective of the priests of Yahweh (the authors of these texts), that usually meant that under the leadership of that particular leader, the people of Israel obeyed their covenant by offering worship exclusively to Yahweh. But here in 10:6, “The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines.” Wow! They covered all their bases, as did everyone around them. This was their explanation for why the Philistines and the Ammonites had victory over Israel. To make a short story shorter, it was Jephthah’s turn to save Israel from their sins.

Judges 11 provides additional evidence that Israel had practiced human sacrifice. Here, Jephthah is willing to sacrifice his daughter. His daughter is willing to be sacrificed. Cultural anthropology confirms this. Ancient peoples were willing to be sacrificed because they thought the gods would confer great benefit to the rest of their societies. The Mayans practiced this right through the 17th century, stopping only as they ran out of humans to sacrifice. By now, practically everyone has abandoned this despicable practice.

Judges 12 is another example of stupid ethnic hatred, reminiscent of the Hatfields and the McCoys. The argument seemingly began with as simple, “Why didn’t you call me to help you fight the Ammonites?” It ends with slaughter, presumably of 42,000. Ibzan, 30 sons and 30 daughters, all intermarrying outside his clan. Abdon, 40 sons and 30 grandsons.

Judges 13 is the **Philistine**’s turn to punish Israel. These may be the cultural antecedents of the people today called **Palestinians**. Another special baby (**Samson**). This may be inspired by the story of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 16, and may in turn have inspired the annunciation of Mary [and Joseph] in Luke. Then another extended narrative where malakh Yahweh and malakh Elohim seem to be used somewhat interchangeably. The source is still Deuteronomistic, so the authors may be continuing the theme that Yahweh and Elohim are really the same god. In Zechariah 12:8, the author seems to be saying that Yahweh (the speaker in the narrative) is calling Elohim malakh Yahweh, perhaps saying that Elohim is nothing more than the messenger of Yahweh. Bias from the Yahweh side? The designation ‘man of God’ may simply be a designation of a prophet. Moses is called that in Deuteronomy 33:1. His designated role is given in verse 5, “he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” Samson will act the role of a savior of Israel, as well as a judge. In 13:11, Manoah considers this messenger to be an (ordinary) man acting in the role of a prophet. Based on instructions from the messenger, he offers a sacrifice to Yahweh. He’s not a priest. He’s not even of the tribe of Levi or a descendant of Aaron. Josiah had not yet centralized worship (i.e. the offering of sacrifices) in Jerusalem. 13:18, ‘And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”’, helps explain Isaiah 9. In neither case is there any suggestion that no human father participates in the birth of the child. See page 71 about the spirit of Yahweh. Manoah then believes this messenger to be a theophany.

The setting is in the lands of Dan just west of Jerusalem. Timneh was at the ‘border’ between the lands of the Philistines and those of Dan, though there was no distinct border at the time. Since the Philistines had conquered Israel and ruled over them for 40 years, a border wouldn’t have much meaning beyond tradition. It was a couple of miles away from Samson’s home. Calling them uncircumcised, 14:3 makes clear they weren’t Jews. We see several assertions of the direct involvement of Yahweh in affairs related to Samson. Samson’s would-be father-in-law ends up giving his daughter to his best man. Then Samson tries to visit his ‘wife’. Another temper tantrum. From 15:20, apparently these conquests earned Samson the role of judging Israel for 20 years.

If Judges 16:23-24 is true, Israel was not the only demographic to credit their god with giving them victory over their enemies. 16:28 is another case of escalation of revenge, which surely Israel had given up by now. But again, a different author with different ideas. The text also makes clear that this author did not believe that the god of Israel was the only god (monotheism). The chapter ends with praise for

the glory of killing.

Judges 17 Micah hires a Levite and ordains him as his personal priest. Worship had not yet been centralized by the 'reforms' of Josiah. He performs a divination for some Danites. On their return visit (with 600 armed warriors) they took the priest with his ephod and his household gods, making him their priest. He was from Bethlehem (בֵּית לֶחֶם) likely named after Lehem (house/temple of Lehem), a Caananite fertility god known to the Akkadians as Lahmu. One has to wonder if this Levite had also served as a priest of Lehem.

The author says four times (17:6, 18:1, 19:1, and 21:25), "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." He considers this a source of problems for Israel. Judges 18 shows this priest-for-hire acting in the role of a shaman or seer. He was performing divination. In 18:27, the people of Dan attack a peaceful city and destroy it with fire. Then they make for themselves some carved images. Well, this is before the reforms of Josiah, so perhaps the prohibition against carved images had not yet happened at the time of the setting of this story.

Judges 19 tells the story of another, probably different Levite (unnamed). After much partying, the scene of Sodom and Gomorrah is repeated. The master of the house offers his virgin daughter and his concubine to the 'worthless fellows'. Both are his property, so he can make that offer. Instead, they take his concubine for a gang rape plus abuse. The master, finding her dead on his doorstep in the morning, cuts her into 12 pieces and sends the pieces throughout Israel, presumably one piece to each tribe. Next follows war with the tribe of Benjamin. This escalation is similar to that following the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34.

In 20:4, the author calls the Levite the husband of the concubine. Perhaps they didn't use our definitions. The perpetrator was Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin [one of the tribes of Israel]. More divination. More slaughter. Presumably almost 50,000 people died because of violence done to one woman who was offered by 'the master of the house'. That plus town set on fire.

Judges 21 'solves' the problem of no wives for the men of Benjamin. Go steal some. Conclude by blaming the absence of a king. Who established these judges? See 2:16.

Review

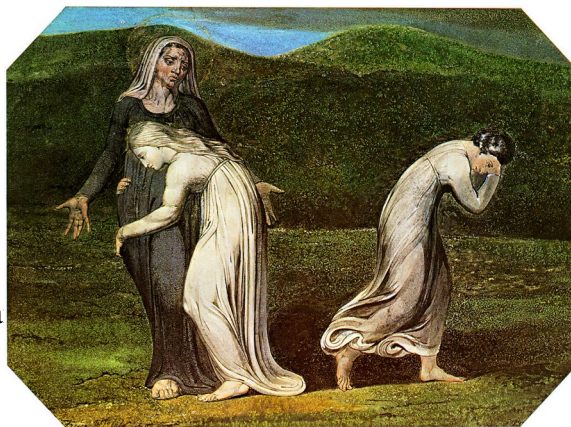
What are the key ideas expressed in Joshua? Which have we seen before (in Torah)? Which are new to Joshua? How about Judges? What was the crime of Israel under the judges? Who gets the blame?

After you have considered these questions, test your answers with a quick read through Joshua and Judges and see if your answers are consistent with the text. Justify any remaining differences and/or adjust your answers.

Ruth

The story of Ruth is set in the time of the judges. That would place the action before ca 1010 BCE, when Israel/Judah first get a king, and the time of writing some

Ancient Jewish Philosophy as Expressed in Tanakh, by Fra



time after that. It is in the Megillah within the Ketuvim, or Writings (Scrolls). The other canonical texts in the Megillah are Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. Most Christian traditions treat it as a history, placing it between Judges and 1 Samuel. The Syriac Christian tradition treats it as wisdom literature, placing it between Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. The image on the right is from [by William Blake - Scanned by H. Churchyard, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=583358](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=583358).

I watched an episode of *God Friended Me* on TV. It's a morality play set as a love story. So is Ruth. It is a book of social engineering. It encourages moral progress away from their traditional xenophobia. It broadens the scope of amity, and the range of whom I should consider my neighbor. The Moabites were always in the 'bad guys' list. But in this story, a Moabite could even be in the line of David. While the setting of the story is in the days of the judges, the writing was likely in the Persian or post-exilic periods, as amity is becoming more inclusive. Most likely in the fifth century BCE, when intermarriage became controversial. It began to be discouraged in Joshua 23:7 and 12, from the Deuteronomistic history. This author is rejecting that more recent xenophobic move, as well as the more ancient expressed in Torah. Both the message and style lean me toward placing this text into the genre of wisdom literature rather than history. It's neither political nor religious. Nothing in Ruth is particularly relevant to the history of Israel. The only connection to history is the character Boaz, who appears in a genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2:11. His wife is never mentioned or named. Oh, what does tradition say about the mother of Boaz? The author of Matthew says she was Rahab from Jericho in the land of Moab. Elimilech and Naomi are mentioned only in Ruth.

Their legend of the origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites is the scandal of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19:30-38, reminiscent of Genesis 9. Make these tribes look bad before you slaughter them (Judges 3, 2 Samuel 8, 2 Kings 3, 1 Chronicles 18, 2 Chronicles 20 etc.) To attribute less-than-honorable parentage to ethnicities you hate is common practice in xenophobia. Nowhere does Ruth portray Moabites in a negative light. Ruth herself acknowledges the xenophobic prejudice in 2:10, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Ruth 4:11, "May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel." Compare this to Genesis 29, where Laban was in "the land of the people of the east". They were outsiders who married into Israel and were counted as partners with Jacob to build up the house of Israel. The comparison is repeated in 4:11, adding Tamar (from Genesis 38), also an outsider, in 4:12.

Ruth 4:7 explains the older tradition of the sandal to a readership likely unfamiliar with it, probably because it was no longer practiced 5 centuries later. It's referred to in Psalm 60:8 and perhaps Amos 2:6 and 6:8. The author of Ruth explains its purpose is the confirmation of a transaction, perhaps comparable the modern handshake. Deuteronomy 25 (about levirate marriage duty of a man whose brother dies without a son) also uses the sandal to confirm the refusal to do that duty, but only the spitting in the face conveys shame. It's significant that the levirate marriage refusal in Ruth includes the confirmation ceremony but not the shame ceremony. **Shame culture** was prevalent in the ANE, and persists today primarily in Islamic cultures. Ruth suggests that Jewish cultures were moving away from that culture.

Sometimes the concluding genealogy is considered to be a post-exilic Priestly addition. I don't see a necessity for that. But if it is, it's probably for the purpose of emphasizing that it's so acceptable for a Jew to marry a Moabite that one of their descendants is David. It's part of the main point that even Moabites can be good people. Compare this to the explanation for why Israel could later consider a traditional enemy (the Assyrians) to be good guys in the book of Jonah. God sent them a prophet and they repented. Israel didn't want their enemies to repent. They wanted them to be punished, destroyed. These attitudes faded as Israel advanced their moral standards and was choosing the benefits of interaction, trade, and mutual cooperation over ethnic hatred. But as we know, that ethnic hatred persists in the Middle East today.

1 Samuel

This anonymous book sets the scene for the histories which follow. 1 and 2 Samuel were originally considered to be one Jewish book. Reference to Eli and his sons (See Numbers 25) sets the time setting of this story. We have only traditions for dates, with parts and versions from the 8th century BCE to around 550 BCE. See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_of_Samuel#Authorship_and_date_of_composition. The chronology of Gershon Galli seems most commonly used, dating the reigns:

1030–1010 BCE	Saul
1008– 970 BCE	David
970– 931 BCE	Solomon

The story of the Ark of God (4:1-7:1) may have an early, even pre-Davidic origin. It's embedded within a larger unit, the story of Samuel (1:1-7:17). Along with Rights of the King (8:11-18), these form the earlier section, composed during the time of Josiah at the end of the 7th century BCE, perhaps drawing from an earlier version from the time of Hezekiah (8th century BCE). Later sections were added during Babylonian exile (6th century BCE), with final editing complete by around 550 BCE. Some small edits seem to have been done even later. The Wikipedia article is fairly informative about this and the sources for the texts. ESV tends to use the Masoretic Text for Samuel, though it is more difficult and often differs from the Septuagint.

If reading this gives you a sense of *de ja vue*, you're probably recognizing Samuel as the 'prophet like Moses' of Deuteronomy 18:15-22. Be on the lookout for what this author believes to be the responsibilities of a king of Israel.

The familiar theme of the special baby. To keep her promise, mom brings Samuel to the priest and prepays his room and board and education. The song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 is the prototype for the Magnificat of Mary. 2:26, "Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man." is copied from Luke 2:52. Well, maybe the other way around. 3:20 says he was widely recognized as a prophet of Yahweh.

1 Sam 2:22 leaves no doubt. The author considers the sons of Eli totally unfit to serve as priests. Does this portend the end of the Levitic priesthood? 2:25, "it was the will of the LORD to put them to death." But Samuel was son of Elkanah, an Ephrathite. That was a descendant of Ephrath, the second wife of

Caleb of Judah. They lived in and around Jerusalem. Samuel was not of Aaron or even of Levi, therefore not qualified to serve as a priest. Since Samuel is so important to this story, the authors had to explain why this non-Levite could act as priest, just as authors had to explain why Israel had to obey a Midianite (Moses).

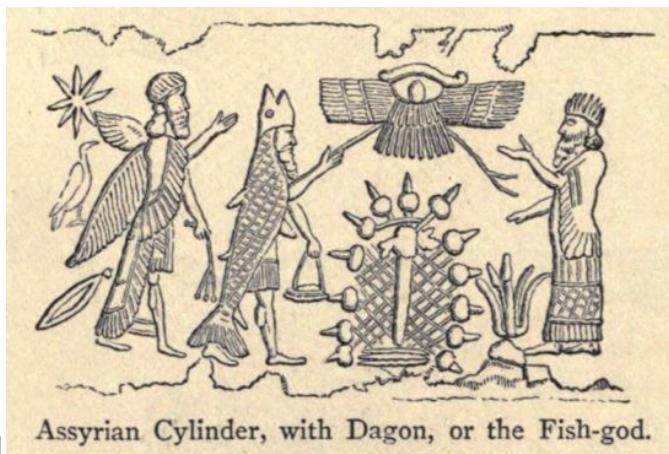
1 Sam 2:18 shows Samuel wearing a linen ephod, the garment of a priest (Exodus 28:6). He was ministering before Yahweh, the role of a priest. If it looks like a duck Hannah and Elkanah were paid well for Samuel: 3 sons and 2 daughters. 2:35 The writing is on the wall. Yahweh will prepare a replacement. 3:19 shows Samuel established and recognized as a prophet of Yahweh. But so far, the text doesn't explicitly say Samuel was functioning as a priest.

Pay careful attention to the language and vocabulary of 1 Sam 4. They had a right to claim protection from Yahweh under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. But they treat the ark like a magic lucky charm. Verse 4 shows that they thought they were bring God to the battleground. "So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim." The Philistines understood this, "A god has come into the camp." Israel confirmed their belief in 4:21 and 22, "The glory (כְּבוֹד) has departed from Israel." As with their peers, the Philistines didn't think the gods were omnipotent. So they fought and won. Upon hearing the news that Hophni and Phinehas died, Eli falls over and dies. "He had judged Israel forty years." So Eli had also acted as a judge of Israel? Another special baby, Ichabod (כְּבוֹד), is born as a grandchild of Eli. Perhaps he can be priest? We see his brother in 14:3. The author does not seem to blame Israel for not consulting Samuel about fighting the Philistines. Perhaps because the Philistines were the ones attacking.

1 Sam 5 presents the theatrical scene with Dagon, the fish god of the Philistines. We see divination based on watching which way the cows pulled the cart with the ark. It's likely they stacked the deck by choosing milk cows from near Beth-shemesh. Then Yahweh slaughters 70 innocent men of the town just because they looked upon [KJV, NIV into] the ark. You're welcome.

1 Sam 7 Samuel becomes a judge of Israel for the rest of his life (7:15). We have now seen him in the roles of prophet, priest, and judge. 7:4 proves Israel had been worshipping Baal and Astarte. Once they stopped that, the Philistines lost. But only after Samuel offered a sacrifice of a nursing lamb as a good luck charm. It worked. Both fasting and pouring out water were symbolic acts of self-denial as part of confession. This was not a drink offering.

Samuel's nepotism in 8:1 fails. We generally don't see how Israel chose its judges. All we saw was that "Yahweh raised up judges." That is, the author probably didn't know how they were chosen. (Judges 6 said Yahweh sent a messenger (angel) to Gideon to hire him. Then Gideon privately attacks the



Assyrian Cylinder, with Dagon, or the Fish-god.

Midianites by destroying their temple. That started a war.) His sons took bribes and perverted justice. Sound familiar? How will their fate differ from that of the sons of Eli? Israel wants a king, but obviously not by familial descent from the priests. Samuel warns. If you get a king, you'll get taxes. How did he know? Another anachronism. The priesthood washes their hands of this. They prefer all the taxes (i.e. sacrifices) go to them. He built an altar in his hometown, most likely indicating that he intended to offer sacrifices there.

Carefully read 8:7, 'And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.'" This provides a good clue about what Israel meant when they used the phrase kingdom of the LORD, or **kingdom of God**. It's Israel under the rule of the priesthood, or at least of religious leadership, or at least of its own leadership. It meant the absence of any traditional human king. This is where Israel transitions away from the direct rule of a priest / prophet / judge. Samuel washes his hands of the decision to have a king. Sound familiar? Yes, Pilate!

1 Sam 9 What is the significance of Saul's ancestry of the tribe of Benjamin? I think it's that it wasn't of the line of David. That line had not yet been established. Statistically, tall people are slightly more intelligent than short. Culturally, people tend to impute power and authority to tall people, and grant them more respect. That seemed to be true at this time as well. When Saul and his servant couldn't find the lost donkeys, they consulted a 'man of God.' Traditionally this would be the shaman, the seer. They sought advice on what direction they should take in their search for the donkeys. Of course they have to pay for the service. Verse 9 removes any doubt about what Israel meant by a prophet and how they would be used. Prophet was another name for seer. Samuel was the one to 'bless the sacrifice', a phrase used nowhere else in Tanakh. Anomalies like this suggest the editors / redactors drew on a different textual base for this part of the book. The phrase here is another hint that Samuel was offering sacrifices, and that he was doing it here in his hometown. Then in 9:27 he acts as a prophet.

1 Sam 10 Samuel privately anoints Saul as prince (KJV captain), a Hebrew word meaning a leader, ruler, or [military] commander. His domain is Yahweh's heritage, a term referring to the land and/or the people of Israel. Saul is described as experiencing ecstatic utterances at the Hill of Elohim. The ancients often thought their seers got inspiration in frenzied bouts, sometimes induced by drugs or sleep deprivation. That's the scene being portrayed here. See lecture 17 in the Teaching Company course, Old Testament. In 10:17, Samuel chooses Saul in a scam process of divination. They draw lots, but the decision had already been made. When the people discover Saul, the author writes a phrase destined to echo throughout Western history, **"Long live the king!"** Samuel dictates the rights and duties of the king. The author implies that the people assumed he had a right to do so.

1 Sam 11 presents Saul's first act as leader. Ammonites capture Jabesh-gilead and demand to gouge out all their right eyes. See Genesis 19:30-38 for what Israel thought of the Ammonites. Using the same language as the previous chapter, Saul has an ecstatic experience, then threatens to kill all the oxen of Israel if Israel doesn't fight in defense of Jabesh-gilead. Compare to the earlier story about this place in Judges 21. Israel assumes he has the authority to carry out that threat. What Saul has effectively done is to create an **empire** out of the tribes of Israel. He can summon an army from all the tribes in the common defense of one city. That's how an empire can prosper. It forbids wars among its member states, while creating a powerful force to defend skirmishes at its borders. 11:13 makes clear that

salvation means victory over your enemies. After this dramatic battle victory, the people make Saul king. We did that with George Washington and Eisenhower. We made them our leaders, though not with the power of a king. Is David going to get a similar story? Stay tuned.

1 Sam 12 shows the people testifying that Samuel was a good and righteous prophet. Here, Samuel consistently refers to Saul as Yahweh's anointed. It meant their king. Prayer was something very specific, and something that only a prophet did.

1 Sam 13 shows Saul being impeached because he offered a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel to do it. The writing allows for many interpretations about how and when this might have happened. In 13:14, Samuel says to Saul, "The LORD has sought out a **man after his own heart**, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." We lack sufficient context to know anything more about the meaning of this phrase than what is implied in this sentence. Jeremiah 3:15 uses this phrase. Acts 13:22 portrays Paul as saying, "when he had removed him [Saul], he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'" This is a quotation of 1 Samuel 13:14. **David** appears as the legendary heroic figure of this story. Saul does not.

The end of the chapter shows that at this time, all of Israel was part of the Philistine Empire. Remember that other name from the same linguistic root? Palestine. Israel recognized the significance of the absence of a protection such as that afforded by the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. Israelites were forbidden to arm themselves. Yet 14:48 suggests that Israel wasn't satisfied with being part of this empire. Or at least the author wasn't. Saul "struck the Amalekites and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them."

1 Sam 14 Jonathan (Saul's son) sneaks away and achieves an unlikely victory over a Philistine garrison. In 14:18, Saul summons his good luck charm, the ark of God. Didn't he read chapter 5? Saul says to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." This may suggest an application of Urim and Thummim for divination. The answer was to go to battle. Again, verse 23, "So the LORD saved Israel that day." shows what they meant by saved.

In 14:24, Saul invokes a stupid curse. A curse has power only over people who believe it has power. Jonathan's "eyes became bright." That wasn't a scene from a grade B science fiction movie. The phrase most likely meant an increase in vitality, in energy. Because of that stupid curse, the people were 'very faint'. So they ate some of the spoil (sheep and oxen) without first draining the blood. So Saul built an altar there (and probably sacrificed). Saul gets the priest to do another divination with U&T, fingering Jonathan as the culprit. Reminds me of the Salem witchcraft trials. The people 'ransomed Jonathan'. The chapter ends with a sidenote of Saul making friends with strong and valiant men. Perhaps this will come in handy later.

1 Sam 15:6 The Kenites were given warning to evacuate the area of devastation. Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, a priest of Yahweh, was a Kenite. This chapter erases any doubt. The author didn't like Saul. In 15:18, Samuel tells Saul the job he was told to do, "And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'" That word sinners appeared previously only in Genesis 13:13 about the residents of Sodom. These are

consistent with the later meaning of the word only if the author thought the residents of Sodom and the Amalekites were non-practicing Jews. Both were thought to be south of the Dead Sea. It seems inappropriate to use 'sinners' to refer to any demographic outside of Israel. Next comes a famously misapplied verse, 15:22, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams." Look at the context. This isn't about obeying Torah. Saul, anointed first king of Israel, had been given specific instructions from Yahweh by way of Samuel the prophet. Saul didn't follow them. This is poetic hyperbole. 15:35 is simple, "And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel." See also 15:11. The meaning is simple, obvious, and unambiguous. If it doesn't match your doctrine, then your doctrine is probably wrong. Well, what about what Samuel says in 15:29, "And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." That Hebrew term *nakham* means relent or change one's mind. In context, the judgment against Saul has already been pronounced and will not change regardless of any tears by Saul. The chapter ends on another dramatic note, as Samuel completes the genocide of the Amalekites (required by Deuteronomy 25:19) by hacking Agag to pieces. Some suggest Agag was a dynastic name of kings of Amalek, similar to Pharaoh as a king of Egypt. Others suggest the word means high, helping to explain Numbers 24:7.

1 Sam 16 Perhaps this author really does have a low view of sacrifice. Here he portrays Samuel using a sacrifice as a ruse, a trick. Next the beauty pageant of the sons of Jesse. No daughters. They somehow allowed some women to be judges, but certainly not a king. 16:12 seems to contradict 16:7. The spirit of Yahweh 'rushed upon David from that day forward' but departed from Saul. Yahweh acting for Israel would now use David instead of Saul. It seems the only witnesses to this anointing are Samuel, probably Jesse, and Jesse's sons. From the rest of the chapter, it seems even Saul didn't know about this. David gets a job as Saul's musician-healer and armor-bearer. 17:12 looks like it's part of a different text from a different tradition. Break out the flannelgraphs for the David and Goliath. 17:42, "And the Philistine cursed David by his gods." That would be Baal, Astarte, and Dagon, all of the Canaanite pantheon of at least a few dozen gods, headed by El and Asherah. Saul tries tricks against David, including giving him his daughters to marry, and sending him into hopeless battles. They are presented as equally bad. But David wins anyway. This is the David of Jewish lore, a warrior.

The accounts in the following chapters suggest a diagnosis of insanity for Saul.

1 Sam 18 Find the antecedents of the pronouns in verse 2. Having failed at getting David killed, Saul outright tells his son and his servants to kill David. Jonathan protects David his friend. More murder plots. More ecstatic utterances. 20:29 a sacrifice used as an excuse with a lie. 21 the holy bread. They always find a way to do what they want, to rationalize the law. 22 Saul commits genocide against the priests (who wore the linen ephod) and their whole city, man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey, and sheep. 23:9 Bring the ephod (probably because it contained U&T). 25 David gets 2 more wives. 26:25 Saul and David kiss and make up. Yet David still fears Saul and moves in with the Philistines. He slaughters more traditional enemies. 28 Saul consults a female medium of Endor, a necromancer, who summons Samuel. Israel eventually decided not to pursue this practice, but they still thought it really happened. 29 The Philistines send David peacefully back home. 30 David's wives are captured. David again calls for the ephod for divination. But the language suggests to me that David was the one using the U&T. David smites the Amelekites and takes back his wives. David declares uniform wages for the army. 31 Saul falls on his own sword. Had he read Shakespeare? Compare to 1 Chronicles 10.

Harmony of Samuel-Kings-Chronicles

258 pages 2 Samuel through 2 Chronicles. These texts were never meant to be ‘harmonized’. But if you insist, see the references on the class web page and also page 702 of the ESV Study Bible. Instead, observe how each author spins the narratives of their traditions. If you see a significant difference, ask why that author made that choice. Is that choice consistent within that author? Where the two accounts match verbatim, why? In general, I will proceed through 2 Samuel, covering Chronicles only where it differs significantly.

David murders the Amalekite who euthanized Saul at Saul’s request. The text quotes the lament of David from the Book of Jashar.

2 Sam 2 David inquires of Yahweh. There is no mention of any use of a prophet. So here again, it seems David is acting as a prophet. Or that’s irrelevant to the purpose of these authors. Their primary message is that Yahweh was providing specific instructions and David was following them. Ish-bosheth (Saul’s son) is made king over Israel; David, over Judah. So much for the united monarchy. An improbable battle at the pool of Gibeon. Was this war or sport? Seems more like farce or slapstick. A dozen on each side and all managed to kill each other? They eventually decide the fighting is nonsense and make peace. This was Israel and Judah at war with each other. I think this is the honesty, whereas the earlier legends of them living as one were wishful thinking, and brainwashing to the idea that Israel and Judah belong together. Watch and see. Even as David manages to ‘unite’ them, it doesn’t last long. In 2 Sam 4, David is finally officially made king over all the tribes of Israel [and Judah, by implication]. 1 Chronicles 12 inserts a census of the soldiers.

2 Sam 5 David conquers **Jebus [Jerusalem]** of the Jebusites. While some suggest the Jebusites thought they were so mighty that even the blind and lame could defend them. Tradition offers a more likely explanation. The author is making fun of the Jebusites. From the Jewish Encyclopedia, “According to a midrash quoted by Rashi on II Sam. v. 6, the Jebusites had in their city two figures—one of a blind person, representing Isaac, and one of a lame person, representing Jacob—and these figures had in their mouths the words of the covenant made between Abraham and the Jebusites.” That tidbit doesn’t appear in the 1 Chronicles version. 5:10 more glowing words for the hero and an explanation for his ascendancy. “And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.” 1 Chron 12 puts in a good word for the Gadites.

Here and 1 Chronicles 11:6 explains why Jerusalem is called the **City of David**. “And David lived in the stronghold [Zion]; therefore it was called the city of David.” That usage seems consistent within Tanakh, referring always and only to Jerusalem. The phrase is never applied to Bethlehem, though David was said to have been born there. The phrase is later applied to a specific area within Jerusalem.

5:21, “And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.” differs significantly from 1 Chron 14:12, “And they left their gods there, and David gave command, and they were burned.” But KJV also has ‘burned’ in 2 Sam. I think that was doctrinally motivated. At Rephaim, Yahweh keep some of the fun (smiting Philistines) for himself. 1 Chron adds, “And the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.”

Here, the Crockett harmony scrambles the texts. You're welcome to try to figure out why. Instead, I'll proceed with the 2 Samuel account as we have the text. We will also use the other harmony I list on the class web page.

2 Sam 6 The ark resurfaces in the narrative. The Priestly tradition of its specifications appeared in Exodus 25, including carrying rings and poles, specified that the poles needed to stay in the rings. The Philistines would feel no obligation to follow those instructions, if they even knew them. Numbers 3 gave more carrying instructions. In Joshua 3, it was the traffic light for wandering Israel. 8:7-8 David is angry because of Yahweh's inordinate punishment. Perhaps David had never heard the rules. Or this is a clue that some of ancient Israel's moral progress is being attributed to David. David became afraid of Yahweh and superstitious about the ark. But when he saw that it worked as a good luck charm for Obed-edom, he finally brought it to Jerusalem. The name of the city differs from that in 1 Sam 7, providing another indication that these are two separate narratives. The collection of names in 6:2 is yet another assertion that Yahweh was the same as Elohim, and specifically identified as head of the pantheon. That God never complains about the ark being carried on a cart suggests that this tradition didn't include specifications about carrying it by poles. Abinadab was a son of Jesse, so not a Levite. Apparently I wasn't the only one to notice that. Thus my guess is that 1 Chron 15 is a later insertion to explain this. With much fanfare, David instructs Levites to do the ark-carrying job. According to this author, that dedication began with David, not with Moses, who is scarcely mentioned in these texts.

David is credited with infusing **music and song** into Jewish ceremonial practice and calling it **praise**. 2 Sam 6:14 Is this the first mention of instrumental music besides David and Saul? In 1 Chronicles 6:31, David is credited with introducing song into Jewish ceremonial practice. He commands the appointment of singers and instrumentalists in 1 Chronicles 15:16. Despite the objections of David's [ex?] wife Michal, the new practice of music, song, and dance went viral. See 15:28. New superstitions arise about the ark, but about touching, not about carrying. 15:13 clearly shows this as an example of the process of the formation of a superstition. Something terrible happened to me just after I broke a mirror. So I'm now terrified about breaking mirrors.

1 Chronicles 15:1-24 has no parallel in Samuel. **Asaph** is one of three Levitical singers appointed to sound bronze cymbals, a cymbalic gesture [sorry]. It's not surprising to find numerous Psalms attributed to him.

David again seems to act in priestly roles as he offers sacrifices, dances (probably ceremonial), and wears the linen ephod. In this account only, the infamous Michal is cursed with perpetual childlessness because she criticized David's immodesty. Or was it really his celebratory ceremonial practices that he seemed to introduce? This isn't the last time that a religious leader was criticized for using new ceremonial practices like music and dance. Asaph is again prominent in 16, the first place thanksgiving is ever associated with praise or music. Modern Christian practice equating worship with music can be traced back to here, but no farther.

I had suggested that the people collecting Jewish wisdom literature into a book of Psalms thought this one would be a good one to toss into the pot. But I think the reverse is far more likely. The song in 16 resembles the wisdom literature genre of the psalms in every way, but stands in stark contrast to the context of 1 Chronicles. It contains many ideas with no precedent in Tanakh up to this point. So I think

it was the chronicler[s] who drew (including copied) from Psalms 105, 96, and 106. While some may credit David with starting Jewish wisdom literature (or at least popularizing it), the book of Psalms we have today reflects the genre in its maturity, during the Second Temple period when it was collected. The genre may have begun in the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, 2055-1650 BCE. It was certainly popular during and after the Babylonian Captivity, including Kings.

2 Sam 7 is a new chapter in the story. But the author isn't necessarily specifying any chronology. If anything, it was simply after the military phase of David's life. Cedar was never native to arid Israel. The famed cedars of Lebanon came from the Mediterranean coast (Tyre). This ostentatious show of wealth came from some combination of his taxing power as king and his political influence with his neighbors. This is as close as Israel ever got to being empire. Besides, David would need some place to keep his wives and concubines. See 2 Samuel 5 for both. The prophet Nathan gives David permission to build a 'house' for the ark of God, but must withdraw it based on a dream. With a delightful pun, the author segues into what we call the **Davidic Covenant**. The 'house of David' now refers to David's offspring. With thousands of wives and concubines between David and Solomon, that's a huge family tree. Without records or genetic testing, nearly any woman of Israel could claim that her child was a child of the king. The 'your offspring' of 7:12 refers to Solomon. He was the next king, though if these accounts were chronological, Absalom had already been born, but not yet Solomon. With this text, the author says that Yahweh told Nathan that Solomon would be a son of God. That was not an attribution of deity. 'Forever' meant indefinitely, since they didn't have the concept of infinity. In fact the Davidic throne ended at the Babylonian captivity. The 1 Chronicles version should call it the Solomonic Covenant, since there it was promised to Solomon, not David. Also see 1 Kings 2 and 1 Chronicles 28:7, where those authors thought the covenant was conditional.

The author now follows the literary tradition by recording a traditional **song**, David's song of gratitude. Most Bible headings call this a prayer, but it's really a soliloquy. It has many stylistic differences from the surrounding texts. That suggests a different source or a different mechanism for passing on tradition. Such a 'song' might not be set to music. But it might be recited as poetry, a creed, or just a favorite story. Our English Bibles show 8 uses of a phrase that looks like '**lord God**', but they give clues if you look carefully. Standard practice for English Bibles uses God for Elohim and LORD (small caps) for Yahweh (represented by YHWH, the Tetragrammaton). Usage of lord (not small caps) generally represents אֲדֹנָי ('adonay) as a term of respect for a man or a leader/boss. The ESV follows an additional custom of representing 'Adonay with YHWH as **Lord GOD** (small caps). The few isolated texts using this phrase do not provide adequate context to discover any specific meaning assigned to it. Translators will capitalize the first letter of the English 'lord' if they think it refers to God. That's an interpretation not derived from the text. 7:22 is not a claim of monotheism, as the rest of the song makes clear. 7:27 is the clearest of many phrases showing Yahweh as head of the pantheon, identical to the Elohim of Israel.

The 'after this' of 2 Sam 8 is an indication that the following text is back in the genre of narrative. The diversion of chapter 7 (presumably after all the conquests) has ended. This author / editor is not obsessed with chronology. It's not what we would call a history. It begins with a simple example of the method of conquest by empire. Slaughter some. Make some slaves. Leave some in the land but make them pay tribute (taxes). Usage of 'subdue' here and elsewhere in context makes clear that Genesis 1:28

isn't talking about environmental stewardship. I found no account explaining the next part as anything but animal cruelty. Hamstringing the horses. Disarm those you conquer so they can't rebel and fight against you. But that also left the horses incapable of walking, therefore taking care of themselves. They would then be a burden to the humans or they would just die slow and agonizing deaths from thirst and starvation, then attacks by wild animals. Perhaps humans cared for them until they could use them for food. That's not the point of the story. David takes booty. Others paid tribute as a painless alternative to war with an empire they are guaranteed to lose. Israel didn't always take that wise choice. This explains where David got his horses despite Deuteronomy 17:16 and also echoes Joshua 11. Until David, Israel didn't use horses. David had been anointed king of Israel. 8:6, "And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went." That was their explanation for David's success as a conquering king (more like emperor). Ditto in verse 14. Many in Second Temple Judaism hoped that Yahweh would do this again.

8:15 "So David reigned over all Israel" is almost certainly inclusive of both Israel and Judah. "And David administered justice and equity to all his people." Perhaps this shows the bias of the authors who have been shouting the praises of legendary hero David. But it also shows one of the greatest benefits of empire: rule of law. Attempts to trace the names are more likely to be misleading than informative. There are too many common names, similar names, foreign names, and scribal errors. The chapter ends with "and David's sons were priests." That's a tidbit indicating the appearance of David acting in priestly roles may have been correct. David was not of Aaron or Levi.

2 Sam 9 (only) seems to have only the purpose of showing that David kept his promise to Jonathan and Saul in 1 Sam 20 and 24. It was common for a new king to murder all the descendants of his predecessor. The author is saying David was better than that. Besides being a dramatic tear-jerker, the lameness of Mephibosheth indicated both that he was incapable of providing for himself and that he was likely no threat to David.

The 'after this' of 2 Sam 10 is an indication that the following text is back in the genre of narrative. The diversion of chapter 9 has ended. Apparently Israel had a relationship of peaceful co-existence with the Ammonites while Nahash was their king. According to this story, David sent servants to console the new king (Hanun) upon the death of his father. It would also be a good practice to encourage continued good relations. Hanun would have none of it, and insulted the servants. Both sides armed up, battles began and escalated, both sides drew in reserves / allies. Of course Israel was victorious. Verse 19 explains what they mean by 'made peace with Israel'. They 'became subject to them'. It was the peace of surrender. Because they rebelled, they transitioned from peaceful peers to vassal servitude. That's the way of empire. This is an appropriate place to quote from the Wikipedia article on Kingdom of Israel (united monarchy), *'In contemporary scholarship the united monarchy is generally held to be a literary construction and not a historical reality, pointing to the lack of archaeological evidence. It is generally accepted that a "House of David" existed, but many believe that David could have only been the monarch or chieftain of Judah, which was likely small, and that the northern kingdom was a separate development.'* and later, *"[Israel] Finkelstein claimed that the Biblical narrative was likely invented under the reign of King Josiah to justify expansion and that the historical united monarchy was the inspiration."* Perhaps Israel took consolation in legend that they too once were empire.

2 Sam 11 (only) presents the soap opera drama of David and Bathsheba. Hittites were usually on Israel's 'bad guy' lists. If they weren't actually part of the Hittite Empire before it collapsed in 1180

BCE, they were close to it. Apparently Uriah's Hittite heritage didn't keep from achieving some success as a warrior for Israel. She was 'purifying herself from her uncleanness'. This was a ceremonial procedure for a menstruating woman, not a public display of nakedness. It's also evidence that she wasn't pregnant before the king had sex with her. The author offers the punishment as an explanation for why David's sons did not treat him well. The child of that first affair dies. Next she bears Solomon to David. Perhaps this explains why the next king of Israel was not from David's 'best' wife. Though nothing in the text places blame on her for anything. Women were typically pawns in the chess game of life.

2 Sam 12 What was the bad thing Nathan the prophet was upset about? David stole the property of a poor man. 2 Sam 13 doesn't speak well of Absalom, who is scarcely mentioned outside of 2 Samuel. See Genesis 38 and Ruth for more about the name Tamar. David seems to be a sucker for stories. Tell him the right story and you can get what you want. 13:29 is the first mention of a mule.

2 Sam 19 portrays David as more compassionate than other kings toward internal enemies. But future internal enemies shouldn't expect that! Sheba leads a rebellion by the [northern] tribes of Israel and is brutally and shamefully dealt with. A woman cuts off his head and throws it over the wall.

2 Sam 21 David practices divination to discern the cause of a famine: Guilt by Saul's line for killing Gibeonites. The problem was that they broke an oath. For atonement, they demand the hanging of seven sons of Saul. Or, this is how the author justifies praising David for this, despite just having praised David for forgiving his internal enemies. Again, Mephibosheth is perceived as no threat. Then yet more war with Philistines. David grew weary. Well, finally! That spear of the giant Ishbi-benob was said to be 37 pounds. But the author provides an excuse for David for no longer directly participating in warfare. He has a new role. Well, not exactly. "You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel." This lamp refers to his descendants, his genetic line. ESV notes on 1 Chron 21:7 suggests that, with all the battles and murders, David's genetic line was on the verge of extinction. That wouldn't do for their belief in the Davidic Covenant.

2 Sam 22 is another song. Without writing, even songs are never static. We shouldn't be surprised at differences in the version in Psalm 18. Hebrew prose tells us what they thought; Hebrew poetry tells us what they felt. In 22:5, the horn of salvation, horn is often used as a symbol of strength. 22:47 The LORD lives. That seems strange and out of context. But Deut 5:29 uses the phrase (living God), but it's about Israel's amazement that God spoke with a man and the man still lived. Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26 and 36; 1 Kings 17 and 18 and Job 27:2 it appears as an oath ("As the LORD your God lives..."); 2 Kings 19:4; some Psalms and prophets.

2 Sam 23 is the swan song of David, an opportunity for the author to insert another plug for the Davidic Covenant. The song seems to end abruptly and pointlessly, so I suspect some of it was lost before anyone wrote it down. While we're at it, let's shout a tribute to the military leaders.

2 Sam 24 begins with another reminder that we're reading the writings of Judah, not those of Israel. "Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them" Judah still doesn't like Israel, but presumably for good reason. [Prophetic literature explains that these northern tribes got their just desserts when the Assyrians conquered them, carried them away, and

assimilated them.] The author leaves ambiguity. Did David sin by taking the census even though Yahweh incited him to do it? 1 Chronicles 21 gives a different view, one we haven't seen before. "Then **Satan** stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel." Whoah, who is this new character? An anachronism, injected here from the later genre of apocalyptic literature. The name appears elsewhere only in Job and Zechariah. This insertion is easy to spot because the idea is such a radical departure from what came before and after, not just because a new name appears without context. The cosmic bargaining of 21:17 is reminiscent of Job. The section ends with a clear picture of the religious philosophy of the Ancient Near East (ANE). Build altars and offer sacrifices so that the gods will treat you well instead of badly. Who was the intercessor? David. But David has more grandiose ideas. He wants a **temple**, not just an altar (1 Chron 22:1).

Note that the measure was 'men that drew the sword', and that the narratives have different counts for Israel/Judah (800K/500K vs. 1100K/470K). Both accounts called this pestilence (70K, about 5%) an act of mercy. This is Hebrew prophetic literature disguised as history. It rationalizes examples of why bad things happen to good people, trying desperately to harmonize their experience with their philosophy.

Solomon

The name means peace (shalom). The text will show why this name is appropriate, in contrast with David, a man of war. This is a hint that this might be a character of legend rather than history. Another hint is the absence of any significant historical record of Solomon. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon#Historicity>. We see without explanation his behavior as a typical king/emperor of the ANE, abusing (by modern standards) his dictatorial power. He squanders the (exaggerated) wealth of this meager plot of land about the size of California but with 13% of the modern GDP of California. David created what's called the united monarchy [of Israel]. Solomon will cause it to fall apart.

The books of Kings are called a **Deuteronomistic history**, since the language and theology follow that of Deuteronomy. "scholars today tend to treat it as made up of at least two layers, a first edition from the time of Josiah (late 7th century BCE), promoting Josiah's religious reforms and the need for repentance, and (2) a second and final edition from the mid 6th century BCE." (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_of_Kings#The_Deuteronomistic_history.) The book of Chronicles "was probably composed between 400–250 BC, with the period 350–300 BC the most likely." (Wikipedia)

1 Kings 1:14 is a conspiracy. Bathsheba will tell an aging (becoming demented?) David that he promised kingship to Solomon. Nathan agrees in advance to swoop in and 'confirm' that. David falls for the ruse. Adonijah is afraid and took hold of the horns of the altar. That was a common custom in the ANE, taking asylum at a shrine. **Solomon** spares his life as long as he behaves.

1 Chronicles 22-29 contains narrative not found in Samuel or Kings. It's a distracting diversion from the Kings narrative but doesn't fit anywhere else. David starts preparing for the building of the temple but explains why David never built one. 2 Chronicles 3 restates the rationale for building the temple in Jerusalem. Jebus was the earlier name for Jerusalem before David conquered it (2 Samuel 5). The tabernacle was at Gibeon, about 15 miles north of Jerusalem.

In 22:14 David says, “With great pains I have provided for the house of the LORD 100,000 talents of gold ...” A talent is about 75 pounds or 34kg. So David provided 3,400 metric tons of gold. To date, 190,000 metric tons of gold have been mined. But in 1835, that number was 10,000 metric tons. And yet one king of one little plot of land managed to have 1/3 of all the gold mined through 1835. This should be enough to convince the reader to expect wild exaggeration in these narratives. He did have booty and slaves from wars and as king also had the power of taxation. Despite that unimaginable wealth supply, “To these you must add.”

In 23, this author skips the drama of Adonijah of the 1 Kings narrative. In 24, David organizes the priests. What authority did he have to do this? No wonder the priests didn’t want Israel to have a king! Several choices were made by lot, showing the practice of divination, even for high-level political and religious affairs, in Israel at this time. In 25:1, two sons of Asaph “prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals.” This requires a radical redefinition of prophecy. Based on Psalm 15, said to be a Psalm of Asaph, I suspect that this new meaning was to create poetic expressions of the prophetic worldview, creating prophetic literature in a new genre. 26 creates a formidable crew of gatekeepers. Why? There were no gates. But once there was a temple, there would be. Especially if it contained (at 2020 prices) \$18 trillion of gold. Numbers 4 had defined who does tabernacle duties. Kohathites: most holy things; Eleazar: oil, incense; Gershom: serving and bearing burdens; Merari: carry the framework. That was then; this is now. More divination for who does what. Lots of treasurers for battle booty. More to have oversight over tribal leadership.

1 Chron 27 seems to be describing not the army, but the labor force needed to maintain the kings in their lavish lifestyle. 24,000 at a time (288,000 total) is an absurd number. See page 46 to put this number into context. Some suggest the Hebrew word *’elep* translated ‘thousand’ is a word used to refer to a unit. If so, we don’t know the size of that unit. See ESV note on 12:23. I can’t tell how much of this was a census of existing leadership and how much was a dictator defining leadership. Responsibilities for vineyards, wine, olive, oil, herds, camels, donkeys, and flocks. Horses aren’t mentioned here, but they are in 1 Kings 4. 27:31, “All these were stewards of King David's property.” Not the nation’s property. Palestine wasn’t a rich land. Lavish diversion of wealth to themselves by the first two real kings (David and Solomon) may be why the united monarchy didn’t last beyond them. Their **wealth inequity** may have been worse than that in the US today.

In his State of the Union speech in 1 Chronicles 28, David asserts that the LORD God of Israel chose Judah, then David, then Solomon to rule Israel as king. What do you notice in 28:7, where the author said that God said, “I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.”? This author thinks the Davidic Covenant was conditional! Same in 1 Kings 2 (see below). David then pleads with Israel to keep their end of the Mosaic Covenant in order to keep the land. In 29, the author says they collected an immense freewill offering. Color me skeptical of this. Thousands of big animals as sacrifices. Solomon is anointed yet again and takes over the throne in 29:23, while David was still alive. David reigned 40 years, a favorite number and time period. Any chronicled material that didn’t find its way into our canonical texts does not exist today.

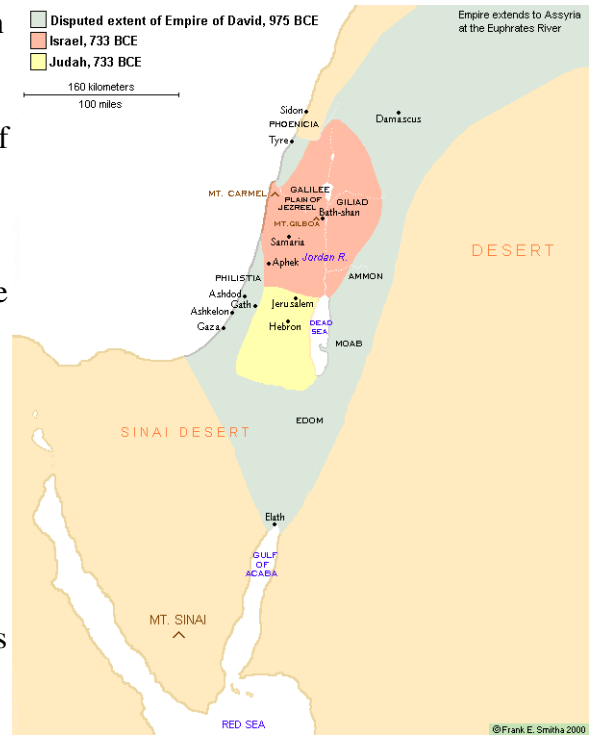
1 Kings 2 David instructs Solomon to obey Torah so that he may prosper. Then he expresses the Davidic Covenant as conditional (“If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.”), conflicting with 2 Samuel 7 which is unconditional. This author thinks the Davidic Covenant was conditional (as noted above). Don’t let Joab die peacefully in old age. But treat my friends well. I promised Shimei that I wouldn’t kill him. But don’t let that stop you. David dies. Solomon takes over. Adonijah complains that he didn’t become king. So he asks Bathsheba (the Jewish mother) to ask Solomon to give him the consolation prize (Abishag) as a wife. Solomon responds by murdering Adonijah his half-brother. Perhaps this author is less enamored with Solomon. He fires Abiathar the priest but says he won’t kill him ‘at this time’. Why does he think he has authority to do that? Joab also claims asylum. But this time Solomon doesn’t respect the tradition and kills him anyway. Shimei was allowed to stay in a city of refuge. But that lasted only 3 years. As the story goes, he leaves the city, and Solomon kills him by the hand of his executioner, Benaiah, a loyal and accomplished military leader. [In the US, we don’t allow the military to perform police actions within national borders.]

Political marriage alliances were common in the ANE. If my king marries your king’s daughter, then surely you won’t attack us! In 3:1, Solomon does this with a daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt. “... until he had finished building his own house ...” Wow, even David’s palace wasn’t good enough for him! Gotta have a new governor’s mansion! That plus the temple plus a wall around Jerusalem. That puts even California’s big spenders to shame! 3:2, “The people were sacrificing at the **high places**, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD.” Nonsense! All they needed was the tabernacle, and they had that. I think it’s hard for these authors to keep their stories straight. We see snippets suggesting that until the ‘reforms’ of Josiah, centralizing worship to Jerusalem, people have been offering their own sacrifices, perhaps using their local (distributed) priests. Joshua 21 shows that Levi did not get any tribal land like all the other tribes. Instead, they got cities and pasturelands distributed across all the other tribal lands. They got 48 cities. Not cities like Dallas. More like Tupman California. A few houses for shepherds who tend the sheep in the nearby pasturelands. On average that would mean one Levite city for each 160 square miles of Palestine. Any Jew would likely live within 10 miles of a Levite. The high places (במות *bamot*) were local/village places to offer sacrifices. The etymology may have begun as a reference to a hilltop or a mound, or even just a platform used as an altar. We see patriarchs and others building altars throughout Torah. The complaint in 3:2 may be an anachronism because worship had not yet been centralized. Or perhaps an acknowledgment that people of Israel were offering sacrifices all over the land. Perhaps Deuteronomy 12 was an early attempt to centralize but Solomon wasn’t enforcing it. Or perhaps not even using the guild priests. Or perhaps sacrificing to other gods. It seems ironic that this author’s complaint about the high places is followed immediately by an account of Solomon going to one of them (at Gibeon) to sacrifice, but being offered magnificent wisdom instead of being punished. That niggling detail takes a back seat to this author’s opportunity to explain why so much Jewish **wisdom literature** is attributed to Solomon. It’s secondarily an observation that the king was presumed to be the highest legal court of the land. Moses did that, but eventually needed to delegate.

1 Kings 4:7-19 lists the 12 “officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household. Each man had to make provision for one month in the year.” This text doesn’t say how many each of those commanded. Perhaps these are a subset of the 288,000 enumerated in 1 Chronicles 27, also by

month.

1 Kings 4:20-21 is the author's assessment of the situation at the David-Solomon transition, typically assigned to 971 BCE. Wikipedia suggests well-accepted archaeological evidence of an Israel by this time, but not for a kingdom of Judah until ca 700 BCE. There is no historical evidence that there ever was a united monarchy. This paragraph describes it as an empire. Very unlikely, and definitely not to the extent claimed by this paragraph. This map from the [Jewish Virtual Library](#) shows the claims vs. the more likely reality. The paragraph expresses a claim of fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants: population, prosperity, and ownership/control of a land. It's a glory that Israel probably never had. The chapter concludes with a paean to the wealth, power, and wisdom of Solomon, and the peace of Israel.



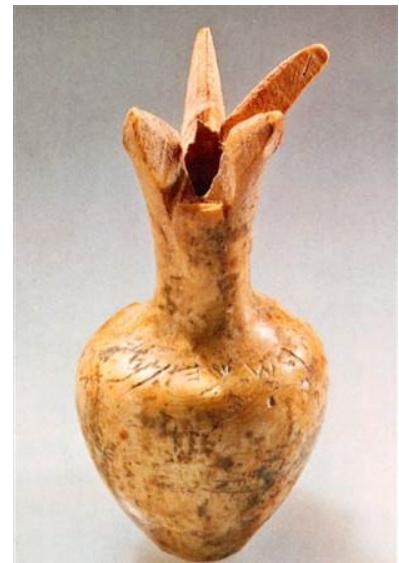
1 Kings 5 gets down to the business of building Solomon's temple with slave labor (v. 13), "King Solomon drafted forced labor out of all Israel, and the draft numbered 30,000 men." 9:15-23 suggests Solomon didn't send Israelite slaves abroad, only other Canaanite slaves. The next chapter continues with some construction details. 6:11 cites another conditional promise to Solomon. He spends 7 years building the temple, then 13 years building his own house. It seems like Solomon delayed finishing the temple until he had finished his own house. Chapter 8 has Solomon bringing the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, along with the tabernacle and all the accoutrements, into the temple with great fanfare and "sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered." The dedication ceremonies are followed by an appearance of Yahweh confirming the conditional Davidic/Solomonic Covenant. 8:12 takes more poetry from the wisdom literature. Then the claim to Davidic monarchy. Then the 'reform' of Josiah to centralize worship in Jerusalem. Not surprising, since Josiah is a likely author of Kings. Mercy is a new idea. The 'mercy seat' of Exodus 25 is better translated 'atonement cover'. Mercy and longsuffering were a philosophical explanation for why bad people (disobedient Israel) sometimes didn't suffer. They certainly weren't willing to admit that their central philosophy was wrong. Very brief citations of elements of ancient Jewish philosophy. They begin to admit the idea that God doesn't really dwell in the temple (or the tabernacle). The superstition shifts to 'pray toward this place'. For some, 'this place' is Mecca. Implicit is the new idea of having the common people pray. Next comes another superstition. If a man does bad stuff and swears before the altar in the temple, he'll get his [karma]. It's an ancient precursor to 'cross my heart and hope to die', using the sign of the cross. The suffering of an individual for his own individual bad deeds is becoming the norm. 8:41 extends prayer to the foreigner! The 'rest' in 8:56 is peace (the absence of warfare) characteristic of the reign of Solomon. That's all. Solomon is claiming credit for causing God to keep up his end of the covenant. More absurd numbers (22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep sacrificed). Another geographical claim of the extent of Solomon's kingdom, south to the Sinai peninsula, north to include Jordan and Syria. The themes of 1 Kings 9 should be familiar by now. 9:11-14 (only) shows Solomon paying Hiram with 20 cities of dubious value. [2 Chronicles 8:2 instead talks about cities

Hiram had given to Solomon.] Galilee is hilly. Even now, it has mostly small villages everywhere but along the Sea of Galilee. 9:15 is “the account of the forced labor that King Solomon drafted to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer” The Millo (probably not really a proper name) means the fill. It refers to terraced fill land. I just said Galilee is hilly, as is most of Israel. Archaeology has found remnants of both styles dating from roughly this period. Iron Age tools could have made terracing practical. The author tries to rationalize slavery by Solomon, and here says that Solomon didn’t enslave people of Israel. That doesn’t match other texts. Of 9:26-28, the ESV Study Bible says, “Many scholars have tried to identify Ezion-geber with the modern Tell el-Kheleifeh, but this site was not settled until the eighth century B.C., at least 200 years after Solomon’s time.”

1 Kings 10 The queen of Sheba is widely considered to be legendary. The story is told to reinforce Solomon’s legendary wisdom and wealth. As I understand it, no evidence has been found for Solomon’s wealth. One year’s gold income said to be 666 talents (50,000 pounds). At the October 2020 gold price of \$1900/ounce, that’s \$1.5 billion in today’s value. Perhaps this is a superiority claim over Tutankhamun, c. 1432-1325 BCE. The prohibition against ‘many horses’ was a Deuteronomistic one (17:16), written much later than Solomon.

1 Kings 11 (only) shows the divide between what the priests wanted and what the king [Solomon] did. The scene was repeatedly set early in the book, showing the promises to Solomon as conditional. Now the author can leap ahead to explain the impending demise of the united monarchy. The ESV Study Bible explains a Jewish name as an insult. “**Ashtoreth** is the biblical name for Astarte (a deliberate distortion of the original using the vowels of the Hb. word *boshet*, ‘shame’).”

2 Chronicles 2-9 parallels 1 Kings 5-11, seeming to emphasize the ceremonial while the Kings emphasizes the ceremonial. An occasion for boasting in 2:9, “The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods.” My god is better than your god. Hyperbole from wisdom literature sneaks in here. 3:1 gives the location as Mount Moriah. 4:13 mentions 400 pomegranates. They were a popular symbol of fertility. They may have been like this thumb-size ivory pomegranate. The one in the photo (from the Israel Museum) is not one from the temple, and made from bone, not ivory. 5:13-14, “the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.” This is the author’s way of saying that Yahweh/Elohim approved of the temple. 6 Solomon portrays God choosing Jerusalem to house the temple, David to rule Israel, and Solomon to build the temple. 6:13 (only) says Solomon had his own brass scaffold, from which he said his prayer. 6:14, “there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth.” 6:40 (only) has a closing to the prayer. 7 Better drama, fire from heaven consuming the sacrifices. Read 7:14 in context. 7:15 is new, “Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.” The chapter ends with an explicit declaration of the prophetic worldview. If Israel is ever evicted from the land, it must be because they disobeyed Torah, violating the Mosaic Covenant. The disobedience will primarily be the worship of other gods. 1 Kings 11:41-43 (cf 2 Chronicles 9:29-31) may explain some of the



differences between these two narratives They drew from different traditional sources.

Now we play ping pong with kings of Israel vs. Judah. Remember this is written by the priestly line of Yahweh, of Judah. It's no surprise that these authors call all of those kings of Israel bad. 1 Kings 12 / 2 Chronicles 10 turns to the next king (rather, pair of kings), **Rehoboam**, after explaining why Jeroboam wasn't chosen. Rehoboam was, of course, called a son of Solomon. [Jeroboam was merely a servant of Solomon.] But why this one (Rehoboam) among probably thousands? Choosing the advice of the youngsters implied rejection of the wisdom of the elders. Opposite of the reputation of Solomon. Now the 'predicted' split of the divided kingdom into its traditional components. Now it's Rehoboam over Judah [one measly tribe] but **Jeroboam** over Israel [everyone else]. 12:21-24 explains why there wasn't a civil war. Shemaiah the prophet said no. Only in Kings, Jeroboam tries to undo the centralization of worship in Jerusalem [which really had not yet happened], and broke the Levitical monopoly on the priesthood. 2 Chronicles 11:13-14 explains that Jeroboam had fired the Levitical priests and evicted them from Israel, so they fled to Judah. So of course the priests writing the text [Deuteronomists] don't like it. The golden calves of 1 Kings 12:28 cause the golden calves of Exodus 32 to make sense. They seemed to be part of the traditional worship of Elohim by Israel. The god of Moses was Yahweh. Chapter 13 (only) shows an unnamed prophet (from Judah, of course, but coming to Bethel, In Israel, just north of Jerusalem) declaring the future demise of the temples of Jeroboam, with the first textual mention of **Josiah**. This prophet 'predicts' that Josiah will sacrifice those bad priests of Israel on the alter he's talking to. 1 Kings 23:15 says that Josiah burned only the dead bones, about 3 centuries later. Jeroboam asks the prophet for favor from Yahweh your Elohim, suggesting that Jeroboam's god was Elohim, not Yahweh. Seems not everyone believed the Moses story. 14:29, "Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?" This is not the books of Chronicles we have today. By this time (early first millennium BCE), "literacy was widespread in and around Palestine, and writing was being employed in legal, business, literary, and religious texts." (ESV notes on 1 Kings 14:19). The language form called Ancient Biblical Hebrew (aka Old Hebrew or Paleo-Hebrew) was in use from the 10th to the 6th century BCE, and was written in the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet. "Standard Biblical Hebrew around the 8th to 6th centuries BCE, corresponding to the late Monarchic period and the Babylonian Exile. It is represented by the bulk of the Hebrew Bible that attains much of its present form around this time. Also called Biblical Hebrew, Early Biblical Hebrew, Classical Biblical Hebrew or Classical Hebrew (in the narrowest sense)." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language#Biblical_Hebrew)

Somewhere around here we hop to 2 Chronicles 12-13, back to the Judah side. Then back to 1 Kings 15 for Abijah.

How might it make sense to read about these kings? Israel (while it existed) had 20 Kings, while Judah had only 12 kings. Perhaps this breakdown (Israel, Judah):

1. {Jeroboam}, {Rehoboam, Abijam} First, discussed more
2. {Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Omri}, {Asa}
3. {Ahab, Ahaziah}, {Jehoshaphat}
4. {Jehoram}, {Jehoram} ???
5. {Jehu, Jehoahaz, Jehoash}, {Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash}
6. {Jeroboam II}, {Uzziah}
7. {Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea}, {Jotham, Ahaz}

After that, it's all Judah.

In these texts, I will consider another possibility. I suspect that many of the instances of Elohim were originally instances of el, the generic word for a god, but also the name of the head of the Canaanite pantheon. The process was prehistoric, but could have been the same as (or the opposite of) a modern trend. That is, to use a company name as a verb. Xerox to mean making a photocopy, or Google to mean doing a web search. We can't tell whether the name El began to be used generically for any god, or whether the generic word for a god came to be used as the name of a specific god. I suspect our Hebrew textual body evolved to 'respectfully' replace el or elohim with Elohim unless the text was clearly speaking generically of gods. An example from 2 Chronicles 14:2-4, "And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers." In the first case, Asa (king of Judah) did what was good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his god. Yahweh was the god of the Southern tribes. The second case may be re-asserting the claim of unity, Yahweh his Elohim.

We see cases of varying names apparently assigned to the same person, and sometimes to a king of Israel and another king of Judah at about the same time. Jehoram/Joram, Ahaziah/Azariah/Jehoahaz, Joash/Jehoash. I can't help but wonder whether the simple explanation is that the authors didn't know who the kings were.

2 Kings 3 Jehoram seemed to become king of both Judah and Israel. Perhaps that's why he was able to quash a rebellion against tribute by Mesha, king of Moab. The author shows him figuring out he was fighting a losing battle. So he sacrifices his eldest son, heir to his throne, publicly on the wall. [This article](#) suggests that this practice (from the time of Ugarit through the time of the Romans) was well-known.

2 Kings 10:32 exemplifies the desperation of Israel to defend their central philosophy by rationalizing conquest as an act of punishment by their god. "In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel." Hazael was king of Syria, forming the empire of **Aram-Damascus** 842-796 BCE. During this time, that empire was conquered by the **Assyrian Empire**. The author credits Yahweh with the success of these empires at nibbling around the territory of Judah. That process will finish in 722 BCE with the final conquest of Israel. Judah will persist as an island until the 586 BCE conquest by the **Neo-Babylonian Empire**. These explanations are sprinkled throughout these texts, but poetically elaborated in their prophetic and apocalyptic literature.

2 Kings 17 explains who they think the Samaritans were. It showed they still believed that if you live in a region, you need to pay dues to the god of that region. The chapter ends with a strawman. No, they never served their carved images. They served the gods represented by the images. They had no superstition against making an image of your gods.

2 Kings 21 Asherah was the Ugaritic mother-goddess, consort of El. We see kings (or Israel) toggling back and forth between traditional Canaanite worship practices and those preferred by the priests of Yahweh. The Yahwist echo chamber can always claim that anything bad happened because Israel didn't devote worship exclusively according to the preferences of the priests of Yahweh. People starting in late

first century did the same thing when Christians refused to obey the traditional religious practices.

These texts convey the indisputable message that, right up to the Babylonian captivity, Israel was polytheistic. Only intermittently were they monolatrous.

Ezra-Nehemiah

Ezra-Nehemiah can be considered a continuation of Chronicles, perhaps by the same author(s). Until the 16th century, they were generally considered as one book. “in Latin Christian bibles from the 13th century onwards, the Vulgate Book of Ezra was divided into two texts, called respectively the First and Second books of Ezra; a separation which became canonised with the first printed bibles in Hebrew and Latin.” (Wikipedia)

Wisdom Literature

Wisdom literature was a popular genre in the Ancient Near East, probably originating in Mesopotamia and Egypt in the middle of the third millennium BCE. The Wikipedia articles provide a good overview.

Job

The book was written in learned literary Hebrew of the Persian period (540-330 BCE). It was likely patterned after the Babylonian Theodicy (1600-900 BCE).

This philosophical treatise addressed an age-old question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” An extended allegory pits the cosmic powers of good, epitomized by God (of course, since this is the Jewish version), against the cosmic powers of evil, epitomized by “the adversary” (Satan). Jews reading this would not jump to the conclusion that Satan was an actual being or person. They would just recognize the personification as a literary device. Peer and earlier wisdom literature on the subject would not likely have personified the cosmic powers of good as a familiar being like a god. That wasn’t the point of addressing this question.

This idea of the cosmic battle became part of the Jewish apocalyptic worldview. Or the converse.

The rest of Tanakh makes the case that the central philosophy of ancient Israel was the Mosaic Covenant. Yet Job contains no trace of that idea. Perhaps that’s because Job predates the invention of that philosophy. Or perhaps that’s because the Mosaic Covenant doesn’t address the question at hand. Or perhaps because the author rejected the philosophy. This is about the suffering of a righteous individual, not about an obedient or disobedient tribe (Israel). Within Tanakh, the folk philosophy development can be seen. If an individual Jew is suffering, that individual must have violated Torah.

In my opinion, Job is not about **theodicy**. The ‘problem of evil’ arises from the apparent paradox that evil persists in the presence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity. Ancient Israel held neither of those doctrines. They were willing to entertain ideas of God doing bad things to people if they could view it as justifiable punishment. Commit genocide against the Canaanites. Here, God isn’t portrayed as perpetrating bad things against Job, but just as permitting it.

Their prophetic worldview explained the Assyrian captivity of Israel (northern tribes) as punishment for disobedience. But author (with Job as his mouthpiece) spends much of this work criticizing those who accuse a suffering person of wickedness. Even today, people say a person is suffering because he must have done something bad. And the converse. A person prospering must have done something good. Once homo sapiens discovered cause and effect, we seek to find causes for every effect. That can be science. Or if we can't find causes, we invent them. That's superstition.

In John 9, the narrative of the man born blind, Jesus is portrayed as rejecting one of those traditional superstitions. No, it's not because this man or his parents sinned. Jesus offers an alternative explanation.

All religions of the ANE held that events on earth were strongly influenced by the gods. If you want the gods to treat you well, give them what they want. Mainly that was sacrifices. Perhaps Job represents a philosophical shift away from gods and toward cosmic forces. That might align it more with Eastern Mysticism. Mesopotamian thinkers could have certainly been influenced.

Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature

Why did people of ancient Israel compose (and later, write) literature in the prophetic and apocalyptic genres? I'm glad you asked.

1. Explanation. Why did major historic events happen? It's more rationalization. Why did the Assyrians conquer the northern territories? Well, of course, the people must have failed to honor their obligations under the Mosaic Covenant. That's the Jewish prophetic worldview. The alternative would be to admit that their central philosophy might be wrong. The real reason for the Assyrian (and Hittite and Babylonian) conquests is that empire nearly always wins battles with tribal fiefdoms. It's a fair fight only when an empire fights another empire.
2. Motivation. Obey Torah so this won't happen again. It's within your collective power to determine whether God brings you blessings or curses.
3. Consolation. If (when) Israel obeys (or repents (stops disobeying)), God will bless. These blessings are described in utopian terms. Consolation also includes the joy of anticipation of revenge. Tiny Israel has no power to defeat an empire that conquered them, so God will make that happen, punishing the empire for doing bad things to Israel. This is all wishful thinking, but had some positive effects. It may have helped enforce moral codes. It may have assisted moral progress in the form of dethroning revenge as a major cultural force. I don't need to take revenge if I believe God will do it for me. That trickled down to local affairs. I've noted the progression from escalation of revenge, to measured revenge (eye for an eye), to withheld revenge (I'm entitled to revenge but I can choose not to take it. Turn the other cheek.)
4. Entertainment. People enjoyed hearing (later reading) the colorful poetry. They liked hearing their philosophy reinforced. It's why people today listen only to their own echo chambers. Tell me what I want to hear. I don't really care whether it's true or not.

Apocalyptic elements were added. We can't tell when, since earlier literature was updated (redacted) to incorporate later ideas. One such element was the idea of battle between cosmic forces of good and evil (Job). Another was the imagination of a specific event in time when God would balance the books, giving the bad people (and empires) all the punishment they deserve, and giving the good people (and Israel) all the blessings they deserve. All of this was **wishful thinking**, since they had no evidence that anything like this would ever happen, but they liked to dream about it.

This is very much like the **karma** philosophy of the Indian religions. For them, it happens in life and in reincarnations. For ancient Israel, it would happen with local or global apocalyptic events. Local events would include Babylonian conquest of Assyria (and vice versa). For Second Temple Judaism, it would happen in Judea, within a generation or two, as God defeats Rome to restore Judea to political independence. For Christians, who adapted the idea, it was the apocalyptic defeat by God of any and all forces which bothered Christians, perhaps including bad people in general. That evolved to the belief that it would happen in an afterlife, a Platonic ideal realm. These are all forms of wishful thinking.

The prophetic worldview was a '**blame the victim**' worldview. If Israel is suffering, it must be because Israel disobeyed Torah. That started to change with later wisdom literature, epitomized by Job.

The background setting of this genre is the Jewish role of a prophet. The shaman of more ancient cultures was a person believed to have a special connection with the gods for communication or influence. This evolved into the Jewish role of a prophet, a person who hears a message directly from God and passes it on to the people. He would introduce pronouncements in that role with, "thus saith Yahweh." They also acted as preachers. Everyone understood their central philosophy of the Mosaic Covenant. It didn't require a specific divine communication for a wise observer to say, "Y'all are violating Torah by doing A, B, and C. If you keep it up, Israel will be punished. Stop it! (repent). If you stop, God will bless." Prophetic literature said the same stuff, stylistically put into the mouth of a famous historic prophet. When a piece explained a specific event, the author would frame it as a prediction by that prophet, though they were told/written after the fact.

These authors didn't think they were creating **Scripture**. When the works were eventually written, the writers knew they were writing scripture (writings), but not Scripture (grandiose edifices with unique imputed authority), subject to **bibliolatry** (worship of the Bible).

Isaiah

The book called Isaiah in the Hebrew canon is an anthology of writings in the prophetic genre, with some apocalyptic elements. Often each chapter is its own story, with little connection with surrounding text.

Second Temple Judaism

This is the demographic and school of thought which is most important to me. It's the one where Jesus lived and taught. Scholars today have quite a bit of literature from this time and region. Most of this body of writing was discovered during my lifetime. The thought and practices represented by this writing are those of the peers of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus would assume an understanding and familiarity with those ideas and the words and phrases commonly used to express them. For example, Jesus used the 'bind and loose' concept without explaining it because everyone already knew what it meant. If we want to understand what Jesus meant when he referred to that concept, we need to look elsewhere to understand the concept. Scholars now have the peer literature to make that possible.

New Testament

James

The ideas in James are much more closely related to the ideas of Second Temple Judaism, and the direct teachings of Jesus as we see them in the synoptic gospels, than they are to the ideas of Paul and later authors. I think it likely represents thought from the very earliest Jesus Movement. This session will examine those ideas, and try to understand where they fit.

Paul

The next logical class after this would be the thoughts of Paul, covered in a separate document. A next class could explore the ideas of Paul, with special attention to how and why they differed from ancient Judaism, Second Temple Judaism, and other religious thought of the region and time. It would cover the New Testament books in (as best we can tell) the order in which they were written, starting with the undisputed Pauline epistles (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon).

Deutero-Pauline Epistles

It might next cover the “Deutero-Pauline” epistles (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians).

Pastoral Epistles

Hebrews

Gospels

The Sunday evening class completed a very long pass through a harmony of the Gospels with Ken Gilbert. I cover the Gospels in a separate document.

Jude

Jude is here because I don't know where else to put it. It's a rant against, and a curse upon, certain people. Perhaps they were insufficiently ascetic. Perhaps they didn't obey what the author considered to be authorities. Perhaps even Paul was on this author's blacklist. The author drops some incidental references to some arcane ideas. Jesus saved a people out of the land of Egypt. Though Paul may have had that idea in 1 Corinthians 10. He cites 1 Enoch 1:9 as prophetic truth. He refers to a story about Michael and the body of Moses which does not appear in any surviving written record.

Revelation

Resources

Some of these are placed here so that the student will follow the instructions, read the texts, and get the answers from the texts. Yeah, I know, wishful thinking on my part.

Parallels between Exodus and Numbers

From the ESV Study Bible. J source on the left, P source on the right.

Ex. 18:1	Advice from Moses' father-in-law	Advice to Moses' father-in-law	Num. 10:29
Ex. 15:22	Three-day journey to Sinai	Three-day journey from Sinai	Num. 10:33
Ex. 15:22–26	Complaint about water	Unspecified complaint	Num. 11:1–3
Exodus 16	Manna and quail	Manna and quail	Num. 11:4–15, 31–35
Exodus 18	Leaders appointed to assist Moses	Leaders appointed to assist Moses	Num. 11:16–30
Ex. 15:20–21	Miriam's song of praise	Miriam and Aaron rebel	Numbers 12
Ex. 17:8–16	Israel defeats Amalek	Israel defeated by Amalek	Num. 14:39–45
Ex. 17:1–7	Water from rock	Water from rock	Num. 20:1–13
Ex. 32:6	People sacrifice to other gods	People sacrifice to other gods	Num. 25:2
Ex. 32:27	Killing of apostates demanded	Killing of apostates demanded	Num. 25:5
Ex. 32:28–29	Levites' status enhanced	Levites' (Phinehas's) status enhanced	Num. 25:6–13
Ex. 32:35	Plague on the people	Plague on the people	Num. 25:9

Ch	Type	Who offers	Leftovers	M/F	Pleasing aroma?	For sin?	Required?
1	Burnt	All	none	M	Y	N	N
2	Grain	All	priests	---	Y	N	N
3	Peace/Fellowship	All	offerer	M/F	Y	N	N
4	Sin (unintentional)	Priest	burn outside	M bull	N	Y	Y
4		Congreg.	same	M bull	N	Y	Y
4		Leader	priests	M goat	N	Y	Y
4		Common man	priests	F goat or lamb	Y?	Y	Y
5	Silent witness	Anyone	priests	F lamb or goat or 2 birds or flour	N	Y	Y
5	Ceremonial	Anyone	priests	ram+restitution	N	Y	Y
6	Oppress neighbor	Anyone	priests	ram+1.2x restitution	N	Y	Y
7	Guilt	Anyone	priests	(whatever)	N	Y	Y

References

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