

An Introduction to the Pentateuch

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By

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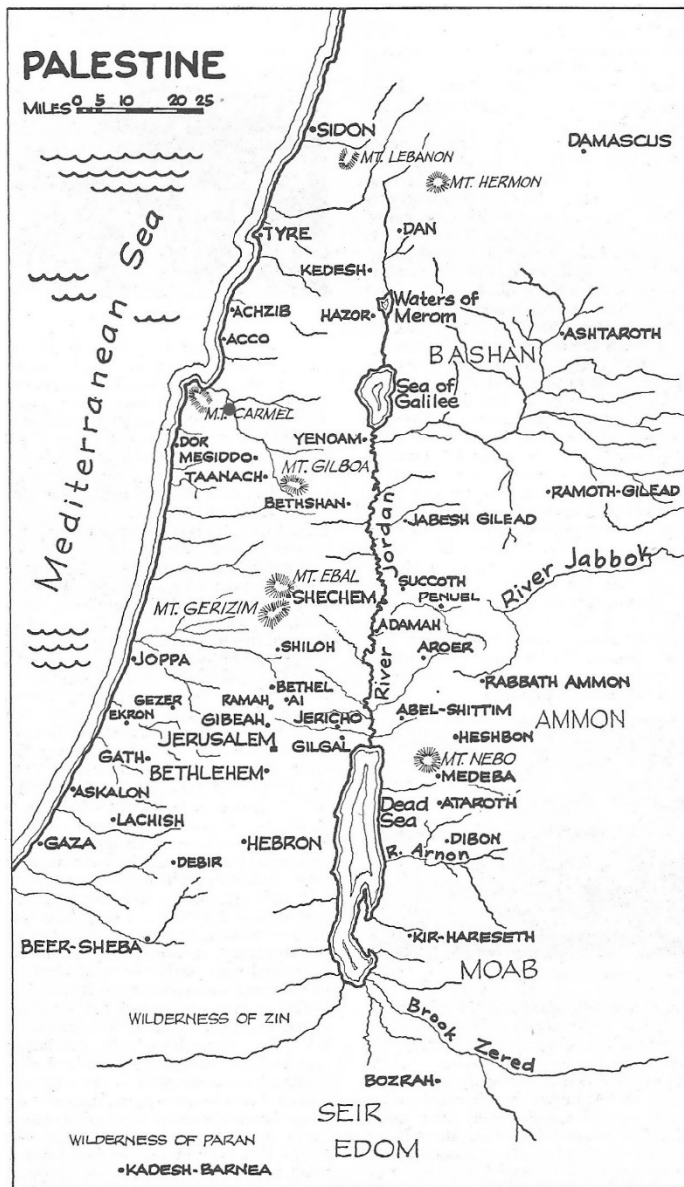


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	=	Ancient Near East
ANET	=	Prichard, James B. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton 1955)
ARCIC	=	Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission
Bib	=	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRUL	=	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> , Manchester
CBQ	=	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
GK	=	Kautzsch, E. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> (Oxford 1910)
H	=	Holladay, W.L. <i>A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Leiden 1971)
HAL	=	Baumgartner, W. et al <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament</i> (Leiden 1967)
HUCA	=	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
J	=	Joüon, P. <i>Grammaire de l'hebreu biblique</i> (Rome 1923)
JBL	=	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSS	=	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
KB	=	Köhler, L. and W. Baumgartner. <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament</i> (Leiden 1958)
RB	=	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RCIA	=	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
THAT	=	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum AT</i>
VT	=	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTS	=	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i>
WO	=	Waltke, B.K. and M.O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> (Winona Lake 1990)
ZDPV	=	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins</i>
ZAW	=	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Biblical Abbreviations

The Old Testament

Am	Amos
1 Chron	1 Chronicles
2 Chron	2 Chronicles
Dan	Daniel
Deut	Deuteronomy
Eccles	Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)
Est	Esther
Ex	Exodus
Ezk	Ezekiel
Ezr	Ezra
Gen	Genesis
Hab	Habakkuk
Hag	Haggai
Hos	Hosea
Is	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Job	Job
Joel	Joel
Jon	Jonah
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Kgs	2 Kings
Lam	Lamentations
Lev	Leviticus
Mal	Malachi
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Neh	Nehemiah
Num	Numbers
Obad	Obadiah
Prov	Proverbs
Ps (pl Pss)	Psalms
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
Song	Song of Songs
Zech	Zechariah
Zeph	Zephaniah

The Deutero-Canonical Books

Bar	Baruch
Eccclus	Ecclesiasticus (=Sirach)
Jud	Judith
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
Sir	Sirach (=Ecclesiasticus)
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom (=Wisdom of Solomon)

Apocrypha

1 Esd	1 Esdras
2 Esd	2 Esdras
En	Enoch

The New Testament

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Apoc	Apocalypse (=Revelation)
Col	Colossians
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Eph	Ephesians
Gal	Galatians
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
Jn	John (Gospel)
1 Jn	1 John (Epistle)
2 Jn	2 John (Epistle)
3 Jn	3 John (Epistle)
Jude	Jude
Lk	Luke
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter
Philm	Philemon
Phil	Philippians
Rev	Revelation (=Apocalypse)

Rom	Romans
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Tit	Titus

INTRODUCTION

The Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Both Jewish and Christian tradition credit Moses with primary authorship of the Pentateuch. These five books form the theological foundation of the Bible. Another name for the Pentateuch is ‘the five books of Moses’.

Written more than 3,000 years ago in Hebrew, the Pentateuch is *Torah*, meaning ‘the law’ or ‘instruction’. These five books are the Biblical account of origins of all things, the human condition, the divine call, the law, and redemption given to us by God through Moses.

The books of the Pentateuch introduce God's divine purposes and plans and explain how sin entered the world. These books also present God's response to sin, his relationship with mankind, and provide insight into the character and nature of God. They describe God's dealings with humankind from the creation of the world to the death of Moses. All this is unfolded in the medium of poetry, prose, and law in a chronological drama spanning thousands of years.

Genesis

Genesis is the book of beginnings. The word *Genesis* means origin, birth, generation. This first book of the Bible chronicles the creation of the world—the universe and the earth. It reveals the God's plan to have a race of his very own, made in his own image and likeness, set apart to worship him. But the first human beings revealed the imperfection of sin and separated themselves from the Creator and can now attain the divine plan only with help. The drama of sin and salvation shapes all that follows. Redemption is rooted in this book. The overriding message of Genesis is that salvation is essential. We cannot save ourselves from sin, so God acts on our behalf. His saving love was manifested in the call of Abraham, our father in faith, with whom God made a covenant. In the stories of the Patriarchs God called Abraham's descendants into a special relationship with him. The call of Abraham introduced a new phase in the history of revelation.

Exodus

In Exodus God reveals himself to the world by through the call of his chosen servant Moses. God revealed his name and his saving plan for his people, setting them free from bondage in Egypt through a series of spectacular miracles. God made himself known through extraordinary revelations, and through Moses God also made an everlasting covenant with his people at Sinai where he gave his Law. Through Moses God entered into a covenant with Israel as a whole, not merely with individuals or separate tribes. The predominant theme of Exodus is that deliverance is essential. Because of human bondage to sin, we need God's intervention to set us free. Through the initial Passover, Exodus foreshadows Christ, the perfect, spotless Lamb of God.

Leviticus

Leviticus is God's guidebook for teaching his people about holy living and worship. Every aspect of life is covered by the revealed Law: from sexual conduct, to the handling of food, to instructions for worship and religious celebrations. All are covered in detail. The prevailing theme of Leviticus is that holiness is essential. The book highlights our need to be in a relationship with God through holy living and worship. After the Lord entered this covenant, Israel enjoyed a peculiar position among the nations of the world: "I have separated you from the nations that you may belong to me" (Lev 20:26).

Numbers

Numbers records Israel's experiences while journeying through the wilderness. The people's disobedience and lack of faith caused God to make them wander in the desert until all the people of that generation had died. Numbers would be a bleak account of Israel's stubbornness, if it were not outweighed by God's faithfulness and protection. The dominant theme in Numbers is one of perseverance. Freedom in our walk with God requires daily discipline. God trains his people through these times of wandering in the wilderness. Only two adults, Joshua and Caleb, survived the desert ordeal and were allowed to enter into the Promised Land. But all are called and must persevere to finish the race. The Law which Moses proclaimed at Sinai, during the desert journey and upon the plains of Moab before crossing the Jordan always remained fundamental

Deuteronomy

Presented when God's people were about to enter the Promised Land, Deuteronomy gives a serene and lyrical reminder that God requires our worship and obedience. The book also retells and renews the covenant between God and his people of Israel, presented in three addresses or sermons by Moses. The prevailing theme in Deuteronomy is that obedience is essential. The book focuses on the need to internalize God's law so that it is written on our heart. We do not obey God out of a legalistic form of obligation, but because we love him with all our heart, mind, and soul. The Law demanded renunciation and mastery over passion but its purpose was to educate men how to serve God in joy.

Primitive history, as contained in the Bible as well as the religious consciousness of Israel regarded the knowledge of God and the obligation to worship him and to lead a moral life as an inheritance stemming from most ancient times. Polytheism or lower forms of religion were not viewed as contemporaneous with the beginnings of the human race but as defections from the one true God. The reasons for this defection were placed in the disobedience of humanity and its evil will, above all in pride. If Israel's religion rested upon revelation, then Israel's spiritual leaders had a true conception of primitive religion for these matters concerned the education of the people in the most vital religious truths. No one who regards the Old Testament as the anteroom to the New can disregard the religious content of ancient Biblical history. Believers can approach God because Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, has opened the way to the heavenly sanctuary with the Father.

This study provides an introduction to the Pentateuch, acknowledging its fundamental place in the canon of Scripture. The origins of the world, of mankind, of human sociology, of sin and redemption, of law and covenant, are all explored in these five vital books. This introduction comes in two parts: 'Studying the Pentateuch' and 'Reading the Pentateuch'. The first part is historical, a diachronic investigation. It surveys the fundamental approaches to the exploration of the Bible generally and the Pentateuch specifically. It examines those branches of scholarship that help us understand the origins of the text and its interpretation: archaeology, anthropology, the origins of the manuscripts, the forms and editions (*critica texta*), methods of analysis, literary genres (etiology, covenant and law) and the use of language and narrative. The second part considers in further detail the theories of how the text was possibly composed and edited. But this part is essentially synchronic. It is concerned with the

nature, structure, themes, symbols and interpretation of the text as it reads in its final literary form. How do these ancient stories and legal codices speak to us still centuries after their composition? How do these texts function as religious writing, even as inspired Scripture? Can they still stimulate, encourage and even foster the affective and moral life? Can they play a role in spirituality—and specifically for Christians seeking the Way, the Truth and the Life?

I. STUDYING THE PENTATEUCH: THE FOUNDATIONS

The term 'Pentateuch' is applied to the first five books of the Bible, the Books of Moses. It derives from the Greek: *penta* 'five' and *teuchos* 'tool', 'implement' or 'vase'. In their ancient scroll form, these were kept in sheaths or cases for protection. The Greek term first appeared in the second century AD and was later employed by Origen.¹

These first five books of the Bible that have come down in various texts and versions have been seen as a unit in the religious communities that preserved them. Their basic content may be divided thus:

- 1) The beginning of the world and mankind: the Primeval History
- 2) The Patriarchal Narratives: from Abraham to Joseph
- 3) Egyptian slavery and the Exodus
- 4) The revelation and Covenant at Sinai
- 5) Wanderings and guidance in the Wilderness (divided into two separate sub-blocks, before and after Sinai)
- 6) Various legal materials: the Decalogue, Covenant Code and passages of cultic and Deuteronomistic laws: interspersed in the narrative which takes up the greater portion of the Pentateuch.

Reading the Pentateuch, The Context, Anthropology, Geography of the ANE, the Formation of Israel, the Biblical Text, the Theories Shaping the Formation of Pentateuch, The Nature of Exegesis and Analysis of Some Key Texts from Genesis.

Exploring the Pentateuch by Historical-Critical Methods

Christianity is a religion of the Word. This Word expresses itself pre-eminently in a book. This book derives directly from Judaism. See the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 1965).²

What is the Book?

Judaism cherishes the **Torah** (Law), **N^əbi'im** (Prophets), **K^ətubim** (Writings) = **TANAK**

Christianity embraces both the Old & New Testaments.

The evolution of tradition:

TRADITION

Literary Corpus

TNK	Old Testament
Mishnah	New Testament
Talmud	
Midrash	

These texts must be studied in their own ambience and not through a New Testament interpretation. It is necessary to understand Jewish traditions. Compare the magisterial texts:

- *Nostra Aetate* (1965)³
- 'Orientations and suggestions' (Commission for Relations with the Jews 1974)⁴
- 'Jews and Judaism in Preaching' (1985)⁵

We must go to the roots of tradition and look at the world in which the text was written. We must distinguish between religion and the cultural world. It is necessary to know the Near Eastern World.

The Bible and the Ancient Near East

In this study, one must overcome Biblio-Centrism. Studying scientifically means a wider world than just Israel.⁶

- The place of Israel in the estimation of peoples is small. (Israel is not really united as presented by the Bible; the Graeco-Roman world did not know much either of Jews or the Old Testament texts.)
- Geographically, the Syro-Palestinian area is much larger than Israel, and had its historical unity. Even the ancient appellation 'Palestine' means the land of the Philistines. The ancients did not even take account of Israel.
- Israel's presence was limited. The concept of the Holy Land is a late one.

The Problem of Chronology

There is the issue of absolute versus relative chronology—taking relative dates within a civilization and then applying them to an absolute scheme.

The Historical Ambience of the Old Testament

- 1) The methodology is that of archaeology.
- 2) The religious aspect involves characters and interconnections.
- 3) The territory of Syro-Palestine is the late Bronze Age to the First Iron Age.
- 4) These involve the origins of Ancient Israel.

The History of Archaeological Methodology

- The foundation of research institutes
- The vertical section method (Wheeler-Kenyon)⁷
- The stratigraphic method (Reisner-Fischer)⁸
- The combined method

Archaeological Criticism has tended to substantiate the reliability of the typical historical details of even the oldest periods, and to discount the theory that the Pentateuchal Accounts are merely the reflection of a much later period.

The aim of archaeological digs in the past was to recover objects. This is no longer the case. What is of interest now is not just the objects found, but everything in a stratum (animal bones, plant remains, geological samples); e.g., in the past, ceramics were used for dating, but now there are more accurate methods such as carbon dating and dendrochronology. In the present day, digs are combined with vertical sections and the stratigraphic method is used for excavating in quadrants.

The characteristics of scientific archaeology are:

- A proper definition of locus, by an examination of the relationships between finds.
- Progression from locus to stratum. Stratum is a collection of perfectly related loci.
- Archaeology in its nature destroys what it finds. It must therefore keep perfect records. It is more important to restore how something is found than the find itself.

Archaeology of the Palestinian Area

Note that one does not study biblical archaeology because, to be scientific, we cannot use the Bible as a reference point. One can only use the method of archaeology itself.⁹

The picture we have of this area from archaeology is very different from the image in the Bible. We do not say that this data confirms or denies the Bible, but it does show how the Bible interprets history. Archaeology is now really a question of ancient history rather than just a question of finding things. All archaeological evidence shows Palestine to be part of a much larger area.¹⁰

Two examples of Palestinian Archaeology

1. Early Bronze to Mid-Bronze Ages

This is an obscure period (2200-2000 BC). For the Bible it is the time of the migration of the Patriarchs. It is a period of crises in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, mainly in their urban centres. These crises may be influenced by climatic factors. It was a period of severe drought.

A population type known as the Amorites had become present during the previous millennium. (The name derives from the Sumerian **mar.tu** or Akkadian **amurru**, both meaning 'western', i.e. from outside the territory.) By the second millennium they are found in Babylon (the first dynasty is Amorite), Nari, Alaleh, and Ugarit. Later they expanded into Egypt and Mesopotamia. Their origin is in a Semite wave, probably from Arabia.

Throughout the Syro-Palestinian area there are small population shifts to cope with the shortage of resources. Thus, there are population movements going on over a wide area. To interpret correctly what is going on in Syro-Palestine, one must look further afield. There is therefore no reason to associate the biblical stories of the wanderings of the Patriarchs with this particular area.

2. The Late Bronze to Iron Age (1200 BC)

The area is again suffering from urban crises. There is considerable technological innovation. Finds in Egypt have been interpreted as Israelite, e.g., a collared rim jar, but this jar is found in other places. Also, one cannot conclude from finds of new objects that a new people had arrived.

From one site, evidence of a different type of house has been found. This house has been interpreted as having the shape of a nomadic tent and therefore showing the presence of Israelites. This is to force a biblical interpretation onto the facts, particularly since over the zone taken as a whole, there is no evidence of an Israelite arrival.

The Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages¹¹

It was a time of cultural exchanges. In the art from Mesopotamia to Syro-Palestine there is only a gradual shift of populations. Changes came rather from cultural influences.

1) Hurriti and Mitanni Kingdom¹²

These were from the Caucasus, neither Semitic nor Indo-European, a people discovered through the Amarna Tablets, and dispersed throughout the Northern zone. They exercised a great cultural influence on other peoples. The Kingdom of Mitanni (Hamigalbat in Assyrian) had their capital in Wassukammi. The Nuzi Texts show their customs and laws explain some aspects of Patriarchal behaviour. They were a warrior people. Much Greek mythology derives from the Hurriti via the Hittites. Gods were typical of the region: the principal god is of the tempest (**Tessap**), with the companion goddess **Hepat**. Tessap is in struggle with another god **Kumarbi**. A'a is the god of wisdom. There were also underground gods, gods of the fathers.

2) Hittites¹³

These were from an Anatolian population substratum, Hatti, Indo-European, using cuneiform script, with their capital at Hattusas.

- From 1700-1450 they formed an ancient kingdom.
- From 1450-1200 they were an empire.
- At 1200 came destruction, until in 500 BC the Neo-Hittite Kingdom in Anatolia was formed with many little kingdoms based on cities, characterized by a Hittite and Semitic (Aramaic) culture: Azitawaddiya, Karkemis, Jau'udi (Sam'al), and Hamat.

3) Aramaeans¹⁴

The Old Testament Aramaean zone is a subsection of a total Aramaic region, known from Assyrian texts from 1400 BC. Based in Ahlamu (NW

Syria) and mid-Euphrates, they followed the same route of diffusion as the Amorites. Damascus was the centre of an Aramaic kingdom.

4) Ugarit (Ras Sharma)¹⁵

This was not an empire, but there have been many discoveries on archaeological digs at the site.

- From 2000-1759 there was a relationship with Egypt.
- From 1550-1400 it was fought for by Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- From 1400-1200 was the highpoint of this culture (from 1350 under Hittite influence).
- In 1200 it was destroyed.

The language was Semitic and it used a cuneiform alphabet (as opposed to logogram or syllabic) which simplified writing and increased the spread of culture. Other languages co-existed: Hittite, Akkadian, Sumerian, and bilingual texts have been discovered.

The Divine Pantheon

El, the chief sun god, creator of the spiritual world, created other gods who assemble around him.

Ba'al Hada, son of God of the harvest (**Dagan**), dominates and creates the earthly world.

Atat, the goddess companion of El.

Atirt, the goddess companion of Ba'al Hadad.

Both El and Ba'al Hadad have power. In some texts it is El, in others Ba'al, who is more powerful.

Quotations from ancient texts:

El – 'father of the gods; 'father of the creatures', 'father of man', 'creator of the earth'.

Ba'al – 'son of Dagan', 'Lord of the earth', 'prince', 'rides on the clouds', 'exalted one'.

Thus, El governs above, Ba'al dominates the world.

Myths of Divine Succession

Hurrit	Mesopotamia	Ugarit	Greece
Alahu			
Amu			Uranus
Kumarbi	Amu	El	Kronos
Tessap	Enlil	Ba'al	Zeus
Typho (in a struggle with Zeus)			

Ideas of a Supreme God coming to power through struggle are widespread. Ba'al had similar characteristics to the Old Testament YHWH, which thus presented a threat to Israelite monotheism. Because divine power was gained through struggle, it was always under threat.

Syro-Palestine from the Late Bronze to the First Iron Age¹⁶

1. The significance of geographical designations

Egyptian designation: 'Inhabitants of the sand', 'Asiatics', and 'land of the Hurrite' (i.e., a land influenced by Hurrite culture).

Mesopotamian designations: 'Amurru' (Western).

Syria referred to a larger area than modern Syria. The original meaning was 'the other side of the river [Euphrates]'. When the area became the fifth satrap of the Persian Empire, it was given the Persian name 'Athura', then the Greek Zuria, then Koile Zuria. After Alexander the Great (d. 323), Syria referred to the Northern part under Seleucid control and Cele-Syria to Phoenicia and Palestine.

Canaan: from the Hebrew **k^ena'an**, meaning either 'lowland', 'western land', 'land of the merchants', and 'purple'. A stature of King Idrimi of Alalah refers to the city Ammiya in Canaan, probably meaning South-West Syria. When the Amarna Letters refer to Canaan, they probably mean the area between Amurru and Egypt.¹⁷ The word is used to describe a heterogeneous area of numerous states, therefore a vague term.

Phoenicia: from the Mycenaean **po-ni-ki-yp** ('colour red') and Greek votive purple. It refers to the same area as Canaan in the Late Bronze Period. Herodotus¹⁸ refers to Phoenicians from the Eritrean Sea (Persian Gulf) who migrated to Syria, but this is mythical. They were probably a

population type which fitted well into the area. A change in designation came from this new population.

Palestine: Egyptian **pw-ri-si'-t**; Hebrew **'eretz p'lishtim**. Herodotus refers to **Palastine**: all mean the land of Palestine.

Note that 'Israel' is not used by ancient writers to describe this territory, only to describe the small Northern Kingdom or the religious entity.

2. Events in this region

1400: the Egyptians and Hittites were in expansion; Assyria and Babylon were in expansion. It was a time of stability with great powers in balance, a time of great civilizations, characterized by urban centres, with fortified cities dominating the surrounding areas.

1000: Greece was still in the dark ages.

Asia Minor saw the eclipse of the Hittite Empire, replaced by a small Hittite state.

Syro-Palestine: this was also an area of small states.

Egypt was experiencing the Third Intermediate Period (the end of Egyptian civilization).

There was no longer stability in the area. Why the changes?

3. Social components and social shifts

It is important to distinguish between nomadism and population shifts. The term 'nomadism' is often used by a sedentary people to describe a population which is shifting (i.e., in a pre-sedentary phase). This is not true nomadism. Population shifts of this period are a pre-sedentary phase. They are also a consequence of the general crisis in the area rather than the cause of that crisis.

Compare this with a study of the Mari zone: a dimorphic population practising agriculture in wet areas/seasons, and stock rearing in dry areas/seasons. A stock-rearing population appears to be nomadic when farming is sedentary.

4. 'Habiru'

Occurring in ancient texts, it means 'predator', or 'assassin', with other possible meanings like 'fugitive' or 'dusty', but these are uncertain.

The Amarna Letters show these people to be marginalized but not a well-defined ethnic group. They are thought to be antecedents of the Hebrews.

The Israelites recognized that they were not descended from 'Israel' but from 'Eber' (Gen 10:24-25). The word '*ibri*' is used rarely in the Old Testament. Here it signifies people in a social position similar to the Habiru of the Amarna Texts. (This is the only evidence of linkage with the Habiru apart from the etymological similarity.) Note that, in a much later period, Jonah refers to himself as 'Ibrim'. Some scholars say the term '*ibri*' is a creation by Post-Exilic historiography.

5. 'Peoples of the Sea'¹⁹

At the beginning of this period the administrative and political structure of the region was based around great cities: the 'Palestine system'. During this period, this structure crumbled; this process seems to be connected with the arrival of 'the People of the Sea'. They are not invading barbarians but more connected with a general population shift.

Classifications:

Aquawasu	Sardu
Luka (Anatolians?)	Meshwesh
Tursa (Etruscans?)	Teker
Sekles (Sicilian?)	
Denyem	

These people arrived in successive waves; the Philistines were also thought to be 'People from the sea'. The original form of the name **Plst** or **Prst** or **Palashtu** (Akkadian form), they were possibly from Caphtor in Crete or from Cappadocia. Some believe them to be from Asia Minor or Syria; in which case, they were contemporary with 'People of the Sea' but did not necessarily belong to them.

Technological Development

There was greater use of iron, a simplification of the writing systems through the evolution of the alphabets. There was also habitation of hilly

areas and cultivation of them using irrigation made possible by iron tools. There was also the development of transport by using camels.

Socio-Political Effects

The core was the tribe and village leading to a national state. Common ancestry becomes the basis of membership of a nation. Genealogies developed to justify an individual's membership. Stories about patriarchs evolve. Often these show a relationship between a tribe and a particular city. Territories are occupied by population groups. A nation was defined by the ethnic homogeneity of a group, not by the territory which it occupies. From these nations, organized states emerge. Other determining factors in membership of state are religion and language.

The Problem of the Origin of 'Israel'

The unity of Israel is a product of late Judaism. It is important to distinguish between a people's own historiography which is a reconstruction of history by the people corresponding to their ideology, and scientific ethno-genesis. Israel is a classic example of this, with its history written after it had become a developed nation. Therefore, there are two themes: the Kingdom of David and national identity with the Torah.

Evidence of Origins

There are no archaeological finds which can be called Israelite. The only literary text is the Old Testament. No neighbouring inscriptions give information about Israel's origins. The 1200 BC Stele of Merneptah refers to **ysry'ar** but cannot be used to interpret this as people or religion, so cannot be used to justify origins.²⁰ The 9th-century BC Stele of Mesha (from Moab) tells of battles between the Moabite and Israelite kings.²¹

Therefore, how can we speak of the origins of Israel? There are five hypotheses:

- 1) **Military infiltration**, not a tremendous conquest but a gradual series of military actions.
- 2) **Socio-religious aggregation** analogous to the formation of Greece and Rome.
- 3) **Social struggle**, a rebellion followed by the triumph of the cohesive force of Yahwism. This leaves open the question where

Yahwism comes from in the first place. Others cohered without Yahwism and the view of Yahwism was proposed but this hypothesis is actually Post-Exilic.

- 4) **Segmentary society.** These ideas come from the anthropological studies of Durkheim and Evans-Pritchard.²² Small groups similar to each other coexist but no group predominates. This is valid for Israel but only up to a certain point. Israel insists on primogeniture which is not found in segmentary societies.
- 5) **Circumscription theory,** where one population puts pressure on another and the oppressed group has to become self-sufficient to be able to pay the tributes required by the oppressing nation.²³

Conclusions

- 1) Elements contributing to the origin of Israel: the Philistine presence, new technology, reconstructing of territory (agricultural progress, commerce due to de-urbanization), coalescence of villages, rise of monarchy, redefinition of the idea of the nation on the basis of ethnicity, language and religion.
- 2) Single or multiple causes? The complexity of the Syro-Palestinian area excludes a single cause. Though there is a temptation to be influenced by the Bible and attribute a single cause, one must distinguish between how Israel really arose and how it thought it had arisen.
- 3) It is necessary to study Israel's own historiography and examine why Israel proposed its origins in the way it did. Note that there are diverse historiographies in the Old Testament (e.g., Kings versus Chronicles). Israel sought to propose a vision of a people brought together and guided by its God. National unity is the fruit of that vision but it is not a historical reality. The same vision is common to all peoples of the region. When looking at the Old Testament we must examine its internal structure.

The Text of the Old Testament²⁴

Outline

The text has been transmitted in history but therefore has changed and cannot be studied as something fixed. One must concentrate on the nature

BC				AD						
cc . 3	2	1		0	1	2	345678	9	10	11
LXX	Qumran			Masoretic Text....				Codex Leningradensis		
				Targum		Vulgate		Aleppo		
						Syriac				
						Vetus Latina				

The Masoretic Hebrew text was transmitted after the Greek.

Maroretic from **msr** = to transmit.
 Massorah = transmission, tradition.

The Masoretes took the text with only consonants and added vowels and marginal notes.

The *masora parva* = short notes, retained in the modern criticaledition
 The *masora magna* = long notes, now published separately.

The Masorites were the authors of this tradition.

Various Masoretic Schools

There were three groups:

Babylonian	Tiberias	Palestinian
	Ben Asher	
	Proto-Receptus	Non-Receptus
	Codex Aleppo	
Codex Leningradensis		Codex Cairo
	Receptus	

The Palestinian vocalization was superlinear; the Tiberian vocalization was sublinear.

The Tiberias School kept the best textual tradition, both in vocalization and in the interpretation. However, the most authentic tradition of all aspects of Judaism was the Babylonian. The Tiberias School was the one closest to the Babylonian.