

RICHARD ELLIOTT FRIEDMAN

For centuries, scholars from many backgrounds—religious and nonreligious, Christian and Jewish—have worked on discovering how the Bible came to be. Their task was not to prove whether the Bible’s words were divinely revealed to the authors. *That is a question of faith, not scholarship.* Rather, they were trying to learn the history of those authors: what they wrote, when they wrote and why they wrote. To date, the most persuasive solution they have found has been the documentary hypothesis. The idea of this hypothesis is that the Bible’s first books were formed through a long process. Ancient writers produced documents of poetry, prose and law over a period of many hundreds of years. And then editors used these documents as sources. From them, they fashioned the Bible

that we have read for some two thousand years.

Those who have disagreed with this hypothesis come from opposite ends of the spectrum: the most traditional and the most radical. The most traditional scholars—mainly fundamentalist Christians and Orthodox Jews—adhere to the ancient answers to these questions: The first five books of the Bible were written down by Moses personally, the Book of Joshua was written down by Joshua himself, and so on. The most radical scholars argue that the Bible’s books were written later and later—and that they are less and less true.

Some writers from both ends of the spectrum have claimed that the hypothesis is dead, that “hardly anybody believes that anymore.” But the hypothesis that, supposedly, no one believes

continues to be the model in which most Bible scholars work. It is taught in major universities and seminaries, and outlined in textbooks.

Whatever position one takes on this matter, it should be based on evidence—not on humorous disdain for the positions of others.¹ And the evidence in support of the documentary hypothesis is substantial. Below, I will summarize the seven main bodies of evidence. But my main goal is not just to persuade people that the hypothesis is right. I want to share with others what I experienced when I translated the Five Books of Moses into English (see box, p. 22). I did not start at Genesis 1:1 and proceed to the end. Rather, I trans-

lated the work in the order in which it was written.² I thus relived, in a way, the formation of the Torah from its sources. It was an inspiring and instructive experience, which I can now share with anyone who desires. For those who want to see the entire Five Books with the sources identified, it is available in my translation, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*.

My translation work began with the source known as J.

For two centuries (from 922 to 722 B.C.E.) the biblical Promised Land was divided into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The text known as J was composed during this period. It is called J because, from its very first sentence, it refers to God by the proper name of YHWH (*Jahwe* in German, which was the language of many of the early works in this field). It includes the famous biblical stories of the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the Flood, the Tower of Babylon (“Babel”), plus stories of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as stories of Joseph and then of Moses, the Exodus, the revelation at Sinai, and Israel’s travels to the Promised Land. J was composed by an author living in the southern kingdom of Judah.

E was composed during this same time period by a priest living in the northern kingdom of Israel. It is called E because it refers to the deity simply as God, which in the original Hebrew is *Elohim*, or by the divine name *El* in stories that take place before the time of Moses. That is, unlike J, the E text developed the idea that the proper name of God, YHWH, was not known on earth until God revealed it to Moses.

E does not include any stories of the earth’s early history, such as Creation or the Flood, but begins in the middle of the story of Abraham. It then includes stories of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the plagues and Exodus, the revelation at Sinai, and the wilderness travels. Some of these stories have parallels in the J stories, and some are different. For example, E includes the stories of the near sacrifice of Isaac and of the golden calf, which do not appear in J. J includes the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which does not appear in E. And both J and E have the story of Joseph’s being sold into slavery, but they have different details of how it happened.

In 722 B.C.E., the Assyrian empire destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. J and E were then no longer separated by a border. They now existed side by side in the kingdom of Judah. In the years that followed, someone assembled a history that used both J and E as sources. This editor/historian who combined J and E into one work is known as the Redactor of JE, or for short: RJE.

The third main source is known as P because one of its big concerns is the priesthood. It was produced

The Sources at a Glance

J **NAME:** comes from *Yahweh* (German *Jahwe*)
WHERE: Judah
WHEN: 922-722 B.C.E.
FIRST LINE: “In the day that YHWH made earth and skies ...” (Genesis 2:4b)

E **NAME:** comes from *Elohim*
WHERE: Israel
WHEN: 922-722 B.C.E.
FIRST LINE: “and he lived between Kadesh and Shur and resided in Gerar.” (Genesis 20:1b)

RJE **NAME:** stands for *Redactor of J and E*
WHERE: Judah
WHEN: post-722 B.C.E.
FIRST LINE: “And Abraham traveled there to the Negeb country.” (Genesis 20:1a)

P **NAME:** for the *Priests* who wrote it
WHERE: Jerusalem
WHEN: post-722 B.C.E., not long after RJE, perhaps during the reign of Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.E.)
FIRST LINE: “In the beginning ...” (Genesis 1:1)

D **NAME:** from *Deuteronomy*
WHERE: Judah (Jerusalem?)
WHEN: D is part of the longer Deuteronomistic History, the first edition (Dtr1) of which dates to the reign of King Josiah (640 to 609 B.C.E.); the second edition (Dtr2) dates to the Exile (post-587 B.C.E.)
FIRST LINE: “These are the words that Moses spoke to all of Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness ...” (Deuteronomy 1:1)

R **NAME:** for *Redactor*
IDENTITY: the prophet Ezra?
WHERE: Jerusalem
WHEN: mid-fifth century B.C.E.
FIRST LINE: “These are the records of the skies and the earth when they were created.” (Genesis 2:4a)

by the Jerusalem priests as an alternative to the history told in JE.³ The P stories parallel the JE stories to a large extent in both content and order, including stories of Creation, the Flood, the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Exodus, Sinai and the wilderness. Like E, the P stories follow the idea that the name YHWH was not known until the time of Moses.

The final main source is known as D because it takes up most of the Book of Deuteronomy. D is part of a longer work, known as the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr), which includes the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. Dtr contains sources that are as old as J and E or possibly even older, but the formation of the work took place in the reign of King Josiah of Judah, circa 622 B.C.E. It was later extended into a slightly longer second edition; this took place during the Exile that followed the destruction of the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylon in 587 B.C.E. The original, Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History is called Dtr1; and the second, exilic edition is called Dtr2.

Unlike J, whose author may have been male or female, the authors of the sources E, P, and D, having been identified as priests, were presumably male.⁴

All of these sources and editions were put together by an editor into the final five-book work. This final editor is known as the Redactor, or for short: R. A number of Bible scholars, including me, think that the Redactor is quite possibly Ezra, the man whose life is depicted in the biblical book named for him.⁵

Today, we have seven main bodies of evidence that support this hypothesis:

1. Linguistic

When we separate the texts that have been identified with the various sources, we find that they reflect the Hebrew language of several distinct periods.

The development of Hebrew that we observe through these successive periods indicates that

- the Hebrew of J and E comes from the earliest stage of biblical Hebrew;
- the Hebrew of P comes from a later stage of the language;
- the Hebrew of the Deuteronomistic texts comes from a still later stage of the language; and
- P comes from an earlier stage of Hebrew than the Hebrew of the Book of Ezekiel (which comes from the time of the Babylonian Exile).

This chronology of the language of the sources has been confirmed through comparison with extrabiblical Hebrew texts. The characteristics of early Biblical Hebrew have been confirmed through comparison with pre-Exilic inscriptions discovered through archaeology. The characteristics of late Biblical Hebrew have

been confirmed through comparison with the Dead Sea Scrolls and other later sources. Despite the power of this evidence, it is practically never mentioned by those who oppose the documentary hypothesis.

2. Terminology

Certain words and phrases occur disproportionately—and sometimes only—in one source but not in others. The quantity of such terms that consistently belong to a particular source is considerable. For example:

The mountain that is called Sinai in J and P (20 times) is called Horeb or “the Mountain of God” in E and D (14 times). There are no exceptions to this distinction.

The phrase “the place where YHWH sets his name” or “the place where YHWH causes his name to dwell” occurs ten times in D but never in J, E or P. The phrase “with all your heart and with all your soul” occurs nine times, and all are in D.

The phrase “gathered to his people” as a euphemism for death occurs 11 times, and all 11 are in P. The phrase “be fruitful and multiply” occurs 12 times, all in P. The word “congregation” (*‘ēdāh*) occurs over a hundred times in the Torah, all in P.

The term “to know” as a euphemism for sex (*yd’*) occurs five times in J but never in the other sources. The term *Sheol*, identifying the place where the dead go, occurs six times in J but never in the other sources. The term “to suffer” (Hebrew *šb*) occurs seven times, and all seven are in J.

There are hundreds of other occurrences of terms that connect to only one source or another.

3. Consistent Content

Certain elements of each source are treated consistently throughout the source. Two examples involve the revelation of God’s name and the use of sacred objects.

The first of these—the revelation of God’s name—is one of the most misunderstood parts of the documentary hypothesis. The point is *not* that different sources have different names for God, as many people seem to believe. Rather, the different sources have a different idea of when God’s name YHWH was first revealed. According to J the name was known since the earliest generations of humans. Referring to a generation before the Flood, J says explicitly, “Then it was begun to invoke the name YHWH” (Genesis 4:26). But E and P state just as explicitly that YHWH does not reveal this name until the generation of Moses. Thus, in Genesis, YHWH tells Abraham that His name is El Shadday:

YHWH appeared to Abram and said to him,
“I am El Shadday.”

(Genesis 17:1)

How the Red Sea Parts: Seeing the Sources of Exodus 14

It's easy to tell J from P in Richard Elliott Friedman's new Bible translation, *The Bible with Sources Revealed* (Harper San Francisco). That's because they appear in different colors. In the passage below, based on Friedman's book, J appears in green, E in red and P in blue. The color-coding makes it easy to read each source individually, from start to finish. As Friedman notes in the accompanying article, each source makes perfectly good sense when read alone.

¹And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying,

²Speak to the children of Israel that they should go back and camp in front of Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-Zephon. You shall camp facing it, by the sea. ³And Pharaoh will say about the children of Israel: 'They're muddled in the land! The wilderness has closed them in.' ⁴And I'll strengthen Pharaoh's heart, and he'll pursue them, and I'll be glorified against Pharaoh and against all of his army, and Egypt will know that I am YHWH." And they did so.

⁵And it was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled. And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people. And they said, "What is this that we've done, that we let Israel go from serving us?!" ⁶And he hitched his chariot and took his people with him.

⁷And he took six hundred chosen chariots—and all the chariotry of Egypt—and officers over all of it. ⁸And YHWH strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel. And the children of Israel were going out with a high hand. ⁹And Egypt pursued them. And they caught up to them, camping by the sea—every chariot horse of Pharaoh and his horsemen and this army—at Pi-Hahiroth, in front of Baal-Zephon. ¹⁰And Pharaoh came close! And the children of Israel raised their eyes, and here was Egypt coming after them, and they were very afraid. And the children of Israel cried out to YHWH.

¹¹And they said to Moses, "Was it because of an absence—none!—of graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the wilderness?! What is this that you've done

to us to bring us out of Egypt? ¹²Isn't this the thing that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying: Stop from us! And let's serve Egypt. Because serving Egypt is better for us than our dying in the wilderness!"

¹³And Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand still and see YHWH's salvation that He'll do for you today. For, as you've seen Egypt today, you'll never see them again, ever.

¹⁴YHWH will fight for you, and you'll keep quiet!"

¹⁵And YHWH said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the children of Israel that they should move! ¹⁶And you, lift your staff and reach your hand out over the sea—and split it! And the children of Israel will come through the sea on the dry ground. ¹⁷And I, here, I'm strengthening Egypt's heart, and they'll come after them, and I'll be glorified against Pharaoh and against all of his army, against his chariots and against his horsemen. ¹⁸And Egypt will know that I am YHWH when I'm glorified against Pharaoh, against his chariots and against his horsemen."

¹⁹And the angel of God who was going in front of the camp of Israel moved and went behind them. And the column of cloud went from in front of them and stood behind them. ²⁰And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. And there was the cloud and darkness [for the Egyptians], while it [the column of fire] lit the night [for the Israelites], and one did not come near the other all night. ²¹And Moses reached his hand out over the sea. And YHWH drove back the sea with a strong east wind all

night and turned the sea into dry ground. And the water was split. ²²And the children of Israel came through the sea on the dry ground. And the water was a wall to them at their right and at their left. ²³And Egypt pursued and came after them, every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen, through the sea. ²⁴And it was in the morning watch, and YHWH gazed at Egypt's camp through a column of fire and cloud and threw Egypt's camp into tumult ²⁵and turned its chariots' wheel so that it drove it with heaviness.

And Egypt said, "Let me flee from Israel, because YHWH is fighting for them against Egypt!"

²⁶And YHWH said to Moses, "Reach your hand out over the sea, and the water will go back over Egypt, over his chariots and over his horsemen."

²⁷And Moses reached his hand out over the sea. And the sea went back to its strong flow toward morning, and Egypt was fleeing toward it. And YHWH tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸and the waters went back and covered the chariots and the horsemen—all of Pharaoh's army who were coming after them in the sea. Not even one of them was left. ²⁹And the children of Israel had gone on the dry ground through the sea, and the water had been a wall to them at their right and at their left.

³⁰And YHWH saved Israel from Egypt's hand that day. And Israel saw Egypt dead on the seashore, ³¹and Israel saw the big hand that YHWH had used against Egypt, and the people feared YHWH, and they trusted in YHWH and in Moses His servant.

And then when YHWH speaks to Moses in Exodus, the text says:

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

(Exodus 6:2-3)

The sources are then nearly 100-percent consistent on this matter. The E and P sources identify God as El or simply as "God" (Hebrew *Elohim*) until the name is revealed to Moses. After that they use the name YHWH as well. The J source meanwhile uses the name YHWH from the beginning.⁶

Throughout the entire Torah, the names YHWH and El and the word God (*Elohim*) occur over two thousand times, and the number of exceptions to the picture I have just described is *three!* Despite this phenomenal fact, we still find writers on this subject asserting that "the names of God" don't prove anything.

Further, the sacred objects are also mentioned by each source with striking consistency.

The Tabernacle is mentioned over two hundred times in P. It receives more attention than any other subject. But it is never mentioned in J or D. It is mentioned only three times in E.

The Ark of the Covenant is identified as being crucial to Israel's travels and military success in J (Numbers 10:33-36, 14:44), but it is never mentioned in E.

In E, miracles are performed with Moses' staff (Exodus 4:2-5, 17:20, 7:15-17, 20b, 9:23, 10:13, 17:5-6, 8). But in P it is Aaron's staff that is used for performing miracles (Exodus 7:9-12, 19, 8:1-2, 12-13; Numbers 17:16-26, 20:8).

4. Continuity of Narrative

When the sources are separated from one another, we can read each source as a flowing, sensible text. When we separate and read the two Red Sea stories, for example, each reads as a complete, continuous story (see box, opposite). And we can observe this kind of continuity through at least 90 percent of the text from Genesis to Deuteronomy.

5. Connections with Other Parts of the Bible

The individual sources have specific affinities with different portions of the Bible. D has well-known parallels of wording with the Book of Jeremiah. P has such parallels with the Book of Ezekiel. J and E are particularly connected with the Book of Hosea. A vast series of connections link J with the Court History of David in the Second Book of Samuel.

6. The Sources' Relationships to Each Other and to History

As noted earlier, the sources have connections to specific

circumstances in history. And they have identifiable relationships with each other.

J, which is believed to have been produced in Judah, has numerous elements that connect it with this southern kingdom. Thus:

In J Abraham lives in Hebron/Mamre (Genesis 13:18, 18:1). Hebron was Judah's capital.

In J the scouts whom Moses sends see only Hebron and other locations in Judah; they see nothing of what would become the northern kingdom of Israel (Numbers 17-20, 22-24).

In J—and only in J—Judah, the son of Jacob who gave the kingdom of Judah its name, is a significant figure.

In J the story of the births and namings of the brothers only covers the first four: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. That is, it only reaches as far as Judah!

In E, meanwhile, the connections are disproportionately with the northern kingdom of Israel. And, more specifically, they relate to the Levites of the priesthood of Shiloh. Thus:

In E the stories of the births and namings of the brothers do not include Judah (or Reuben, Simeon and Levi), but they do include all of the tribes that were part of the northern kingdom of Israel: Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin.

In E the birthright is awarded to Joseph; and since the birthright is a double portion, this results in two tribes being created from Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh, which were the two largest tribes of the kingdom of Israel.

In E Jacob fights with God, and the story concludes with the naming of the place where it happens: Penuel (Genesis 32:31). Penuel is associated with northern Israel's first king, Jeroboam I; he is reported to have built it (1 Kings 12:25).

While J speaks favorably of Judah's royal family of David and Solomon, E is critical of them. E—and only E—describes the Egyptians' enslavement of Israel with the words: "They set commanders of work-companies (*missim*) over it" (Exodus 1:11). The same Hebrew term is used in the Book of Kings to describe the forced-labor companies established by Solomon. In Kings, the northern tribes are so offended by this practice that they stone the head of the *missim* (1 Kings 12:18).

E had a specific relationship with the priests of the northern Israelite city of Shiloh. In the days of the United Monarchy, King Solomon expelled their chief priest, Abiathar, and gave the chief priesthood solely to Aaronid priests (priests who traced their descent from Aaron). The prophet Ahijah from Shiloh incited Jeroboam to rebel against Solomon and form the northern kingdom (1 Kings 11:29-39). But, in the end,

continues on page 48

in the earlier traditions from which it is drawn." He mentions Jesus' "cleansing of Jerusalem"; just what he means by this is difficult to discern.

After examining the types of sayings attributed to Jesus, including those about reversal of social fortune and about becoming like children, Thompson concludes that the ideas reflected in these sayings have an extensive prior history in ancient societies and so, as regards Jesus, "We may be dealing with a narrative figure, whose function is to illustrate universal or eternal values." But it will come as absolutely no surprise to any informed person that ideas expressed in Jesus' sayings often reflect the culture in which he lived and so often echo prophetic principles from the Hebrew Bible. Who doubts that Jesus' sayings sometimes reflect principles also found in the prophets? Why such observations lead Thompson to conclude that Jesus never lived is beyond me to fathom. If there is a coherent case to be made in this regard, the awkwardness of Thompson's prose obscures it.

Thompson fails to offer any significant explanation of why authors of the first century would have invented a Galilean messiah figure and called him Jesus. In the absence of any coherent rationale for their creating a fictional Jesus, the view that Jesus really did live remains the best explanation for the Gospels about him. If one is interested in an exciting, clearly written and well-informed argument against the historicity of Jesus, one is well advised to turn to Earl Doherty's *The Jesus Puzzle* and to leave *The Messiah Myth* on the shelf.

Stevan Davies is professor of religious studies at College Misericordia in Dallas, Pennsylvania.

Supporting Role *continued from page 16*

Dictionary, vol. 3, pp. 1098-1103, esp. p. 1101.

³ Quoted in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7.14.

⁴ William Brosend, *James and Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), p. 6.

⁵ See Bauckham, "The Letter of Jude: An Account of Research," *ANRW* 2/25/5 (1988), pp. 3791-3826.

⁶ See Bauckham, "Jude," pp. 1099-1100.

⁷ This material will appear in a fuller form in my forthcoming book, *The Inner Circle of Jesus* (Harper, 2006), dealing with Mary, the Beloved Disciple, Peter, James, Jude and Paul.

Ben Witherington III is professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary in Lexington, Ky., and doctoral supervisor for St. Andrews University in Scotland.

continued from page 23

Jeroboam failed to make these excluded Levites the priests of his new kingdom. Jeroboam set up golden calves as religious symbols (1 Kings 14). The E story of the golden calf corresponds to these events: It says that Aaron made the golden calf at Horeb, thus denigrating both the Aaronid religious establishment in Judah and the golden-calf religious establishment in northern Israel.

P follows J and E, and the fall of the kingdom of Israel.

Various elements connect P to the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah (715-687 B.C.E.). Examples:

P distinguishes between Aaronid priests and all other Levites: Only the Aaronids may serve as priests. All other Levites serve as lesser clergy. The Book of Chronicles reports that this distinction was a development of the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 31:2).

In J and E, people sacrifice at various locations. But in P, sacrifice is permitted only at the Tabernacle and nowhere else on earth. Centralization of worship was also a policy of Hezekiah, who tried to eliminate all places of sacrificial worship outside the Temple in Jerusalem. Further, Hezekiah is the only king of Israel or Judah to combine the centralization of worship with the divisions of the priesthood among the Levites.

P was not only written after JE, but in response to it. Thus, the P narrative follows the JE narrative in content and in the order of episodes: Creation, Flood, Abraham's migration, etc., down to the death of Moses.

This following of the JE sequence of events is not simply a matter of the Redactor's having arranged the P episodes to match those of JE. We can know this because P, when read on its own, still flows as a continuous text. If it were just a collection of rearranged sections, it would not flow so well.

Where P does differ from JE, it can almost always be explained in terms of the author's own consistent views. For example, P, without exception, has no sacrifices until the Tabernacle is established in Exodus 40. P therefore has no story to parallel the J story of Cain and Abel, which involves a sacrifice; P has no sacrifice at the end of the Flood story, though J does; P has no sacrifice in the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17), though J does (Genesis 15); P has no parallel to the E story of the near-sacrifice of Isaac (and the sacrifice of a ram).

Also, P has no channels to God outside of the priesthood, so it never includes angels,

dreams or talking animals, and rarely has a blatant anthropomorphism. P therefore has no parallel to the J story of the Garden of Eden, with God walking in the garden and making the humans' clothes, and with a talking snake. Nor does P have the JE Balaam story with the talking ass. P does not have a story of the three angelic visitors to Abraham like that in J, nor does it have the story of Jacob wrestling with God or an angel at Peni-El as in E, nor does it have a parallel to the J story of the angel in the burning bush. P's account of Joseph does not mention the dreams of Joseph, the drink steward, the baker or the pharaoh.

Observing this consistent relationship between P and the prior sources is a valuable support for the hypothesis in general, and it helps us to identify the steps by which the sources were formed and the contexts of the sources in history. It reveals that P was composed later than JE, that it was composed by someone who was familiar with J and E in their combined form and that it was composed as an alternative to the JE version of Israel's story. It was a retelling of the story in terms that were more suitable to the Aaronid priesthood. After all, the combined JE had the story of Aaron making the golden calf. This was utterly unacceptable for an Aaronid priest. P was therefore written as a complete, alternative version of the story.

After P comes D, which has elements that connect it to the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (640-609 B.C.E.).

As noted earlier, Deuteronomy is part of a seven-book work that tells the history of Israel from Moses to the Exile in Babylon (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings). This work is called the Deuteronomistic History because it constructs the fate of Israel in each period by the standards of Deuteronomy: Did the people and their kings follow the commandments in Deuteronomy or not? The story that begins with Moses culminates in King Josiah in a number of ways.

In D it says about Moses, "a prophet did not rise again in Israel like Moses." The Book of Kings says about Josiah, "after him none rose like him" (2 Kings 23:25). This expression, "none rose like him," is applied to no one else in the Hebrew Bible.

In D, Moses says, "love YHWH, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). In Kings, it says that Josiah alone turned to YHWH "with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might" (2 Kings 23:25). This threefold expression occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

D contains the Law of the King, which

gave Israel a constitutional monarchy. The law requires that the king do exactly as he is instructed and “not turn from the commandment, right or left” (Deuteronomy 17:11,20). Only one person in the Hebrew Bible is described as having behaved this way: King Josiah (2 Kings 22:2).

Josiah’s religious reforms have connections to D as well.⁷ According to D, Moses burns the golden calf and grinds it “thin as dust” (Deuteronomy 9:21). According to the Deuteronomistic History, Josiah burned the high place where King Jeroboam had erected a golden calf “and made it thin as dust” (2 Kings 23:15). In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase “thin as dust” occurs only in contexts related to Moses or Josiah. Moreover, when the Deuteronomistic History tells the story of Jeroboam and the golden calf, it says that a man of God comes and proclaims that a king descended from David will some day ruin that altar, and it adds: “Josiah is his name!” (1 Kings 13:2).

D says, “You shall demolish (*nts*) their altars ... and burn (*šrp*) their Asherahs” (Deuteronomy 12:3). Josiah demolishes (*nts*) altars and burns (*šrp*) the Asherah, the representation of a goddess, at Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:6,12).

7. Convergence

Above all, the strongest evidence establishing the documentary hypothesis is that several different lines of evidence converge.

There are over thirty cases of doublets—stories or laws that are repeated—in the Torah, sometimes identically, more often with some differences of detail. For example, God’s covenant with Abraham is narrated twice, in Genesis 15 and 17; and Moses strikes a rock with a staff and gets water at a place called Meribah in two stories, in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20. The existence of so many overlapping texts is itself noteworthy. But one could argue that this is just a matter of style or narrative strategy. Similarly, the text includes hundreds of apparent contradictions. When looked at one-by-one, however, these contradictions might be explained away. And, similarly, some of the texts consistently call the deity God while other texts consistently call the deity YHWH—but one could respond that this is simply like calling someone sometimes by his name and sometimes by his title.

Not one of these matters is itself a powerful argument; what is significant, however, is that all of these matters converge. When we separate the doublets, nearly all of the contradictions are resolved. And when we separate the doublets, the name of God divides consistently in all but three out of

over two thousand occurrences. And when we separate the doublets, the terminology of each source remains consistent within that source.⁸ And when we separate the sources, the individual narratives flow continuously, with only a rare break. And when we separate the sources, the Hebrew of each source fits consistently with what we know of the Hebrew in each period. And so on for each of the six categories I’ve listed here. The name of God and the doublets were the starting points of the investigation into the formation of the Bible. But they were not, and are not, major arguments or evidence in themselves. The most compelling argument for the hypothesis is that it best accounts for the fact that so much evidence of so many kinds comes together so consistently. As far as I know, to this day, no one who has challenged the hypothesis has addressed this fact.

Some of the documentary hypothesis’s detractors have claimed that doublets are a common phenomenon in ancient Near Eastern literature. That is false. No such phenomenon exists. Doublets are not common in Near Eastern prose because there is *no* Near Eastern prose, either in the form of history writing or long fiction, prior to these biblical texts. It is not even common in Near Eastern poetry. The poetic text that comes closest to the biblical text in terms of the use of doublets is the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and it is a composite of several sources. It is a *demonstration* of composition by combining sources in the ancient Near East, not a refutation of it!

Some critics have argued that advocates of the documentary hypothesis selectively use the evidence; for example, a scholar might assign every verse that has the word “congregation” in it to P and then say that the recurrence of this word in P is proof of the hypothesis. But no scholar is clever enough to make all of these terms line up within the sources—and to make it all come out consistent with all the other signs of the sources: the doublets, the resolution of

**READER
SERVICE AD
1/3 SQ p.
49**

**MORRIS
p. 49**

the contradictions, the separation of the words that are used to identify the deity, the smooth continuity of each source, the linguistic evidence for each source's stage of Hebrew, and all of the other categories of evidence. It is simply not possible to construct such phenomenally consistent results.

The combined weight of the evidence should make it clear why this explanation of the biblical origins has been so compelling for over a century. One can agree with the documentary hypothesis, question it or challenge it, so long as one addresses the evidence. Whether this evidence leads each of us to a traditional or a critical understanding, we shall be the wiser and the stronger for it. **BR**

For more on this topic, see Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (Harper San Francisco, 2003).

¹ I have assembled evidence in other books and articles to show the flaws in recent attacks on the hypothesis from the radical and traditional ends of the spectrum. In this article I want to concentrate on the positive arguments for it. For those who wish to see the evidence against those recent attacks, see the Appendix in Richard Elliot Friedman, *The Hidden Book in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1998), pp. 350-378; and my articles "Solomon and the Great Histories," in Ann Killebrew and Andrew Vaughn, eds., *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology—The First Temple Period* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); "An Essay on Method," in Friedman and William Henry Propp, eds., *Le-David Maskil*, Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003); "Some Recent Non-arguments Concerning the Documentary Hypothesis," in Michael Fox et al., eds., *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 87-101; and "Late for a Very Important Date," *BR*, December 1993, pp. 12-16.

² I first translated J, then E. Then I pursued the editing of J and E together by the redactor known as RJE. Then I translated P, then D (in its stages). Then I translated the remaining small texts (such as Genesis 14).

CLASSIFIEDS

Spectacular Helicopter Footage of Biblical sites including DVDs of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Dead Sea, Galilee, Shephelah, Negev, Coast. See samples at www.preservingbibletimes.org or call **301-838-7401**.

Pilgrim Tours

Biblical Greece & Turkey, Israel Monthly First Class, Sicily Archaeology, Egypt, China, Peru, Malta and many other destinations. Wholesale groups and individuals. 800-322-0788 www.pilgrimtours.com

And then I pursued the editing of all of these together by the redactor known as R.

³ In critical scholarship, there are two main views of when it was composed. One is that P was the latest of the sources, composed in the sixth or fifth century B.C.E. The other is that P was composed not long after J and E were combined. Linguistic evidence now virtually rules out the late date for P. I have also brought evidence for the earlier date for P in *The Exile and Biblical Narrative* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), in *Who Wrote the Bible?* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1987), and in "Torah," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 6, pp. 605-622.

⁴ I first raised the possibility that the author of J may have been a woman in *Who Wrote the Bible?* pp. 85-86. See also *The Hidden Book in the Bible*, pp. 51-52.

⁵ Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* pp. 223-225.

⁶ I have added one more element to this picture. The J source never uses the word God (*Elohim*) in narration. When individual persons in the story are quoted, they may use this word; but the J narrator never uses the word, without a single exception in the received Hebrew (the Masoretic Text).

⁷ Josiah's reforms are connected to instructions that are found in D. And the narrative of Josiah's making those reforms is told in terms and phrases that are typically found in D. And Josiah's reforms are traced to the promulgation of a particular scroll, which is identified by the same words as the scroll that Moses writes in D. This interlocking chain of connections led to the extremely widely held view in scholarship that the scroll that was read in Josiah's day was D. There have been a variety of conceptions: It may have been just the law code that appears in Deuteronomy (chapters 12-26). It may have been the law code and some of the material that precedes and follows it. It may have been written at the time of Josiah. It may have been written earlier and then made public and authoritative in Josiah's time. But there is little room for doubt that D is linked in some integral way to the reign of Josiah.

⁸ In *The Bible with Sources Revealed* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2003), I've listed 24 examples of such terms, which are consistent through nearly 400 occurrences.

Winn Leith

continued from page 8

Trinity, infant baptism (Baptists are the exception here!), and even the status of the New Testament as scripture (nowhere in the New Testament do we read [just what doesn't the NT say that you might expect it to say if it claimed it were scripture?!])! All these ideas arose out of several centuries of doctrinal debate by church fathers whose devotion to the biblical text was no less avid than that of the rabbis and who found ways to reconcile what was for them a living scripture with the developing Christian traditions.

Interestingly, Roman Catholicism has always acknowledged both the Bible and what Catholics call inspired church tradition as sources of doctrine; this explains the nonbiblical principle of saints as heavenly intercessors, for example, as well as the internal reforms of Vatican II in the early 1960s. Like the rabbis long ago, the proponents of these doctrinal changes were careful to cite the biblical text to support the principles they advocated, even if the

biblical text was mute on the specific topic at hand. This reliance on tradition is shared by both conservative and [liberal?] practitioners. In the Catholic church today, both reformers calling for the ordination of women and a married clergy as well as their more conservative opponents base their arguments on past tradition in addition to the text of the Bible.

While both Christian communities like to claim that the church is unchanging and eternal, their own histories attest to growth and change over time even as the biblical text has lost none of its authoritative power.

Similarly, the Constitution has, over its brief 200-year history, proved itself flexible and amenable to new interpretations that, one hopes, will always promote and preserve the principles of justice, general welfare liberty for all Americans.

Mary Joan Winn Leith is associate professor of religious studies at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts.

¹ A good up-to-date work on this subject is Jaroslav Pelikan's *Interpreting the Bible and the Constitution* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2004).

² The Constitution's "supreme" legal status was established in *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803.

³ See "Constitutional Interpretation: A Director's Forum with Antonin Scalia, Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court," http://www.wics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.print&news_id=114178&stayout=true (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, March 23, 2005).

⁴ Although Leviticus 19:18 might be adduced here.

⁵ Jacob Neusner explicates this in *Between Time and Eternity, the Essentials of Judaism* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1975), pp. 60-62.

⁶ E.W. Kitzner, *Student's Edition of the Babylonian Talmud/Baba Kamma translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices* (London: Soncino, 1956) pp. 474-480.

⁷ Suggested reading: Michael Fishbane's *Judaism: Revelation and Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987) acknowledges this in both its title and in its eloquent Introduction.

⁸ Pelikan, *Interpreting the Bible*, goes into this extensively; the phrase comes from John Henry Newman.