

INTRODUCTION TO PART I: MOSES AND THE ORIGINAL SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

It is often observed that the Hebrew Bible is a “*Jewish*” book. While this is effectively true of the popularly received final edition (cobbled together, revised and handed down by generations of Jewish scribes), it was not always true of each of its original parts. Hence, each so-called “Abrahamic” world religion of Judaism, Christianity and Islam – although variously dependent on this received textual tradition – relies on its own reinterpretation, supplement or alternative. (Jews study their *Oral Torah*; Christians preach a *New Testament*; Moslems recite the Quran.) So, the formerly codified “Mosaic” Testament, the compilation traditionally ascribed to Moses, universally carries only secondary importance for defining what became Muslim, Christian – or even Jewish, as learned Talmudic rabbis well-know. This is because the earliest myths, histories and laws of the Bible, redacted into the so-called Five Books of Moses, were not Jewish. Rather, these once distinct texts bear historical witness to two ancient rivals: ISRAEL and JUDAH.

Similarly, one often hears remarks concerning, “*the God of the Old Testament.*” This too is a late conflation hardly respectful of history. While the latter portions of the Hebrew Bible variously refer to “*Yahweh Elohim,*” “*Yahweh El Elyon*” “*El Elohim Yahweh,*” “*Yah Elohim*” etc... historically, the religion of Israel was Elohistic and the religion of Judah was Yahwistic. Thus, EL and YAH were once known as separate deities; Yahweh was not “*the Elohim of Israel.*”¹

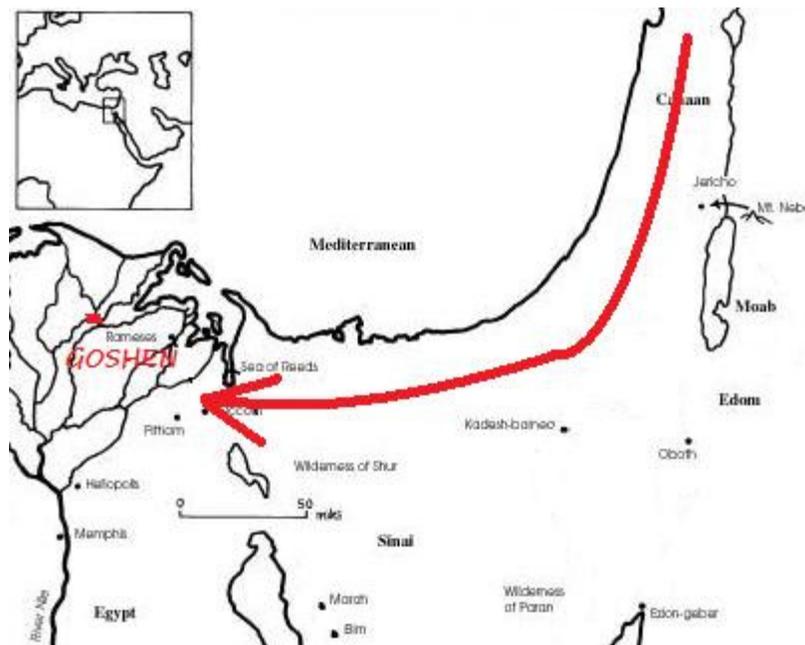
Distinguishing ISRAEL FROM JUDAH (historically), and ELOHIM FROM YAHWEH (theologically), is the beginning of understanding the Hebrew Bible and – by implication – all the successive Judaisms, Christianities and Islams. Indeed, without a basic historical-critical knowledge of the so-called Old Testament, the complex theologies of the ideologically dependent New Testament will forever mystify. So, we begin our biblical research not with the Jews, but with Israel of old.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL (FROM AVARIS TO SAMARIA)

The original forerunners of the people of Israel had been in Syria-Palestine before developing from around 1800-1550 BCE in the Eastern Delta of the Nile River in Egypt (an area including what the Bible calls *Goshen*). In reference to these Syrian people having come into their territory from the East, the native Egyptians called them *Asiatics* and, more specifically, *Hyksos*

¹ Respectively, Genesis 2:4 (and frequent); 14:22; Psalm 50:1; 68:18. Many compound divine names and titles exist, some frequent, including “*Yahweh (our/your) Elohim*” and “*Yahweh (Sabaoth) the Elohim of Israel.*”

(“foreign rulers”) long before they were ever known as “Israel.”² The arriving Asiatics gradually grew in number and stature and, after about 100 years’ time, gained control of the entire Eastern Delta, setting up their own kings over the North (i.e. “Lower Egypt”). This cultural and political shift marked the end of what Egyptologists call the *Middle Kingdom* and the beginning of the *Second Intermediate Period*, more commonly known as the time of the Hyksos.



Having garnered close relations with the Mycenaean Greeks and various Sea Peoples, the Hyksos retained control of the fertile Nile Delta region along the Mediterranean, ruling Lower Egypt from their capital city of Avaris for about 150 years until their expulsion (what Biblical tradition relates as the *Exodus*).³ During the full course of their sojourn, they were heavily

² The native Egyptian designation “*heqa khasewet*” is variously transliterated into Greek as: Ἰκουσσῶς {*Hykoussos*}; Ἰκσῶς {*Hyksos*}; Ἰξῶς {*Hyxos*}. Its meaning has been literally translated: “ruler(s) of the foreigners,” or “ruler(s) of foreign lands,” and (by implication) “foreign ruler(s).” In his writing called, *Against Apion*, the first century CE Jewish Roman historian Titus Flavius Josephus cites and refers to the (now largely lost) works of the Egyptian historian Manetho who likely lived during the Ptolemaic Dynasty of Egypt (around the 3rd century B.C.). Manetho apparently mentioned two different Egyptian expulsion events (first of the Hyksos and later during the Ramesside period), connecting both with Syrian foreigners and Jerusalem, and Josephus argued the earlier of these events matched the Biblical account of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, specifically connecting the Hyksos with Mosaic tradition and the Patriarch Joseph. In *Against Apion*, both Manetho and Josephus refer to the Israelites and Hyksos as “Shepherds,” “captives,” and “Shepherd Kings” which reflects the false etymological understanding that the Greek “Hyksos” was taken from the Egyptian “*hiqw shasu*,” meaning “nomad chieftains.” Therefore both this ancient Jewish text and even more ancient Egyptian history associate the Biblical exodus of the Israelites with the Egyptian expulsion of the Hyksos rulers in the 1500’s BCE.

For more research on the Hyksos, consult Seters, John Van, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966).

³ Curiously, the scriptures point to two significantly different times for when the Biblical exodus took place:

influenced by the native culture, many adopting Egyptian names and practices. Likewise, these Asiatics left their own impressions upon Egypt, most notably introducing Eastern deities such as *Baal* (“the Lord/Owner”) and his consort *Anath*. Left indelibly on both sides, the greatest mark of influence came with the Hyksos adoption of the Egyptian deity *Seth* or *Set* (whom they equated with their patron deity, Baal) and subsequent establishment of the “*House of Seth*” in Lower Egypt. Concerning the most powerful and longest ruling Hyksos King it is recorded:

Then king Apophis—life, prosperity, health!—made him Seth as Lord, and he would not serve any god who was in the land except Seth.⁴

Now it came about in the ***four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign*** over Israel ... that he built the house of the LORD. {1 Kings 6:1}

Despite this explicit summary of 480 years from the Exodus to Solomon’s 4th regnal year (in the mid-10th century BCE), numerous Biblical scholars have demonstrated a careful accounting of the periods found between Joshua and Kings (particularly Judges and Samuel) yields at the very least a known figure of 554 years between these events, with unspecified periods forcing the total closer to 600 years. Note the alternate calculations of Josephus:

Solomon began to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign ... five hundred and ninety-two years after the Exodus out of Egypt. – Solomon himself built that temple six hundred and twelve years after the Jews came out of Egypt. {Antiquities of the Jews 8.3.1 & Against Apion 2.2; William Whiston, Translator (1737)}

Searching near 600 years before the time Solomon was said to reign notably reveals a time squarely during the reign of King Ahmose I of Egypt and his expulsion of the Hyksos rulers around 1550 BCE. This synchronization of dating between ancient Egyptian and Biblical texts when coupled with the findings of modern historians and Egyptologists on the Hyksos expulsion makes for a powerful witness:

“The victory inscriptions of these southern pharaohs tell us that they threw these foreigners out of Egypt, then pursued them to Canaan and beyond. And this is the only foreign mass-migration, an exodus from ancient Egypt, for which there is any evidence at all in the archaeological records.” Romer, John, *Testament: The Bible and History*, p. 48 (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1988).

“There is only one chain of *historical* events that can accommodate this late tradition [i.e. the story in Exodus], and that is the Hyksos descent and occupation of Egypt.” [original emphasis] Redford, Donald B., *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, p. 412 (Princeton University Press, 1992).

Not only is a Biblically attested *time* aligned with the only historical kernel from which the Biblical exodus traditions could have originated, but also a *place*. According to Exodus 1:11 the Israelites “*built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.*” While *Pi-Ramesses* was the Ramesside capital built after the Hyksos expulsion, it was also built on the same site, immediately adjacent the Hyksos capital of Avaris. Thus, the Biblical reference to “Raamses” appears to be anachronistic nomenclature for Avaris (the archaeological site of Tell el-Dab’a). Recent excavations at Tell el-Dab’a have unearthed North Syrian ceramic and architectural features, including a seal representing the North Syrian storm god (Ba’al) and the ruins of a temple of Seth.

For further research consult Redford, Donald B., editor, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 2, Bietak, Manfred, *Hyksos*, (Oxford University Press, 2001) & Bietak, Manfred, *Avaris, The Capital of the Hyksos: Recent Excavations [at Tell el-Dab’a]*. (London: British Museum Publications, 1995).

⁴ The story of Seqenenre and Apophis in the *Papyrus Sallier I*. Translation from J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 2nd edition. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p.231.

Eventually, the natives around Thebes in the South (or “Upper Egypt”) rebelled against Hyksos rule, and by around 1550 BCE King Ahmose I besieged and conquered Avaris. Many of the ruling Hyksos were driven out of Egypt and pursued all the way into Canaan (i.e. Palestine); however, Egyptian culture and religion would never be the same.⁵ Still influenced by these Asiatics, centuries after their defeat, in tribute to the enduring cult of Seth and founding of Avaris, the future Pharaoh Ramses II, son of Seti I, erected a monument around 1325 BCE, inscribed:

His majesty commanded the making of a great stela of granite bearing the **great name of his fathers**, in order to set up the **name of the father of his fathers**,” {i.e. *Seti & Seth*, in commemorating the jubilee:} **“Year 400 of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Seth-the-Great-of-Strength**; so that he exists forever and ever.⁶

Having been conquered and driven back eastward into Canaan and beyond, these people ceased being “Asiatics” and “foreign rulers,” settling ultimately in the north of Canaan among their original people. Over the next several hundred years, they existed much the way they formerly had, confederating with Amorite and other Aramean tribes from the north, subsequent waves of Asiatics leaving Egypt from the southwest, and local Phoenicians with later Philistines and other Sea Peoples who had all settled along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean by around 1200 BCE. Gradually with Egypt’s 400-year dominance waning in the region and ultimate withdrawal under Ramses VI after 1150 BCE, two nations would emerge, known as *the people of Aram* (“Syria”) situated to the north and west of Canaan, and *the people of Omri* (“Israel”) who occupied northern Canaan adjacent the southern border of their Aramean kindred.

Various kings of Israel arose, the most notable of which was King Omri who founded the Israelite capital city of Samaria in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim from which he and his son

⁵ The deity Set (Suty, Setekh, Sutah, etc.; styled in Greek as Σήθ {*Seth*}) was a respected and loved part of the ancient Egyptian pantheon. Seth was an important deity identified with the South (Upper Egypt), where there emerged popular cultic sites (temples) devoted to him, particularly at the city of Nubt (Ombos). One of Seth’s epithets was “*Nubty*” (the *Ombite*), and he was fondly regarded as the protector of Ra. As an unparalleled show of reverence, many Egyptian deities are depicted carrying a scepter called the “*Was*” which depicts none other than Seth.

However with the arrival of the Asiatic Hyksos and their subsequent adoption of the Egyptian deity Seth as their own patron deity and “Father,” Seth became more particularly associated with these and other foreigners, residing in and outside Egypt. Despite the *House of Seth* in Lower Egypt continuing into the Ramesside period (well after the conquest of Avaris and expulsion of the Hyksos rulers), Seth was gradually vilified and demonized as he became associated with other foreign threats to Egypt, having been equated with the Eastern storm god Ba’al. Seth’s image as protector of Ra would be eclipsed by the celebration of his defeat at the hands of Horus, and eventually Seth’s image would completely transmute negatively into the God of chaos, darkness and evil.

For more research on Seth, consult H. Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).

⁶ The commemorative Stela of the Ramesside family at Tanis. (“400 Year Stela”) Translation from J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 252-253.

Ahab ruled a vast kingdom organized in the early 9th century BCE. Not only were Kings Omri and Ahab the earliest figures in the Bible whose existence is attested to in contemporary, extra-biblical records, the Kingdom of Israel itself became recognized by its Eastern neighbors (such as the Assyrians) as the “*House of Omri*.”⁷ The Omrite Dynasty literally put Israel on the map as one of the most powerful nations in the ancient Near East, organizing the resources of 100’s of villages at various centers of administration, with elaborate and specialized constructions such as the *Palace of Samaria* (the largest structure ever found in ancient Israel), fortified walled cities and great stone gates, and a formidable standing army to defend and expand upon its fertile territory.

With the progress and development of an organized state, it was only natural that literacy would follow, and the Israelites began transmitting their oral traditions in textual form. One particular text written in Hebrew, the common language of the indigenous Canaanites, included such stories as the Patriarchs Abraham (lit. “Exalted Father” or “Chief of Many”), Jacob (who would be called “Israel”), and Joseph (representing Ephraim & Manasseh, two of the Ten Tribes of Israel), who was betrayed by his brothers to sojourn without them in Egypt. Furthermore, this text included stories concerning a salvific figure with an Egyptian name: *Moshe* (or “Moses”), who led the Israelites out of Egypt (reminiscent of King “Ahmose” who drove the Hyksos out of Egypt)! These and many other stories representing the collective memories and traditions of ancient Israel concerning their origin and custom were memorialized forever in the surviving portions of what has been rediscovered and identified as the document of the **Elohist (“E”)**.

THE FALL OF ISRAEL (AND THE SCRIBES OF JUDAH)

During the settlement and emergence of the people of Israel, many indigenous Canaanite tribes adjacent to the south of Israel, in particular the people of *Edom*, became absorbed into another distinct sub ethnic group, centering around the southern Patriarchs Isaac and Judah and subject to

⁷ The Mesha Stele (or “Moabite Stone”), discovered in the ancient capital of Moab (Dibon) and raised around 840 BCE by King Mesha of Moab contains an inscription reading in part, “*Omri was king of Israel, and oppressed Moab during many days ... His son succeeded him, and he also said, ‘I will oppress Moab.’*”

On the Kurkh Monolith of king Shalmaneser III of Assyria is an inscription concerning a battle at the Syrian city of Qarqar in 853 BCE. The inscription refers to an alliance of “twelve kings” which stood against Shalmaneser III, including thousands of chariots and foot soldiers led by “*Ahab the Israelite*.”

The Tel Dan Stele, discovered in the ancient Israelite city of Dan in 1993-94, contains an inscription written in Aramaic and probably placed by King Hazael of Aram-Damascus in the late 9th century BCE reading in part, “*Now the king of Israel had penetrated into my father’s land before.*”

On the designation “*House of Omri*” as a reference to the Kingdom of Israel, and other significant historical connections between the House of Omri and the so-called *Ten Lost Tribes of Israel*, consult Capt. E. Raymond, *Missing Links Discovered in Assyrian Tablets: The Remarkable Discovery of Assyrian Tablets That Reveal the Fate of “The Long Lost Tribes of Israel”*, 13th ed., (Artisan Publishers, 2010).

a royal dynasty called the *House of David*. Their capital city became Jerusalem, which was said to be founded by King David the son of Jesse in the 10th century BCE, and thus it was called the “City of David.” One of these southern Canaanites, a scribe likely living in Jerusalem, wrote some of the most memorable portions of the Bible in a lengthy epic which has been rediscovered and identified as the document of the Yahwist (“J”).

In the J document, these Canaanites are collectively known as “Judah” (the tribe from which King David descended), and as the underdog to the northern Israelite nation, the people of Judah were far less populous, with a territory not nearly as sizable or fertile and a considerably smaller military force. With Judah being a step behind Israel in most aspects (including the spread of literacy), the scribe known as the Yahwist found it beneficial to exaggerate the state of his people and make light his northern neighbors in rivaling stories ranging from the Creation in Genesis chapter 2, all the way into the books of Samuel and Kings concerning the administration of David.

For example, J traces primary ancestry back to *Cain* the son of Adam (instead of *Seth* the son of Adam), who receives special protection from Yahweh. Also in J, the Patriarch Isaac is deceived by his son Jacob (representing Israel) and is therefore tricked into blessing Jacob instead of Jacob’s twin Esau (representing Edom). Providing such supplementary material—alternate to Israelite E, while favoring indigenous J—the Yahwist even includes the nativity of Judah as though he were one of Jacob’s sons, now listed among the births of the original Ten Tribes of Israel. Finally, the text concludes (outside the books ascribed to Moses) to the point of suggesting David conquered lands as far north as Aram and would ultimately be destined rule over all the territory of Judah – and Syro-Israel!⁸

This however was not to be, as the sovereign nation of Israel was not ruled under the House of David at any time. Furthermore, it was too great a power for the marginal nation of Judah to

⁸ The “J” material continues outside of the “Five Books of Moses” into the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel and 1 Kings. This material largely focuses on Israel’s settlement into the land of Canaan and the subsequent rise of the House of David the Judahite over the House of Saul the Benjaminite. Idealized views of David ruling over the entirety of the tribes of Israel and Judah, from the northernmost cities to the southernmost, as well as exaggerations concerning his military campaigns and conquests are found throughout, such as:

*As Yahweh has sworn to David, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and **to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.** {2 Samuel 3:9,10}*

*When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, **David killed 22,000 Arameans. Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David, bringing tribute.** And Yahweh helped David wherever he went. {2 Samuel 8:5,6}*

For textual research on the original “J” material outside of the first five books of the Old Testament, consult R. E. Friedman, *The Hidden Book in the Bible: The Discovery of the First Prose Masterpiece*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1998).

take by way of military campaign. Nevertheless, there were bigger fish in the sea of neighboring nations who could, and when the mighty and cruel nation of Assyria rose to dominance in the late 9th century BCE it sought to expand to the Mediterranean coast and threatened the entire region of Syria-Palestine including Syria, Israel and Judah.



As they had done in the days of King Ahab son of Omri, the brothers Aram/Syria and Israel made a coalition to defend against the threat looming from the Northeast. However even when compelled to help and despite all their boastings of David's great conquests, Judah and the House of David would not support or defend their supposed brothers to the north. The capital of the Syrian nation (Damascus) fell in 732 BCE along with much of Israel, and by 722 the great compound at Samaria shared the same fate at the hands of the Assyrians, and many Israelites from their cities were led away captive towards Mesopotamia to be displaced abroad. These peoples are often called the *Ten Lost Tribes* of Israel, and Biblical historians refer to this event as the *Assyrian Captivity* of Israel.

After Damascus and Samaria were conquered, a text from the remnant nation of Judah recorded its version of the event as follows:

Yahweh said to Isaiah, "Say to {Ahaz the king of Judah}, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear because of these two because Aram, [with] **Ephraim, has planned evil against you**, saying, "Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it." Thus says the Lord Yahweh: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass. For the head of Aram is Damascus (**now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, [so that it is] no longer a people**), and the head of Ephraim is Samaria.'"

Yahweh spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Listen now, O house of David! The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. For before the boy will know [enough] to refuse evil and choose good, **the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.**"

Yahweh will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come **since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.**"⁹

Surprisingly rather than by Assyria, Judah felt terrorized by the kings of Aram-Damascus and Israel, and in the absence of their once great and newly "forsaken" northern neighbor, began to refer to Israel merely by one of its ten tribes – "Ephraim." Even more puzzling, the pen of Judah introduced the historical contrivance that "*Ephraim separated from Judah,*" as if David really had once ruled over all Judah and Israel! With Israel unable to represent itself, an exaggerated Judahite epic, coupled with this royal propaganda, would be adopted as the official "family history" during the reign of this so-called, "Immanuel."

THE RISE OF JUDEO-ISRAEL (AND THE PRIESTS AT JERUSALEM)

Despite Isaiah (a text sponsored from Jerusalem) referring to Ephraim as "*no longer a people,*" the people of Israel still existed in a variety of places. Not only had thousands been taken captive and displaced by the Assyrians, the majority of Israelites who lived in the hundreds of smaller towns and villages never left their northern country. Furthermore in fact, several thousands of Israelites poured south into the Kingdom of Judah in the years leading up to and after the Assyrian military campaigns in Syria-Palestine.

During the early life of King Hezekiah of Judah (the child called "Immanuel" and son of King Ahaz),¹⁰ the land of Israel was indeed forsaken. As a result during Hezekiah's reign, the

⁹ Taken from Isaiah 7:3-17

¹⁰ The material in Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:8,10; 9:6-7; etc. which references a child called "Immanuel" or "God With Us" is often regarded as a prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, based on the Christian reinterpretation of this text found in Matthew 1:23. Nevertheless, a reading of Isaiah with respect to the immediate context and intentions of its author reveals a concern for the events which took place in the 8th century BCE, over 700 years before the birth of Jesus. Of particular import is Isaiah 7:16 which reads:

*"For **before the boy will know [enough] to refuse evil and choose good,** the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."*

Note that this places the birth of the child within the 8th century BCE, before the fall of Aram-Damascus and Samaria of Israel, as the "two kings you dread" is a reference to the two men mentioned repeatedly throughout this portion of scripture, particularly in verse 1:

*"**Rezin** the king of Aram and **Pekah** the son of Remaliah, king of Israel,"*

Historically, it can therefore be deduced that "Immanuel" is a reference to King Hezekiah of Judah, whom Isaiah served under as Court Prophet in Jerusalem, and during whose reign this and much Judahite royal propaganda was written. The texts created during Hezekiah's reign are discussed in more detail in the following section of the introduction.

population of Jerusalem grew a remarkable ten-to-fifteen times its original size,¹¹ becoming the new home of thousands of refugees from many cities of Israel (particularly Bethel, about 10 miles north of Jerusalem in Assyrian-dominated territory). Cities and towns all across Judah were expanding, and for the first time in the history of Judah and the House of David, their king was *actually ruling over a majority Israelite populace*.

King Hezekiah enacted religious reforms including the destruction of many high places of altars across Judah, insisting his new subjects travel to the capital Jerusalem to worship only Yahweh and only in an official temple (i.e. the “*House of Yahweh*”). Furthermore, Hezekiah constructed a great fortification wall to the west of the Temple Mount around Jerusalem to better protect his newly acquired subjects. It was also during this time that the Northern *Elohim* text (“E”) was synopsized with the rival Southern *Yahweh* epic (“J”). With close to half of Judah’s national population (and an overwhelming majority in Jerusalem) now making up former residents of Israel, their textual traditions were editorially amalgamated to reflect and appease the new society of the Southern Kingdom. This synthesized *Judeo-Israelite* text is presently scattered throughout Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers and is sometimes labeled by scholars, “*JE*”.¹²

Now with so many new residents all being made to visit Jerusalem to partake in ritual sacrifice and other matters of worship, the centralized priesthood at Jerusalem quickly rose to powerful social significance. These priests, aware of the adulterated and quasi-historical text of “J&E” (or “JE”), found it necessary to write their own official records and sacred textual traditions. They therefore composed an entirely unique vision of history from Creation to the establishment of the Priesthood, however structurally complementing JE. Their text offered alternate versions of stories, sometimes favoring E or J, which would often include supplementary explanation to smoothen out the rough differences still noticeable between the Israelite and rivaling Judahite textual traditions. Furthermore, this text predominantly focused on genealogies, dates and other figures, priestly rituals and related cultic concerns and has been rediscovered and identified as the **Priestly Document (“P”)**.

¹¹ It was at this time that many cities of Judah quickly expanded in population, particularly Jerusalem, which grew from a 12-acre town to a densely populated urban area of 150 acres. In response to all the Israelite refugees from the north taking up new residence and more people looking for protection against possible Assyrian invasion, King Hezekiah built a great defensive wall around the Western Hill beside the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to guard its newly formed suburbs. Significant ruins of this wall still exist, along with many and various evidences documenting the massive and speedy social changes which took place in 8th century BCE Judah.

For more archaeological research on the expansion of Judah around the fall of Israel, consult Finkelstein, Israel and Silberman, Neil Asher, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, ch. 9, *The Transformation of Judah*, (New York: Free Press, 2001).

¹² For research on JE and the combination and comparison of J and E, consult Friedman, Richard Elliott, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 3, *Two Kingdoms, Two Writers*, 1st ed. Summit Books, 1987, (New York: HarperOne, 1997).

While these compromises were being made to the original traditions of Israel, the scribes of Judah were also hard at work forging a new kind of history. Aside from the pseudo-prophetic records of Isaiah (Hezekiah's court prophet) concerning the fall of Samaria, appended to the "J" epic is a continuation of the story which had originally concluded somewhere around the death of King David and the ascendance of his son Solomon.¹³ Complementing King Hezekiah's building projects and religious policies, the legendary King Solomon of Judah was portrayed constructing fortification walls around cities in what was the Northern territory of Israel, and a great temple in Jerusalem – called the "House of Yahweh"¹⁴ Furthermore, Solomon is depicted as ruling over, levying taxes, and requiring labor from all the tribes of Israel to fund his building projects.

¹³ The original "J" material, which likely ends shortly after the death of King David and ascendance of his son Solomon to the throne, was appended to significantly during the reigns of Kings Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah of Judah, to include stories regarding the legendary reign of King Solomon and an explanation for why the northern Kingdom of Israel had actually been independently ruled by its own Kings (i.e. not the *House of David*). This textual expansion accounts for most of I-II Kings.

For archaeological research on the cultural natures of the original nations of Israel and Judah and historical contexts surrounding the material appended to the original "J" epic, consult Finkelstein, Israel and Silberman, Neil Asher, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition*, (New York: Free Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Concerning some of the building projects attributed to King Solomon in the portions appended to "J", 1 Kings 9:15 reads:

*Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to **build the House of Yahweh, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.***

The gates (now excavated at the archaeological sites of Tel Hazor, Tel Megiddo, and Tel Gezer) were built at different times ranging from the 9th to 8th centuries BCE. (Solomon's reign would have been in the 10th century BCE.) Not only were these cities located in the northern territory of the Kingdom of Israel, they were built by the Northern administration of the Kingdom of Israel, generations after Solomon.

Similarly, excavations of the great palace at Samaria (built for the Omrite Dynasty of the Kingdom of Israel) reveal it was made of ashlar blocks bearing the same type of masons' marks as the southern palace at Megiddo. These marks have not been found at any other ancient site in the region, revealing these Israelite centers of power were built during the Omrite Dynasty (as one might expect), by the same builders and at the same time.

Other important evidences such as similar pottery and radiocarbon dating have further testified that the layers of these and other excavated cities, which had been traditionally dated to the reign of King Solomon in the 10th century BCE, were vestiges of a later time. This new understanding of the dating of ancient cities across Israel is known to archaeologists as the *Lower Chronology*, and (when coupled with the Biblical claims) reveals prime examples of the administration of the Kingdom of Judah usurping notable royal traditions of the Kingdom of Israel in an effort to legitimize their claims that Kings David and Solomon once ruled over all Israelite tribes.

For more research into this subject, consult Levy, Thomas E. and Higham, Thomas, eds., *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science*, ch. 3, *A Low Chronology Update*, by Israel Finkelstein, (London: Equinox, 2005).

According to this royal Judahite propaganda, one of King Solomon's servants named Jeroboam (an Ephraimite) rebels against the king who had appointed him "*over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph,*" and a prophet informs him:

"Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Behold, **I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes** (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel)'"¹⁵

Jeroboam then flees to Egypt until Solomon's death, at which time the "assembly of Israel" petitions Solomon's son, King Rehoboam, to lighten their labor. When Rehoboam refuses, all Israel answer:

"What portion do we have in David?
[We have] no inheritance in the son of Jesse;
To your tents, O Israel!
Now look after your own house, David!"

So **Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.** All Israel made {Jeroboam} king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.¹⁶

When Rehoboam prepares to combat the house of Israel and restore his father's kingdom, Yahweh says to him, "*You must not go up and fight against your brothers the sons of Israel.*"¹⁷

Therefore it may be observed that these additions to the official Judahite annals presented the northern people of Israel (many of whom had now fallen subject to King Hezekiah the son of David) as having long been in rebellion against the House of David. In other words, these northern refugees pouring into Judah were greeted with a fictitious "*Welcome home,*" as though they had always been familial & national "*brothers,*" and that it was Yahweh's plan from the beginning that they should serve the King of Judah! Officially Samaria had fallen, "*because they did not obey the voice of Yahweh their God, [even] all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded.*"¹⁸ Concerning King Hezekiah the same Judahite annals (written during his reign) offer him the praise:

¹⁵ 1 Kings 11:31b-32

¹⁶ Taken from 1 Kings 12:16-20; compare 2 Samuel 20:1 (original J).

¹⁷ 1 Kings 12:24

¹⁸ 2 Kings 18:12

“He clung to Yahweh; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which Yahweh had commanded Moses. And **Yahweh was with him.**”¹⁹ {note: Hezekiah’s prophetic name, *Immanuel*, means “God With Us”}

KING JOSIAH AND THE LONG-LOST BOOK OF MOSES

Israelite and Judahite culture continued to bleed together in the Southern Kingdom, while scribes made amendments and additions to the official records of the administration of Judah (i.e. the *books of Kings*). By the mid-7th century BCE, with Assyria beginning to give up control of the Northern territory of Israel, a certain king by the name of Josiah (Hezekiah’s great-grandson) ascended the throne of Judah at the age of eight. Groomed by the priests and scribes until he was of age, the priests of this century presented King Josiah with yet another one of their documents. Unlike the Priestly Source (“P”), this document was not a revision of earlier Israelite and Judahite stories. Rather, it was an entirely novel composition, containing updated laws and lengthy speeches written and presented as though it was the long lost book of Moses!

Hilkiah the high priest said, “**I have found the Book of the Law in the House of Yahweh.**” Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king.²⁰

Today this book is called Deuteronomy (i.e. “*the fifth book of Moses*”), and represents the document of the **Deuteronomist (“D”)**.

Upon hearing the words of this book, Josiah went on a rampage of religious reforms across Judah, enforcing the new laws contained therein. He ordered the removal and destruction of religious icons honoring the Northern Baal and other deities which were being kept in the House of Yahweh. He did away with the priests of Baal and other priests deemed “idolatrous” across the land of Judah. Furthermore, he destroyed the high places of worship in the cities along with altars which were not official to the cult of Yahweh at the Temple in Jerusalem. It was at this time the scribes of the administration of Judah added yet another chapter to their growing epic. Immediately following their story about the Ten Tribes of Israel rebelling against the house of David with King Jeroboam, these words were inserted:

Jeroboam said in his heart, “If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to {the house of David}.” So the king made two golden calves and said, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your Gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.” He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

¹⁹ 2 Kings 18:6-7a

²⁰ Taken from 2 Kings 22:8,10

There came a man of God from Judah to Bethel. He cried against the altar and said, "O altar, altar, thus says Yahweh, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, **Josiah** by name; and on you **he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.**'"²¹

As discussed, the evolving Judahite epic from Hezekiah's day may have depicted Yahweh commanding, "*You must not go up and fight against the sons of Israel,*" but the scribes a century later handed Josiah just the excuse he needed to legitimize the newest shameful low in the history of Judah.²² For the first time ever (as soon as the chance presented itself), the underdog nation of Judah would march on Israel, kicking them while they were still down.

King Josiah's fathers were unwilling to help Israel in their time of need when the threat of Assyrian invasion was looming, so it was only natural Josiah himself would offer no support for his "brothers" in the north, once Assyria finally relinquished its grip on the southernmost cities in Israel (beginning with Bethel). Instead, having been taught since childhood by the same family of scribes who sought to seduce Israel into believing they were once ruled by David and Solomon, Josiah (emulating the legendary conquests of King David) sought so seize those Israelite cities and northern territory in a deranged and misguided attempt to restore Israel to its former days of glory – under the House of David.

²¹ Taken from 1 Kings 12:26-29; 13:1-2

²² The leaders (both kingly and priestly) of ancient society often used the written word as a powerful propaganda tool. This was certainly true in ancient Judah, as can be witnessed by both the book of Deuteronomy being presented by the priests to the king as though it had the ancient authority of being written by Moses some 700+ years before, and also the scribal insertions which were made to the official Judahite annals (namely the books of the Kings).

Firstly, King Josiah is depicted as gathering the elders and "*the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great*" and reading to them the entire contents of the "Book of the Covenant" which was claimed to have been found in the House of Yahweh {2 Kings 23:2}. Immediately after acquainting his subjects with the content of this "ancient" book, Josiah is depicted enforcing his religious and social reforms across Judah.

Secondly, and even more heinously, when Josiah marches into the northern territory of Israel and begins slaughtering priests, burning human bones on the altars, and desecrating the gravesites at Bethel, he is depicted once again as appealing to the written word – the pseudo-prophetic additions of his own scribes to "J" (in 1 Kings 13), promoting his agenda:

*Now when Josiah took the bones from the graves and burned [them] on the altar and defiled it **according to the word of Yahweh** which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. Then he said, "What is this monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and **proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel.**" He said, "Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones." All the priests of the high places who [were] there he slaughtered on the altars and burned human bones on them; then he returned to Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23:16-18a,20)*

Therefore it can be seen: not only was a *textual insertion in the form of a prophecy* from 1 Kings used to justify Josiah's campaign against Israel's national and religious heritage, the royal scribes further memorialized the acts of his reign by employing more textual propaganda in 2 Kings.



According to the scribes of Judah’s own administration, when Josiah entered Bethel in the territory of Israel, he destroyed the high place and altar therein, burning the religious icons. Then he removed bones from nearby graves and burned them on the altar, “*according to the word of Yahweh which the man of God proclaimed.*”²³ Acting out the enmity of Judah against the true heritage of Israel, he continued marching on the other “*cities of Samaria,*”²⁴ desecrating the Israelite gravesites, burning the bones on the altars, and destroying the high places of worship. However, Josiah was not satisfied with his efforts to destroy the national and religious heritage of Israel. It is likewise recorded, “*All the priests of the high places who [were] there {Josiah} slaughtered on the altars.*”²⁵

²³ 2 Kings 23:16

²⁴ Important to note, is a growing shift in the social (and scriptural) identification of “Israel,” which took place after the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE. When the Kingdom of Israel was still in power, the Israelites referred to themselves as “Israel,” and the Judahites referred to themselves as “Judah.” This can be observed from such passages as the original “J” material boasting Yahweh would, “*establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah*” {2 Samuel 3:10}. Even before the propaganda concerning Israel’s “rebellion” (in which only Judah supported the House of David), the two nations are still treated as they were – separate!

However, as more Israelite refugees took up residence in Judah, and without the Kingdom of Israel to speak on its own behalf, it became the official policy of Judah to *refer to itself* as “Israel.” As was discussed, Isaiah (who was employed by King Hezekiah of Judah) therefore refers to Israel as merely “Ephraim,” promoting the undermining equation: *Ephraim + Judah = Israel*. Similarly here in Josiah’s royal annals, Josiah is not depicted as marching on the *cities of Israel*, but rather the “*cities of Samaria*”! The original territory and identity of the people of Israel have become demoted to “Ephraim” and “Samaria,” as the administration of Judah assumed for its own purposes the role of “Israel.” As such, Josiah’s campaigns against the North are not recorded for what they were – Judah, marching on the cities of Israel.

²⁵ 2 Kings 23:20a

After returning to Jerusalem, Josiah would institute a new type of Passover celebration, based on the legal revisions found in the book the priests presented him (“D”), requiring all his subjects to go up to Jerusalem to “*the altar of Yahweh.*” What was originally a Northern family holyday commemorating the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, was now sanctioned by the central administration of Judah as a means to tax the people and further unify the Judeo-Israelite state. Judah was closer than ever in their efforts to absorb (and assume the role of) Israel.

However the waning power of Assyria in the region also interested Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt, and when the ambitious Josiah came to meet the Pharaoh as he passed through the territory of Israel near the end of the 7th century BCE, Necho killed him at the Israelite city of Megiddo. In memory of Josiah’s profane and murderous acts against Israel, the scribal historians of Judah (who never favored a single Israelite king) could give their Davidite king nothing but the highest praise:

{Josiah} did right in the sight of Yahweh and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left. ... Before him there was no king like him who turned to Yahweh with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.²⁶

MOSES AND THE ORIGINAL SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

A brief overview of the historical and societal contexts surrounding the composition of “the Five Books of Moses” reveals a steady shift in power and ideology over the course of a few centuries:

By early-8th century BCE, the earliest and shortest of these documents (the ancient Israelite source of the Elohists) was written at the height of the nation of Israel’s power in the ancient Near East when the southern nation of Judah was still quite poor and marginal. When Israel fell into Assyrian control in late-8th century BCE, and as thousands of Israelites took refuge in the cities of the Judahites, the Elohist textual tradition was met with another rival text from the south.

This expansive Yahwist epic written and amended by the royal scribes of Jerusalem presented an idealized view of history, from Creation to the rise of the House of King David in Jerusalem. With Judah’s population now composed of both Judahites and Israelites ruled under the House of David, the ancient Israelite material was *recast as part of the Judahite epic*, by way of a scribal synopsis of the two texts into one, quasi-historical introduction to the royal annals of Judah. No doubt there was once more Israelite written material concerning the rise of the House of Omri and their other maligned kings,²⁷ but this material was picked apart, discarded and lost to history

²⁶ 2 Kings 22:2; 23:25

²⁷ Just as several parts of the Bible sometimes refer to various books which are now lost, the royal annals of Judah refer to the now lost, “*Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel,*” which appears to be a source text used in the official records of Judah to record the acts of the Kings of Israel, namely: *Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri,*

as the scribes of Judah were neither willing nor able to synopsise it into their royal propaganda. Indeed, had the ancient Israelite material not been synopsized as part of the *official “family history” of Judeo-Israel*, one might suspect none of it would have survived.

By mid-7th century BCE, the powerful centralized priesthood of Jerusalem composed a **Priestly** document representing their idealized view of history, from Creation to the rise of the priesthood as the focal point of society. This text would also rival those that came before it, rewriting stories from the adulterated composition of JE and casting them in a new light neither altogether favorable to the Israelites or the administration of Judah. Furthermore, it would often attempt to compromise the decidedly more Cananaite-friendly readings of J, reflecting a society that had become more ethnically Israelite.

Finally in the late-7th century BCE, the priests of another generation prepared a separate book with a host of new laws (now called Deuteronomy or the **Deuteronomist** document). The word Deuteronomy comes from Greek **Δευτερονόμιον** {*Deuteronomion*} meaning, “secondary law.” Once presented to the King, the priests’ new set of laws were ambitiously enforced across Judeo-Israel as the administration of Judah sought to expand its rule into the Northern territory of Israel. Deuteronomy however was not like the texts that came before it. Not only did it lack any literary inter-relationship with E, J and P, it was received as having been written by none other than Moses himself some 7 or 8 hundred years before its “discovery”!

Mutually beneficial to the royal administration and Temple priesthood, these new “*Mosaic*” laws commanded a centralization of the Israelite and Judahite cultic and family festivals. Forcing the priests of the various cities in Judah to either join the House of Yahweh in Jerusalem

Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah. For example:

*Now the rest of the acts of **Omri** which he did and **his might which he showed**, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? {1 Kings 16:27}*

*Now the rest of the acts of **Ahab** and all that he did and **the ivory house which he built and all the cities which he built**, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? {1 Kings 22:39}*

What appears to be completely at the discretion of the royal scribes of Judah {1 Kings 14 through 2 Kings 15}, the acts of these Israelite kings were recorded in such a way that they are all presented as having done “*evil in the sight of Yahweh*,” “*walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin*,” etc. Omri’s career is summed up as having, “*acted more wickedly than all who were before him*,” and his son Ahab is described as doing, “*evil in the sight of Yahweh more than all who were before him*.”

No doubt the original Israelite Chronicles told a much different side of the story, and the reader is left to wonder what was said about such things as Ahab’s “ivory house” and “all the cities which he built.” The Israelite annals concerning the palace at Samaria and (as previously discussed) the great stone gates at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer have been marginalized to make room for the official scribes of the administration of Judah to usurp the glorious achievements of the now fallen Kingdom of Israel – all while maligning its kings.

or find a new occupation while slaughtering the priests in the Israelite territory to the north, simultaneously unified and strengthened Josiah's kingdom and the cult at Jerusalem. For the first time in the history of Western civilization, emerged a text which was both sacred and authoritative.

Despite the scribes and prophets of Judah depicting Yahweh promising the throne of David would be established in Jerusalem over Israel forever,²⁸ in 586 BCE the King of Babylon took Jerusalem, the city of David, and slaughtered the sons of the last king of Judah, carrying him and many of his subjects away. Biblical scholars refer to this event as the *Babylonian Captivity* of Judah. Nevertheless in Babylon without King or Temple, the *Messianic hope of another Josiah* lived on as a King who would fulfill the promises of Yahweh and complete the task of uniting the people and restoring a Judeo-Israelite Kingdom comparable to all the rich epical fantasies that the ancient scribes of Judah could forge.

Eventually the post-Babylonian scribes would *further synopsise* JE with P to form the basis of what we call Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Along with Deuteronomy, these five scrolls would all be collectively and traditionally remembered as "*the Law*" and "*the Five Books of Moses*." The scrolls did not contain the sacred ritual and practice of any *one* priesthood or rival sect nor the historical and literary tradition of any *one* nation or rival tribe. Rather, this text represented the jockeying of religious and political powers which together (under the banner of "Moses") sought to rule over an integrated Judeo-Israelite (i.e. synopsized) society:

Pseudo-Historical Textual Synopsis: The ancient literary traditions of Israel were merged with those of Judah (i.e. *Judaized*), merged again with the writings of the priests at Jerusalem, and (like Deuteronomy) the resulting text was wholly claimed to have been written by Moses.

National (Ethnic) Synopsis: Some of the original Israelite people, who had emerged after their sojourn in Egypt, became integrated into the Canaanite nation of Judah. With their literary traditions being merged, the lines between "*Israel and Judah*" were fading as Israel became demoted to *Ephraim/Samaria*. Now, "*Ephraim and Judah*" were collectively taught a shared ancestry called *the Twelve Tribes of Israel*, in which these "brothers" shared the same Patriarchs.

Political synopsis: With the fall of the Kingdom of Israel, the King of Judah (through his court prophets and scribes) began promoting the propaganda that Kings David and Solomon *once upon a time* ruled over the Ten Tribes of Israel to the north, and would so again. Finally, the King of Judah would march on Israel, destroying its national and religious heritage, in efforts to "reclaim" that territory.

²⁸ For example: 2 Samuel 7:13-16; 1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:3-5; Psalm 89:29-37; Isaiah 9:6,7; Jeremiah 33:20-21,25-26; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 2 Chronicles 6:16.

Religious synopsis: The original, more polytheistic religion of ancient Israel (notably, *Elohim* and *Baal-Seth*) was replaced by the singular cult of the House of Yahweh at Jerusalem (whereby people would also be taxed). The fall of Israel was blamed on idolatry, as new laws were enforced resulting in the destruction of “idolatrous” implements and places of worship and many Israelite priests being killed.

These “Books of Moses” represent the *real synoptic problem of the Old Testament*. Whereas the New Testament presents four separate Evangelists’ accounts of the Lord Jesus and the early Church which *could be synopsized*, the Old Testament texts and peoples *have been synopsized*. The contextual motivations and rhetorical intentions of these individual authors have been hidden for millennia, and with them, any semblance to the true history of Israel. Separating these texts is therefore essential for those who desire to know the quintessential Mysteries of this four-fold foundation of our Biblical Heritage.