

The Mosaic Torah

Description

THE MOSAIC TORAH



by Trent Wilde

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Did Moses write the Torah – the first five books of the Bible? The automatic response of most Jews and Christians is something like, “Of course he did! We’ve known that for centuries!” But not everyone accepts “knowing something for centuries” as evidence, especially since there are many things we have “known” for centuries that have turned out to be wrong. The earth being the center of the universe and blood-letting being an effective treatment for disease are just a couple examples among many. Moreover, just as it was a combination of critical thinking, willingness to question tradition, and subjecting our ideas to rigorous testing that led to the rejection of these ideas, some assert that it is these same ways and means that have led modern biblical scholarship to overwhelmingly reject the idea that Moses wrote the Torah. So, what is the truth? Is the traditional view right or is modern scholarship correct in its rejection of it?

Before we begin to answer this question, let’s clarify one basic point. Many readers of the Bible assume that its first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are separate books. This is only natural given that they have different titles and are printed using a format which would seem to indicate that they are as separate from each other as are any other two books in the Bible. In reality, though, these five books constitute one literary work. This is apparent from the fact that they tell one continuous story which flows seamlessly from one book to the next. With this point in mind, we can examine the Torah as a whole, especially seeking to derive from it any facts which have a bearing on the question of Mosaic authorship.

Now, to ask what should be an obvious and natural question –

Does the Torah claim to have been written by Moses?

The only way to definitively establish the answer to this question is to read the entire Torah, but since it would be impractical to quote it here in full, and since you can read it on your own, we’ll just look at the passages where one would expect an author to identify him/her-self. The first such passage is at the very beginning:

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. – Genesis 1:1

As you can see, this verse simply does not identify its author. If you read the whole first chapter (and beyond) you will see that it does not do so either. The next place one might think to find an author’s identification is at the end of a work. So, let’s see what it says:

¹⁰ Never since has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land, ¹² and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses did before the eyes of all Israel. – Deuteronomy 34:10-12

Not only does this passage *not* claim Moses as its author, it even speaks of him in third person, indicating that the author distinguished between him/herself and Moses. Furthermore, for Moses to say, “Never since has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses ... he was unequalled ... for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses did, etc.” would really be for him to say, “Never since has there arisen in Israel a prophet like *me*... I am unequalled ... for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power

that / did.” This sort of bragging isn’t really what you’d expect from the humblest man on the face of the earth (which is what he’s called in Num. 12:3 – also not something you’d expect the humblest man on earth to say about himself)!

This matter of referring to Moses in third person is pretty important. In fact, from the time baby Moses is first introduced in Exodus chapter two all the way till the end of the Torah, he is always described in third person. This does not sound like Moses writing his own autobiography; it sounds more like someone else writing a biography about Moses. Being the main character of the Torah’s story does not make him its author, just like Jesus’ being the main character of the stories in the New Testament gospels does not make him their author. Besides, Moses isn’t the Torah’s only main character. Before him was Joseph, then Jacob, then Isaac, Abraham, Noah – all the way back to Adam and Eve. The Torah’s narrative is really a family saga with many main characters across time and all of them are referred to from the third person perspective of the narrator.

So again, does the Torah claim to have been written by Moses? As we can now see, the answer is clearly “No.” Neither the beginning, end, nor middle of the Torah claims Moses as its author and whoever did write it referred to Moses as distinct from him/herself.

Some might think that pointing this out is somehow anti-Torah, but how could it be? It could not possibly be against the Torah to question or disbelieve a claim which the Torah does not itself make or to simply point out that it does not make that claim. Likewise, it is not anti-Moses to acknowledge that the Torah does not claim to have been written by him. If there was a book in circulation which did not claim you as its author, would you feel it is against you for someone to point out that it does not claim to be written by you? Would that even make sense? Of course not! When it comes down to it, one could far more easily and strongly argue that it is the traditional view which is anti-Moses and anti-Torah. If Moses did not really write the Torah, to suggest that he did places words in his mouth which he did not say and which he might not have wanted to be attributed to him. It would also overshadow the Torah’s actual author which would make it pretty well inevitable to lose sight of his/her original aims and ideas in writing, thus resulting in the Torah and its author losing their own integrity. And, as I think we can all agree, that would be a shame.

Conclusive Facts

Knowing that the Torah does not claim Moses as its author is important, but it doesn’t ultimately answer our question. In order to do that, we need to move on from what the Torah does *not* say to what it *does* say. In fact, we have already considered our first example – the Torah’s consistent use of third person language when referring to Moses. This language strongly indicates that the words of the Torah are not the words of Moses; they are the words of someone else concerning Moses (and concerning others). This example of what the Torah *does* say is hugely important; it is not an obscure feature of an isolated passage; it is the consistent and pervasive reality of the Torah’s own portrayal of Moses as someone other than its author. From this fact alone, one could justifiably conclude that the Torah was not written by Moses, nor does it pretend to be.

Sometimes, we forget the importance of starting with the facts and then forming our beliefs to match those facts. It is so easy to believe something without weighing the evidence first. We may hear an idea that we happen to like, or from someone we trust, and conclude that that idea must be correct. These are fallacies we have all committed at one point or another and so it shouldn’t be a surprise to find out that we have some beliefs that aren’t grounded in fact. The important thing is to be willing to re-evaluate our beliefs in light of the evidence once we become aware that we formed them without sufficient backing. To not do this would be to shift the burden of proof away from ourselves, when in fact we still have it. We need to realize that it is not reasonable to start with a cherished belief as our default and then to demand proof that it is false in order to give it up. One could believe any number of unsupported and untrue theories using that method. You could even believe that a duplicate of Donald Trump lives in an earth-simulating capsule hidden in the core of Jupiter. No one could prove your belief wrong, but that wouldn’t make it true and it wouldn’t make it reasonable to subscribe to that belief. The lesson here is that the only honest way to handle our beliefs is to require ourselves to have sufficient evidence upon which to base them before forming them.

The truth is, no one could start with the facts of the Torah and honestly conclude from those facts that it was written by Moses. Still, the Mosaic authorship of the Torah is a deeply ingrained and cherished belief for many

and it can be difficult to let go of holding it as the default position. For those struggling to change their way of handling beliefs, but who ultimately care about truth, it can be helpful to see evidence that what they have assumed to be true actually isn't. For their sake, and for everyone who cares about evidence, here are some example passages in the Torah which simply could not have been written by Moses:

Passage

Comment

Genesis 11:28, 31

²⁸ And Haran died in the presence of Terah, his father, in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.... ³¹ Then Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they went from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan.

It has long been known that Ur was not ruled by the Chaldeans in the days of Terah and Abram. This isn't to say that Abram did not come from Ur, only that the author used the qualifier "of the Chaldeans" for the sake of clear communication with his/her audience since the Chaldeans ruled Ur at the time of writing.

What is most relevant here is the fact that Moses could not have been the one to make this clarification. "As a distinct people, the Chaldeans appear in the 9th century B.C."¹ Moses' life is usually dated to around the 16th-13th centuries B.C. and certainly could not be as late as the 9th century since that is past the time of David and Solomon. Moses could not have referred to the Chaldeans since, in his day, there were no Chaldeans to refer to.

Genesis 12:6

⁶ And Abram went through the land as far as Shechem, at the oak of Moreh; at that time the Canaanites were in the land.

The phrase "at that time the Canaanites were in the land" refers to a circumstance which is in the past from the perspective of the author. This indicates that the Canaanites were no longer in the land when this was written. As all who know the story of Moses are aware, the Canaanites were in the land for the entire duration of Moses' life. Thus, Moses could not have referred to the Canaanites living in the land as a reality of the past.

Genesis 13:7

⁷ And so there were disputes between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herds-men; at that time, the Canaanites and Perizzites were in the land.

The same principle applies here as in the previous example.

Genesis 36:31

³¹ And these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel:

Someone could only write that a past event happened “before any king reigned over the children of Israel” if they lived at a time after kings had already begun to reign over the children of Israel. This should be as obvious as the fact that nobody could write that a past event happened “before there were presidents of the United States” unless they lived at a time during which the United States had already had presidents. Since Moses lived and died before any king ruled over Israel, he simply could not have written this.

Numbers 12:3

³ Now the man Moses was more humble than any other person on the face of the earth.

It is impossible for Moses to have written this statement if it is true. Even if the statement isn’t true, but Moses had even the smallest amount of humility, he still would not have written it. The level of pride one would need to have in order to make this statement concerning oneself is colossal. It is also hard to imagine a worse hypocrisy than to brag that you are the humblest man on earth!

Attributing this statement to Moses paints him as the most hypocritical egotist this world has ever seen. In light of this, how could it be anything other than anti-Moses to claim that he wrote the Torah? By the same token of logic, it would be equally anti-Torah since it paints the Torah as the words of one of the world’s most contempt-ible men.

Deuteronomy 1:1

¹ These are the words that Moses spoke to all of Israel in the wilderness on the other side of the Jordan, in the desert-plain of Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab.

The places described as being “on the other side of the Jordan” are all east of the Jordan, outside of Canaan. This should be obvious to everyone who knows the story of the Exodus, even if they are not familiar with the geography of the region, since Moses never crossed the Jordan into Canaan and he is supposed to have delivered a speech at the location described in this verse. To speak of the land east of the Jordan as being “on the other side of the Jordan” is to speak from the perspective of someone on the west of the Jordan – in the land of Canaan. Since Moses never crossed over to the west of the Jordan, he could not have written this passage. Moreover, calling the east side of the Jordan “the other side of the Jordan” is not an anomaly of this verse; it occurs several other times in Deuteronomy (1:5; 4:41, 46, 47, 49).

Deuteronomy 2:12

¹² Previously, the Horites dwelt in Seir, but the children of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from their presence as Israel had done to the land of their possession, which the LORD had given to them.

Deuteronomy 34:5-12

⁵ Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the LORD. ⁶ And he was buried in a valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth Peor, but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. ⁷ Now Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eye did not grow dim and his vigor did not flee. ⁸ And the children of Israel wept over Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning over Moses were complete. ⁹ And Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. And the children of Israel listened to him and they did that which the LORD commanded Moses. ¹⁰ Never since has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land, ¹² and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses did before the eyes of all Israel.

Since this passage clearly refers to the children of Israel dispossessing and destroying the Canaanites (those who dwelt in “the land of their possession which the LORD had given to them”) as an event of the past, it could not have been written by Moses since he died before that event took place. One could argue that he could have spoken of the Israelite takeover of Canaan as an event to come, but no one can honestly argue that he could have referred to it as an accomplished fact, as this verse does.

Out of all the passages which show that the Torah could not have been written by Moses, this is probably the most obvious. In fact, it is so obvious that it is almost painful to point out why Moses could not have written it. Yet, point it out we shall. This passage describes Moses’ death and burial, not as an event which will one day happen, but as an already accomplished fact. Moses could not have written this description because he was already dead. It doesn’t get much more plain than that!

There are other aspects of this passage which highlight all the more that Moses could not have written it. For example, saying “no one knows the place of his burial *to this day*” implies that this was written long after Moses died since the phrase “to this day” implies a long duration between the event and the time of writing. And then we have verses 10-12 which, as we saw earlier, amount to Moses bragging about himself as being the best prophet in an only thinly veiled way – that is, if we attribute the passage to him. More than that, to say “Never since has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses” and that “He was unequalled” implies that other prophets had arisen in Israel to whom Moses could be compared.

All together, these aspects show very clearly not only that Moses didn’t write this passage, but that it must have been written a considerable time after Moses had already died.

There comes a point when the weight of evidence tips the scale and, unless we are going to cheat the balance, we must humbly and honestly acknowledge where the evidence falls. In this case, the evidence shows beyond a reasonable doubt that Moses did not write the Torah. To be sure, this does not mean that Moses didn’t produce written material, nor does it mean that the Torah is absent of any such material. In fact, there are six documents for which the Torah claims Mosaic authorship (Ex. 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27-28; Num. 33:2; Dt. 31:9, 24; 31:22) and at least five of those six it quotes, possibly in full (Ex. 21:2-23:19; Ex. 34:14-26; Num. 31:1, 3-49; Dt. 12:1-26:15; 32:1-43).² Keep in mind, however, that these quotations comprise a very small portion of the Torah and they also constitute another line of evidence that the Torah was not written by Moses since they are examples of the Torah distinguishing between itself and the texts which it regards as of

Mosaic origin. Furthermore, the Torah claiming Mosaic author-ship on behalf of these documents is not the same as them claiming it for themselves, nor is the act of making a claim equal to showing that the claim is true.

At the beginning of this article we asked a few questions like, “Did Moses write the Torah?” and, “Is the traditional view right or is modern scholarship correct in its rejection of it?” We now have our answers: Moses did not write the Torah, the traditional view is not right, and modern scholarship is correct in rejecting the Mosaic authorship of the Torah.

Mosaic Indeed

Now that we have seen clear evidence that the Torah was not written by Moses, we are left with a new question, “Who did write the Torah?” As is so often the case with important questions, the answer is somewhat of a paradox. How so? – you ask; well, modern scholarship has demonstrated that the Torah is mosaic after all! No, not in the sense that it was written by Moses, but in that the process of its composition resembles, in some ways, the making of mosaic art. When an artist creates a mosaic, he or she often starts with several masses of raw source material (usually tile, stone, or glass) which differ from each other in their color. Each of the variously colored source materials are then broken up into smaller pieces so that they can be artistically arranged with the pieces of other colors. Thus, the artist is able to create a picture which goes beyond the scope and possibilities of any one material while retaining much of each source, if even in pieces. When it comes to the Torah, the source material is not tile or stone of different colors, it is literature – different compositions from different authors with different perspectives. To be more exact, scholars over the past few hundred years have discovered that the Torah was compiled from four main literary sources, each of which were originally separate documents, along with several smaller literary fragments. These sources were broken up into sections which were then arranged together thus creating a new work – a new picture.

In principle, this isn’t too far-fetched, especially since we know this sort of process to have occurred with other writings in the Bible; case in point – the story of David and Goliath. The story of David and Goliath is found in the book 1 Samuel, which is known to us in two different versions. The most popular version today is preserved in a group of manuscripts known as “the Masoretic Text,” or “MT” for short. The other is preserved in a Greek translation of an underlying Hebrew text and is part of a family of Greek manuscripts known as “the Septuagint,” or “LXX” (70).³ These two versions are similar enough that they are clearly both 1 Samuel, but they differ enough in their wording and content that they must be considered two different versions. When it comes to the story of David and Goliath, these two versions differ substantially. Virtually all the content of the version preserved in the LXX is found in the MT, but the MT also contains a great deal of content found only in it. Careful analysis has revealed that the LXX version and the content found only in the MT were originally two separate literary works each telling the story of David and Goliath in their own unique ways.⁴ The LXX preserves one of those literary works on its own (which we’ll call DG₁),⁵ and the MT represents the combined version of both literary works. When you subtract those parts of the MT which find a parallel in the LXX, the remaining material is the other literary work (DG₂). The development of these texts is shown in the following illustration:

Preserved
in the LXX

DG₁

DG₂

Preserved in
those parts of
the MT not
in the LXX

MT

It must be kept in mind that this picture does not represent a mere speculation regarding the development of these texts. It represents a series of developments we actually know to have happened because we have the manuscripts which demonstrate it. In the next several pages you will find a translation of these manuscripts.⁶ We have placed in the left column a translation of the LXX (which represents DG₁) and in the right column a translation of those parts of the MT which are not found in the LXX (representing DG₂). If both columns are read together, you get the content of the MT.⁷ As you read, it will become apparent that the texts in each column were indeed originally separate documents. Not only do the manuscripts show this, but the content itself testifies to this reality. When read together, as it is in the MT, the story is somewhat confusing. Goliath is introduced as if for the first time (17:23) even though he had already been introduced (17:4) and Saul has no idea who David is when he sees him going to fight Goliath and even after David returns from his fight and speaks to Saul face to face (17:55-58) – this, in spite of the fact that Saul had already taken David on board as his personal musician (16:18-19), made him his armor-bearer (16:21), and clothed him with armor for this very fight with Goliath (17:38-39)! (Just to name a couple examples.) On the other hand, when each source text is read on its own there are no such points of confusion and everything flows quite smoothly. This itself is strong evidence that these texts were originally separate.

It is easy to imagine writing a text, deleting sections of it and the remaining portion still making sense, but what isn't so imaginable (at least not realistically) is the deleted portions also making sense when read on their own(!) and for both the remaining portions and the deleted portions to make more sense on their own than when read together! But this is precisely what we have with the story of David and Goliath. If you start with the MT and read the sections only in the LXX, they make sense. If you read the remaining sections without the parts paralleled in the LXX, they make sense. When you read it all together, it is confusing. This simply would not be the case if every-thing we have in the MT originated as a single literary work. The only reasonable explanation is the one that the manuscript evidence already demonstrates to be true – the MT contains a combined version of two originally separate works. Read on and see for yourself.

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 16:14-18:30

(DG1) 16:14 And the Spirit of the Lord withdrew from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. 16:15 And the servants of Saul said to him, "Look, now an evil spirit from the Lord is tormenting you. 16:16 Now allow your slaves to speak before you and seek for our master a man who knows how to play on the lyre. And it will be that when the evil spirit comes upon you, then he will play on his lyre, and it will be good for you, and it will calm you." 16:17 And Saul said to his servants, "Look now for a man for me who plays well and bring him to me." 16:18 And one of his servants answered and said, "Look, I have seen a son of Jesse, a Bethlehemite. He knows music, and the man is wise, and the man is a warrior and is wise in his speech and a man good in his appearance, and the Lord is with him." 16:19 And Saul sent messengers to Jesse, saying, "Send your son, David, to me, the one with your sheep." 16:20 And Jesse took a homer of bread and a skin of wine and one kid from the goats and he sent them by the hand of David, his son, to Saul. 16:21 And David came to Saul and stood before him, and Saul loved him greatly. So David became an armor bearer for him. 16:22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Now let David stand before me, because he found favor in my sight." 16:23 And it happened that when the evil spirit would come upon Saul, David would take out his lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would recover. And it was good for him, and the evil spirit consistently withdrew from him.

17 Now the Philistines gathered their army for battle, and they were gathered in Socoh of Edom,⁸ and they camped between Socoh and between Azekah Ephesdammim. 17:2 And Saul and the men of Israel gathered and camped in the valley.⁹ They formed ranks for battle opposite the Philistines. 17:3 And the Philistines stood on the hill on one side, and Israel stood on the hill on the other side, with the course between them. 17:4 And a strong man came out from the Philistines' camp. His name was Goliath from Gath. His height was four arm lengths and a span. 17:5 And there was a helmet on his head, and he was wearing a coat of chainmail, and the weight of his coat was five thousand shekels of bronze and iron. 17:6 And he had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze shield between his shoulders. 17:7 And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spearhead was six hundred shekels of iron, and the carrier for his weapons went before him. 17:8 And he stood up and shouted to the camp of Israel and said to them, "Why have you come out to prepare for battle opposite of us? Am I not a Philistine, and are you Hebrews of Saul? Choose for yourselves a man, and let him come down to me. 17:9 And if he is able to fight against me, and if he can strike me down, then we will be your slaves. But if I am able and I can strike him down, then you will be our slaves, and you will serve us." 17:10 And the Philistine said, "Look! I scorn the camp of Israel today, on this day! Give me a man, and both of us will fight together one on one!" 17:11 And Saul and all Israel heard these words from the Philistine, and they were shocked and incredibly terrified.

(DG2) 17:12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite. This man was from Bethlehem of Judah, and his name was Jesse. He had eight sons; in the days of Saul this man was old, yet he still walked among the men. 17:13 The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone and followed Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, his second oldest was Abinadab, and the third was Shammah. 17:14 Now David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, 17:15 but David went back and forth from Saul¹⁰ to feed the sheep of his father in Bethlehem. 17:16 Now the Philistine came forward early and late, and he took his stand for forty days.¹¹

17:17 Then Jesse said to his son David, "Please take for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread, and bring them quickly to the camp for your brothers. 17:18 And these ten portions of cheese you will bring to the commander of the thousand; find out how your brothers are doing, and take their pledge." 17:19 Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah fighting the Philistines.

17:20 David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper, and he took the provisions and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment while the troops were going to the battle line, and they raised the war cry. 17:21 Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle lines, one battle line against the other. 17:22 David left the baggage he had with him in the care of the baggage keeper, ran to the battle line, and came and asked how his brothers were doing. 17:23 While he was speaking to them, the champion, whose name was Goliath the Philistine from Gath,¹² was coming up from the caves of the Philistines. He spoke just as he had previously¹³ and David heard his words. 17:24 When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from his presence and were very afraid. 17:25 And the men of Israel said, "Did you see this man who has come up? For he is going up to defy Israel! It will be that the man who defeats him, the king will make him very rich with great wealth and will give him his daughter in marriage and will make his father's house free in Israel." 17:26 Now David had spoken to the men who were standing with him, saying, "What will be done for the man who defeats this Philistine and removes the disgrace from Israel? For who is this un-circumcised Philistine that he defies the battle lines of the living God?" 17:27 And the troops had spoken to him according to this word, saying, "So it will be done for the man who defeats him."

17:28 His oldest brother Eliab heard while he was speaking to the men, and Eliab became very angry against David and said, "Why have you come down today, and with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumptuousness and the evil of your heart! For you have come down in order to see the battle!" 17:29 David replied, "What have I done now? I merely asked a question! 17:30 He turned around from him to another opposite him and he spoke to him in the same way, and the people answered him as before.

17:31 Now the words which David had spoken were heard and they reported them to Saul, and he summoned him.

(DG1) 17:32 And David said to Saul, "Surely the heart of my lord should not be dejected because of him. Your slave will go and fight with this Philistine." 17:33 And Saul replied to David, "You cannot go up against the Philistine to fight him because you are a boy and he is a man, a warrior from his youth." 17:34 And David replied to Saul, "Your servant was shepherding for his father with the sheep. And when the lion or the bear was coming and tried to take sheep from the flock, 17:35 I would go out after it and strike it and draw out from its mouth. And if it rose against me, then I held its throat and strike and kill it. 17:36 And your servant has struck down the bear and the lion, and the uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of these. Will I not go and strike him down and remove today the disgrace from Israel? Because who is this uncircumcised one who scorns the camp of the living God? 17:37 The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and from the claws of the bear, he will rescue me from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you." 17:38 And Saul put on David a wool cloak and bronze helmet on his head. 17:39 And he strapped his sword onto David around his wool cloak. But he grew weary walking around a few times. So David said to Saul, "I would not be able to go on in this because I have no experience." So they removed them from him. 17:40 And he took his staff in hand and chose five perfect stones for himself from the wadi and put them in the shepherd bag that was with him for storage. And with his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine man.

(DG2) 17:41 Then¹⁴ the Philistine came on, getting nearer and nearer to David, with his shield bearer in front of him.

(DG1) 17:42 And Goliath saw David and had contempt for him because he was a boy and he was ruddy, with attractive eyes. 17:43 So the Philistine said to David, "Am I like a dog that you would come against me with a stick and stones?" But David answered, "No, rather, you are worse than a dog!"¹⁵ And the Philistine swore at David by his gods. 17:44 And the Philistine said to David, "Come over here to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and to the beasts on the ground." 17:45 And David replied to the Philistine, "You come against me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield, but I come to you with the name of the Lord God of Hosts, of the army of Israel whom you scorned today. 17:46 And the Lord will shut you up today into my hand, and I will kill you and remove your head from you and give your limbs and the limbs of the army of the Philistines on this day to the birds of the sky and the wild animals on the ground. And the entire world will know that God is in Israel. 17:47 And this entire assembly will know that not by the sword or spear does the Lord deliver, because the battle is the Lord's, and the Lord will hand over you into my hand." 17:48 And the Philistine rose and went to meet David.

(DG2) David ran quickly to the battle line to meet the Philistine.

(DG1) 17:49 And David reached his hand into his bag and took a single stone from there and launched it. He struck the Philistine on his forehead, and the stone penetrated through his helmet into his forehead, and he fell on his face on the ground.

(DG2) 17:50 So¹⁶ David prevailed over the Philistine with the sling and with the stone, and he struck down the Philistine and killed him, but there was no sword in David's hand.

(DG1) 17:51 And David ran and stood over him and took his sword and executed him and removed his head. And the Philistines saw that their strongest had died, and they fled. 17:52 And the men of Israel and Judah rose and raised the war cry. And they pursued them closely as far as the entrance of Gath and as far as the gate of Ashkelon, and corpses of the Philistines fell on the road to the gate even as far as Gath and as far as Ekron. 17:53 Then the men of Israel returned, turning around after the Philistines, and trampled their camp. 17:54 And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, and his weapons he put in his tent.

(DG2) 17:55 Now when Saul saw David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Whose son is this young man, Abner?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." 17:56 Then the king said, "You inquire whose son this young man is." 17:57 So when David returned from striking down the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul. The head of the Philistine was in his hand. 17:58 Then Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David said, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."¹⁷

18 When he finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan became attached to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 18:2 Saul took him on that very day and did not allow him to return to his father's house. 18:3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 18:4 Jonathan stripped off the robe that he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his fighting attire, and even his sword, his bow, and his belt.

18:5 David went out whenever Saul sent him, and he succeeded. So Saul appointed him over the men of the war, and it pleased all the people and even pleased the servants of Saul. 18:6 When they were coming back after David had returned from striking down the Philistine,¹⁸

(DG1) And the dancers¹⁹ came out to meet David²⁰ from every town in Israel with tambourines and with celebration and with cymbals. 18:7 And the women began and sang,

"Saul has struck down his thousands
and David his ten thousands."

18:8 And the statement was viewed as evil in Saul's eyes. And this is what he said about these words: "To David they give the tens of thousands, and to me they give thousands." 18:9 And Saul began watching David with suspicion from that day on onward.

(DG2) 18:10 On the next day, the evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he prophesied in the middle of the house. Now David was playing the lyre²¹ with his hand on that day as usual, and the spear was in Saul's hand. 18:11 Then Saul hurled the spear and thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.²²

(DG1) 18:12 And Saul was afraid from the presence of David.

(DG2) because Yahweh was with him, but had departed from Saul.

(DG1) 18:13 And he removed him from before himself and appointed him as his commander of a thousand, and he went out and came in before the people. 18:14 And David was prudent in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. 18:15 And Saul saw how he was very prudent, and he was annoyed by his presence. 18:16 And all Israel and Judah loved David because he came in and went out before the presence of the people.

(DG2) 18:17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you as your wife. Only be a brave warrior for me and fight the battles of Yahweh." For Saul thought, "My hand will not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." 18:18 But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and who are my relatives, the clan of my father in Israel, that I should be a son-in-law to the king?" 18:19 But at the time Saul's daughter Merab was to be given to David, she was given instead to Adriel the Meholathite as wife.

(DG1) 18:20 And Michal, the daughter of Saul, loved David, and she told Saul, and it was good in his eyes. 18:21 So Saul said, "I will give her to him, and she will be a trip for him." And the hand of the Philistines was against Saul.²³ 18:22 And Saul commanded his servants, saying, "Speak, all of you, covertly with David, saying, 'Look, the king desires for you, and all his servants love you, so you must become a son-in-law to the king.'" 18:23 So the servants of Saul spoke into the ear of David these words, and David replied, "Is it simple in your eyes to become a son-in-law to the king? And I am a humble man and do not have honor." 18:24 And the servants of Saul reported to him about these words that David spoke. 18:25 And Saul said, "This is what you should say to David: 'The king has no desire for a bride gift but rather for a hundred foreskins from the Philistines for vengeance against the enemies of the king.'" And Saul was counting on him being thrown into the hands of the Philistines. 18:26 And the servants of Saul explained to David these words. And the issue seemed fair in David's eyes to become a son-in-law to the king. 18:27 So David rose, and he and his men went, and he struck against the Philistines one hundred men and brought their foreskins to the king, and he became a son-in-law to the king. And he gave to him Michal, his daughter, to him as his wife. 18:28 And Saul saw that the Lord was with David and all Israel²⁴ loved him. 18:29 And he grew in his wary suspicion of David even more. – 1 Samuel 16:14-18:29 (LES)

(DG2) so²⁵ Saul became a perpetual enemy of David. 18:30 Then the commanders of the Philistines went out for battle, and as often as they went out, David succeeded more than all the servants of Saul, and his name became very esteemed. – 1 Samuel 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-18:6a, 10-11, 12b, 17-19, 29b-30 (LEB)

The text itself, as you can see above, is what shows more clearly than anything else that 1 Samuel 16:14-18:30 in the MT truly is a combination of two originally separate documents. Again, our reason for taking the time to demonstrate this is to illustrate the fact that there are writings in the Bible which have been formed through the combin-ing of multiple originally separate documents. 1 Samuel 16-18 is a particularly powerful example since this editorial process is evidenced directly by the manuscripts and they plainly reveal the content of each original document. One could imagine, however, that it would be possible to discern the different sources even if we didn't have the manuscript evidence. If we only had the MT, one could still notice that Goliath seems to be introduced twice in these chapters and that some passages portray Saul as knowing

David prior to the encounter with Goliath whereas others picture them as not knowing each other until after Goliath had been slain. By taking note of differences such as these, one could split the chapters into two categories. The fact that the content of each category would read smoothly on its own and form a story that is more internally consistent than when the two are combined would serve as confirming evidence. Manuscript evidence is great, and it makes the task of identifying and separating sources much easier, but it is only one among many types of evidence.

In the study of the Torah, the first evidence that indicated to scholars that it is a combination of multiple different sources was a phenomenon known as “doublets.” A “doublet” is a story or a saying that occurs more than once, often in varying forms. For example, there are two stories of the institution of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15 and 17), two stories of the naming of Beer-sheba (Gen. 21 and 26), two stories of Jacob’s name being changed to Israel (Gen. 32 and 35), two stories of Moses getting water from a rock at a place called Meribah (Ex. 17 and Num. 20), etc. There are actually over 30 doublets throughout the Torah, and even some triplets (such as in the case of the ten commandments – Ex. 20, Ex. 34, and Dt. 5).

One of the things that was most intriguing to scholars about these doublets (especially those in Genesis) was that, in many of them, God was referred to by different names in each version. In the doublet of the institution of the Abrahamic covenant, for instance, one version (Gen. 15) exclusively refers to God as Yahweh (the unique name of the God of Israel), whereas the other version (Gen. 17) exclusively refers to him with variations of the word ‘El (generically, a title for any god; specifically, the name of the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon). The collection of stories that most often referred to God as Yahweh reflected the idea that the name Yahweh was known to humanity since the beginning of human history and was thus designated by the letter J (since Yahweh is spelled with a “J” in German – the language of many of the scholars initially involved in this research) and the collection which used variations of ‘El reflected the idea that humans didn’t know the name Yahweh until it was revealed to Moses, and so it was designated by the letter E. Triplets, among other things, quickly led scholars to recognize a third source which shared E’s view that God was not known as Yahweh until the time of Moses²⁶ but also had a unique concern with priestly issues. It was called P. Scholars noticed that if you line up all the J stories and read them straight through, they flowed very well together and told an internally consistent story. The same thing could be done with E and with P. This held true from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Numbers. The next step was to recognize that J, E, and P did not continue into Deuteronomy, but that it was primarily composed of another source, which scholars called D (for obvious reasons). These sources were pieced together in at least two stages of editorial processes, which scholars call “redac-tion.” The first stage of this process was the combining of J and E, which produced a text sometimes called JE, with the scribe who produced it being called RJE (redactor of J and E). The last stage of redaction was to combine JE together with P, D, and several other small literary fragments (which are not a part of J, E, P, or D) to create the Torah as we have it. The final editor is known by scholars as R. This view of the authorship and composition of the Torah came to be known as the “Documentary Hypothesis” and, over time, line upon line of evidence has arisen further supporting and refining it. Our purpose here is not to explain or explore this model in all its details, but to simply show that the Torah is a mosaic of originally separate documents. The best way to do this is to examine the text itself. We’ll look at just two examples.

Noah’s Flood

Genesis 6:1-9:17

J

P

(J) 6:1 And it happened when the humans began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them 6:2 that the children of the 'elohim²⁷ saw the human daughters, that they were good, and they captured for themselves women from all that they chose. 6:3 And Yahweh said, "My breath in these humans will not be strong for very long insomuch as they are flesh and their days will be 120 years." 6:4 The Nephilim were in the earth in those days – and also afterward – when the children of the 'elohim had sex with²⁸ the human daughters. And they bore children to them – these were the mighty ones from ancient times, the people of renown. 6:5 And Yahweh saw that the humans were very bad in the earth and all the inclinations of the thoughts of their heart were only bad every day. 6:6 And Yahweh regretted that he had made the humans in the earth and he was grieved to his heart. 6:7 And Yahweh said, "I will wipe out the humans, whom I separated, from on the face of the earth – from humans, to beasts, to creeping things, and to the birds of the sky, for I regret that I made them." 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.

(P) 6:9 Noah²⁹ was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generations. Noah walked with the 'elohim. 6:10 And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Yaphet. 6:11 And the earth was destroyed before the 'elohim and the earth was full of violence. 6:12 And 'elohim saw the earth and behold, it was destroyed, for all flesh destroyed its way on the earth. 6:13 And 'elohim said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before me for the earth is full of violence from their presence and behold, I am going to destroy them with the earth. 6:14 Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; make the ark with rooms, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 6:15 And this is how you are to make it: the ark's length – three hundred cubits, its width – fifty cubits, and its height – thirty cubits. 6:16 A skylight should be made for the ark. It should be finished to one cubit from the top. The door of the ark should be put on its side. You must make it with lower, second, and third decks. 6:17 And I, behold, I am about to bring the flood waters on the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under the sky. All that is in the earth will perish. 6:18 And I will make a covenant with you and you will go into the ark – you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 6:19 And from all living things, from all flesh, you shall bring two of everything into the ark in order to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. 6:20 From the bird according to its kind, and from the beast according to its kind, and from all the creeping things of the ground according to their kind – from everything, two will come to you to keep them alive. 6:21 And you, take for yourself from all food which is to be eaten and gather it to yourself and it will be as food for you and for them." 6:22 And Noah did according to all that 'elohim had commanded him; so he did.

(J) 7:1 And Yahweh said to Noah, "Go, you and all your household, into an ark, for I have seen you that you are righteous before me in this generation. 7:2 From all the ritually pure beasts you must take for yourself seven pairs – man and his woman. And from all the beasts that are not ritually pure, two – man and his woman. 7:3 Also, from the birds of the sky, seven pairs – male and female, in order to keep seed alive on the face of all the earth. 7:4 For in yet seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights and I will wipe out all the living creatures that I made on the face of the ground. 7:5 And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.³⁰ 7:7 And Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him went into the ark from the presence of the waters of the flood. And Yahweh shut him in.³¹

(P) 7:8 From the beasts that are ritually pure and from the beasts that are not ritually pure as well as from the birds and everything that creeps on the ground, 7:9 two of each went to Noah into the ark – male and female, as 'elohim had commanded Noah.

(J) 7:10 And it happened after seven days that the waters of the flood came on the earth.

(P) 7:11 In the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, in the second month, in the seventeenth day of the month – on that day all the springs of the great deep broke forth and the windows of the sky were opened.

(J) 7:12 And the rain came on the earth forty days and forty nights.

(P) 7:13 In this very day, Noah, Shem, Ham, and Yaphet (Noah's sons), Noah's wife, and his sons' three wives with them, went into the ark – 7:14 they and every living thing according to its kind, and the beast according to its kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind – every fowl, every winged thing. 7:15 And they came to Noah into the ark two by two from all flesh in which is the breath of life. 7:16 And those that came, male and female from all flesh, they came as 'elohim had commanded him.

(J) 7:17 And the flood continued forty days on the earth. And the waters increased and they lifted the ark and it rose up from the earth.

(P) 7:18 And the waters became powerful and increased very much upon the earth and the ark went on the face of the waters. 7:19 And the waters became more and still more powerful on the earth and they covered all the mountains – even those that are the highest under the entire sky. 7:20 Even fifteen cubits from the top the waters were powerful and covered the mountains. 7:21 Then all flesh that creeps on the earth perished – of the bird, of the beast, of the living thing, of every swarmer that swarms on the earth, and all the humans.

(J) 7:22 Everything that had the breath-wind of life in its nostrils from all that was in dry land died. 7:23 So he wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the ground from human to beast to creeping thing and to the bird of the sky; they were wiped out from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark were left.

(P) 7:24 The waters were powerful on the earth one hundred and fifty days. 8:1 And 'elohim remembered Noah, all the living things, and all the beasts that were with him in the ark. And the wind of 'elohim passed over the earth and the waters subsided. 8:2 And the springs of the deep and the windows of the sky were closed up,

(J) And the rain from the sky was restrained. 8:3 And the waters receded from on the earth; they went and receded.

(P) and the waters lessened at the end of the one hundred and fifty days. 8:4 And in the seventh month, in the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 8:5 And the waters continued to go and lessen until the tenth month. In the tenth month, in the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.

(J) 8:6 And it was at the end of forty days that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made

(P) 8:7 And he sent the raven and it went to and fro until the waters had dried up from on the earth.

(J) 8:8 and he sent the dove from him to see if the waters had diminished from on the face of the ground. 8:9 But the dove did not find a resting place for the sole of her foot so she returned to him into the ark for water was on the face of all the earth. And he sent out his hand from the ark and took her and brought her to himself. 8:10 And he waited still seven days; then he again sent the dove from the ark. 8:11 And the dove came to him at the time of the evening and behold, a fresh branch of an olive tree in her mouth. Then Noah knew that the waters had diminished from on the earth. 8:12 And he again waited another seven days and he sent the dove, but she did not return to him again.

(P) 8:13 And it happened in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, in the first day of the month that the waters began to dry up from on the earth.

(J) And Noah removed the cover of the ark and he looked and he saw that the face of the ground had dried up.

(P) 8:14 And in the second month, in the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. 8:15 Then 'elohim spoke to Noah, saying, 8:16 "Go out from the ark – you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. 8:17 And every living thing that is with you from all flesh – of the bird, of the beast, of every creeping thing that creeps on the earth – you must bring them out with you. And they will swarm in the earth and be fruitful and increase on the earth." 8:18 So Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him went out. 8:19 And every living thing, every creeping thing, every bird, everything that creeps on the earth; they came out from the ark according to their families.

(J) 8:20 And Noah built an altar for Yahweh and he took from all the ritually pure beasts and from all the ritually pure birds and caused ascent offerings to ascend in the altar. 8:21 And Yahweh smelled a soothing smell, and Yahweh said to his heart, "Never again will I diminish the ground because of the humans for the inclination of the heart of the humans is bad from their youth. And never again will I strike all life as I have done. 8:22 Again,

all the days of the earth,

seed and harvest, cold and heat,

summer and winter, day and night,

will not cease." – Genesis 6:1-8; 7:1-7, 10, 12, 17, 22-23; 8:2b-3a, 6, 8-12, 13b, 20-22

(P) 9:1 And 'elohim blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase and fill the earth. 9:2 And fear and dread of you will be on every living thing of the earth, on every bird of the sky, in all that creep on the ground, and in every fish of the sea. Into your hand they are given. 9:3 Every creeping thing that is alive, to you it will be for food just as green plants. I give for you everything. 9:4 But flesh in its life – its blood, you must not eat. 9:5 Furthermore, I will seek your blood belonging to your lives. From the hand of every living thing I will seek it. And from the hand of the humans, from the hand of each person's sibling, I will seek the life of the humans. 9:6 Whoever pours out human blood, by a human shall his blood be poured out, for in the image of 'elohim were the humans made. 9:7 And you, be fruitful and increase – swarm in the earth and increase in it. 9:8 And 'elohim said to Noah and his sons with him, saying, 9:9 "I, behold, I am establishing my covenant with you, with your seed after you, 9:10 with every living being that is with you of the birds, of the beasts, and of every living thing of the earth with you, from all that came out of the ark to all the living things of the earth. 9:11 I am establishing my covenant with you that I will never again cut off all flesh by the waters of the flood, nor will there again be a flood that destroys the earth." 9:12 And 'elohim said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I am making between you, me, and every living being that is with you for future generations. 9:13 I have set my bow in the cloud and it will be for a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 9:14 And when I make a cloud appear on the earth, the bow will be seen in the cloud. 9:15 And I will remember my covenant that is between me, you, and every living being of all flesh and the waters will not again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 9:16 And the bow will be in the cloud and I will see it to remember an enduring covenant between 'elohim and every living being of all flesh that is on the earth." 9:17 And 'elohim said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." Genesis 6:9-22; 7:8-9, 11, 13-16, 18-21, 24-8:2a, 3b-5, 7, 13a14-19; 9:1-17

As you can see, there are two discernible stories of Noah's flood contained within these chapters. The seamless flow of the content of each column when read independent of each other is no less significant here than in the stories of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 16-18. While both flood stories have the same overall plot – a great flood brought upon the earth to destroy all air-breathing life forms and the survival of that flood in an ark by one human family (Noah's) along with representatives of all air-breathing animals – there are also a number of differences. One difference that is commonly, though un-wittingly, noticed is the difference regarding how many ritually pure animals were brought into the ark. When reading Genesis 6-9 in its combined form, one gets a somewhat confused picture of this point. At first (6:19), Noah is told to bring "two of everything into the ark" "from all living things, from all flesh," which obviously includes ritually pure animals. But then, a few verses later (7:2), he is told to bring seven pairs of all the ritually pure beasts in contrast to the two of every ritually impure beast. Yet again, a few verses later (7:8-9, 15), when describing the animals boarding the ark it says "two by two from all flesh" went into the ark, even specifying that "from the beasts that are

ritually pure and from the beasts that are not ritually pure ... two of each went to Noah into the ark” But then, later (8:20), upon exiting the ark, Noah is described as offering sacrifices “from all the ritually pure beasts and from all the ritually pure birds” which would seem to imply that he brought more than “two of each” of the ritually pure into the ark, for sacrificing even one of every type of ritually pure animal would mean the end of that type of animal if only two were in existence. So, some verses in these chapters imply, and even state, that seven pairs of ritually pure animals were brought in the ark while other verses imply, and even state, that only two of every ritually pure animal were brought into the ark. Many notice this discrepancy, but are at a loss as to how to explain it. In light of what we have been learning, it should be apparent that this difference is simply a manifestation of the reality that we have, in these chapters, a combined form of two originally separate stories.

What is more is that this difference is not the only one. The J story refers to God consistently by means of the term Yahweh, whereas the P story refers to God as ‘elohim; in P, Noah is said to be 600 years old whereas in J, his age is not mentioned; J provides no details regarding the construction of the ark while P does; J mentions a window and a cover for the ark, both of which are absent from P’s description; the J story has everyone board the ark seven days before the flood begins while P has them all board the same day the flood begins; the flood lasts no more than 54 days in J when P has it lasting over a year; P describes the events as taking place on specific calendar dates while J gives no such description; in J, the flood is caused by rain while in P it is caused by the opening up of the springs of the deep and the windows of the sky (P doesn’t mention rain and J doesn’t mention the springs of the deep and the windows of the sky); in P, mountains play a significant role whereas in J mountains are not mentioned; P has Noah send out a raven once while J has him send out a dove multiple times; there is no animal sacrifice in the P story, but there is in the J story; the P story contains a grant to eat all life forms which is absent in J; the J story contains a promise for the continuity of seasons which is absent in P; there is no covenant made between Yahweh and Noah in J, but there is a covenant between ‘elohim and Noah, his family, and all life, in P; J has no “bow in the cloud” while it is present in the P story. These are some of the differences between our two stories (though there are more). Recognizing them should help us to see that they really are two different stories written by different individuals with different perspectives whose writings have been mosaically combined together.

Israel's Escape From the Egyptians

Exodus 13:21-14:31³²

J

E

P

(J) (³³ 5:2 And Pharaoh said, “Who is Yahweh that (E) (12:31 ... and he³⁵ said, “Get up! Go out from (P) (12:41 And it was at the end of the 430 years, I should listen to His voice to send out Israel? I do not the midst of my people, both you and the children of in that very day, that all of Yahweh’s hosts went out know Yahweh! Further, I will not send out Israel!” Israel ... from the land of Egypt....)

13:18b ³⁴But the children of Israel went out from Egypt prepared for battle.)

... 13:17 And it was, when Pharaoh let the people go, that ‘elohim did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines ... 13:18 But ‘elohim turned the people by way of the wilderness ...)

(J)³⁶ 13:21 And Yahweh went in front of them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to them so they might travel by day and by night. 13:22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

(P) 14:1 And Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, 14:2 "Speak to the children of Israel that they should³⁷ camp in the presence of Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the Sea – in the presence of Baal-zephon. You must camp facing it by the sea.

(E)³⁸ 14:3 And Pharaoh said of the children of Israel, "They are wandering aimlessly throughout the land! The wilderness has closed in on them!"

(P) 14:4 And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh and he will pursue them and I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through all his army and Egypt will know that I am Yahweh." And they did so.

(J) 14:5 And it was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled.

(E) And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people. And they said, "What is this that we have done, that we sent out Israel from serving us?!" 14:6 And he hitched his chariot and he took his people with him.

(J) 14:7 And he took six hundred chosen chariotry and all the chariotry of Egypt and officers over all of them.

(P) 14:8 And Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel

(J)³⁹ Now the children of Israel had gone out with a high hand 14:9 but the Egyptians pursued them and caught up to them camping by the sea,

(P) – every chariot horse of Pharaoh, his horsemen, and his army, to Pi-hahiroth, in the presence of Baal-zephon. 14:10 And Pharaoh came near.

(E) And the children of Israel raised their eyes and, behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them.

(J) and they were very afraid.

(P) And the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh.

(E) 14:11 And they said to Moses, "Were there no graves in Egypt?! None?! – that you took us out to die in the wilderness? What is this that you've done to us – to bring us out from Egypt? 14:12 Isn't this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone!' and 'We will serve Egypt'? For it is better for us to serve Egypt than for us to die in the wilderness!"

(J) 14:13 And Moses said, (E)[40](#) 14:13 And Moses said to the people,

(J) "Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the deliverance of Yahweh that he will do for you today, for

(E) "The Egyptians, whom you see today, you will never see them again – ever!

(J) 14:14 Yahweh will fight for you."

(E)[41](#) And you will be quiet!"

(P) 14:15 And Yahweh said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the children of Israel that they should move! 14:16 And you, [42](#) stretch out your hand over the sea and split it apart! And the children of Israel will go through the middle of the sea on dry ground. 14:17 And I, behold, I will harden the heart of Pharaoh and the heart of Egypt and they will come after them and I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through all his army, through his chariotry and through his horsemen. 14:18 And Egypt will know that I am Yahweh when I am glorified through Pharaoh, through his chariotry, and through his horsemen."

(E) 14:19 And the messenger of the 'elohim, who went in front of the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them

(J) And the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and stood behind them, 14:20 going between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. Then it became dark, and still darker, but light was given to the night and all that night the one did not come near the other.

(P) 14:21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea

(J) And Yahweh drove back the sea with a strong east wind all through the night and he made the sea into dry ground.

(P) and the waters were split. 14:22 And the children of Israel went into the middle of the sea on dry ground and the waters were for them a wall on their right and on their left. 14:23 And the Egyptians pursued them and went after them – every horse of Pharaoh, his chariotry, and his horsemen, into the midst of the sea.

(J) 14:24 And it happened in the morning watch

(P) 43 And Yahweh, who was in a pillar of fire and cloud, looked down on the Egyptian camp

(J) that he threw the camp of Egypt into confusion.

(E) 14:25 and he bound their chariots' wheels so that they drove with difficulty.

(J) And the Egyptians said, "I must flee from the presence of Israel, for Yahweh is fighting for them against Egypt!"

(P) 14:26 and Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea and the waters will return upon the Egyptians, on their chariotry, and on their horsemen." 14:27 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea

(J) And the sea went back to its regular flow as it turned toward morning. And the Egyptians fled from meeting it, but Yahweh tossed the Egyptians into the sea.

(P) 14:28 and the waters went back and covered the chariotry and the horsemen – all of the army of Pharaoh who were coming after them in the sea. None of them survived, not even one. 14:29 But the children of Israel walked on dry ground through the middle of the sea and the waters were for them a wall on their right and on their left. – Exodus 12:41; 14:1-2, 4, 8a, 9b-10a, d, 15-18, 21a, c-23, 24b, 26-27a, 28-29

(J) 14:30 And in that day, Yahweh delivered Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. And Israel saw the Egypt-ians dead on the shore of the sea

(E) 14:31 And Israel saw the great hand that Yahweh used against the Egyptians and the people feared Yahweh. – Exodus 12:31; 13:17-18; 14:3, 5b-6, 10b, 11-13a, c, 14b, 19a, 25a, 31a

(J) and they trusted in Yahweh and in Moses his servant. – Exodus 5:2; 13:18b, 21-22; 14:5a, 7, 8b-9a, 10c, 13a-b, 14a, 19b-20, 21b, 24a, c, 25b, 27b, 30, 31b

As you may have noticed, the combined narrative has some major problems. On one hand, Israel is said to have fled Egypt in defiance (14:5a, 8b), but on the other hand, they are said to have left with Pharaoh's permission (12:31; 13:17). Some verses tell us that the Egyptians, who were attempting to flee from the Israelites, were tossed by Yahweh into the sea after it had returned to its regular state (14:25b, 27b), but other verses say that they were pursuing Israel through a water-walled path in the middle of the sea which then closed in on them, covering them with water (14:22-23, 24b, 26-27a, 28). Furthermore, if the Egyptian forces all died in the middle of the sea by water collapsing upon them as they traversed the dried up seabed, as it says in one verse (14:28), how could Israel have seen them dead on the seashore, as is described by another verse (14:30)?

It would be unreasonable to suppose that a story which is self-conflicted in such a way, and to such an extent, came from the hand of a single author. Rather, what we have is a combination of originally separate stories by different authors. One story had Israel defiantly flee Egypt, while another had them leave with Pharaoh's permission. One story said the Egyptians fled from the Israelites at the sea, while another said they pursued the Israelites into the sea. One story said Yahweh tossed the Egyptians into the already-normalized sea, while the other said the sea collapsed upon them while they were passing through its dry path. There, in the midst of the sea, one story had them die, while the other had them seen dead on the seashore. Moreover, as one can see from the above columns of text, there are not two, but three discernible stories in this passage and they are all quite unique.

Did you notice that P's story is the only one with walls of water and a divided sea? Did you notice that E doesn't have a sea-crossing at all? In J, the Egyptians stop pursuing Israel because they are thrown into confusion and become afraid of Yahweh, while E's Egyptians fail in their pursuit because a "messenger (typically translated 'angel') of 'elohim'" messes with their chariot wheels and, in P, their pursuit ends only in the sea. J's Israelites fear the oncoming Egyptians and are comforted and encouraged by Moses while E's Israelites complain of the oncoming Egyptians and Moses rebukes them. In P, Yahweh hardens Pharaoh's heart; in E, Pharaoh changes his own heart; and in J, Pharaoh is evidently heartless. J's story takes place in stages of transition from daytime to nighttime and then to morning; E implies that what it describes took place during the day since it repeatedly mentions Israel seeing things, and P doesn't give any indication of the time of day. If you keep reading and rereading the passage, you are sure to find more differences between the sources; each indicating, with the rest, that there are indeed three originally separate stories, with different authors, combined together in this passage.

Example after example could be given, but the point should already be clear – The Torah has no single author! The Torah is, in essence, a mosaic of originally separate literary works by different authors with varying perspectives whose works, having been divided up into smaller parts, were artistically arranged into their present form.

If you want to learn more about the sources of the Torah as well as the history of, and evidence for, the Documentary Hypothesis, there are two books you should really get – both written by Richard Elliott Friedman (though generally representing the consensus among scholars). The first is *Who Wrote the Bible?*, which lucidly explains the hypothesis and the history of scholarship in formulating it. The second is *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, which is predominantly a translation of the Torah with the sources distinguished by means of color-coding and font variations, but there is also a 31-page introduction which contains an information-packed, and incredibly concise, tabulation of the evidence.

A Final Thought

Learning that Moses did not write the Torah can be quite a trying experience for a lot of people – especially those whose faith has been, to a large degree, built upon the belief in the Torah's Mosaic authorship. But, as we have seen, the facts simply do not support this authorial claim, nay, they demonstrate conclusively that the

claim is false.

O facts, how obstinate are your ways?

– giving no respect to preference or sect,

who shuns you is left in a daze!

Or, as John Adams put it,

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence...”⁴⁴

So then, should we not alter our beliefs to match the facts rather than denying the facts to uphold our beliefs? Any position that requires the latter is a position not worth keeping. I think we all recognize that the only right thing to do when confronted with an evident truth is to accept it simply because it is true and let the chips fall where they may. In the case of the M/ mosaic Torah, there are chips, and they do fall, but letting them do so is certainly better than pretending we don't know what we do and we do know what we don't.

¹*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, art. *Chaldea* – C. *Chaldean History*

²The exact starting and ending points of some of these quotes are debated. For example, one could argue that the first document in this list starts with Ex. 20:22 rather than 21:2. In any case, the possibilities are not far off from each other.

³This is based on the tradition that the Septuagint was produced by a group of 70 (or 72) translators.

⁴See *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*, pp. 333-362 by Emanuel Tov.

⁵DG for David and Goliath

⁶More precisely, “representatives of these manuscripts” (it is not possible to include all the manuscripts). For the LXX, we here use the Lexham English Septuagint which is based on *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint* – a critical edition put together by Henry Barclay Swete which makes use of many LXX manuscripts. For the MT, we here use the Lexham English Bible which bases its Old Testament on *The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* which is an edition of the Leningrad Codex with critical notes marking different readings from other manuscripts.

⁷There are instances in which the MT and LXX differ in passages which they share, the more significant of which we have pointed out in the footnotes. We have likewise noted instances where the MT editor appears to have altered DG1 and DG2.

⁸The MT says, “which belongs to Judah” instead of “of Edom.”

⁹The MT adds, “of Elah” in order to tie DG1 with DG2 since DG2 later specifies this event to take place “in the

valley of Elah" (17:19). This is a clear example of the editorial work of the MT compiler.

10The words "back and forth from Saul" seem to have been added by the editor of the MT in an attempt to harmonize DG1 with DG2. The conflict is that DG1 has already said that David played music for Saul and had been hired as an armor-bearer (16:21, 23) whereas DG2 still has him as shepherding his father's flocks. Furthermore, "back and forth from Saul" cannot be native to DG2 since, in that text, David and Saul have not yet met (that doesn't happen till 17:55-58).

11This verse seems to be an addition by the editor of the MT in an attempt to tie DG1 and DG2 together. The verse refers to a circumstance already brought to view in DG1, but it is out of place in DG2 since the battle with the Philistines and Goliath himself are only introduced in 17:19, 23.

12Notice that Goliath here is introduced as though for the first time. DG1 has already done this in 17:4.

13The LEB has a footnote here reading, "Literally, 'according to these words.'" If this phrase refers to Goliath's words in 17:8-10, then it must be considered an editorial addition, but the literal wording of the phrase does not require that conclusion. It is also possible that the phrase originally referred to words quoted immediately thereafter but which have been lost in the transmission of the text.

14Or, *meanwhile* as in the NIV

15This sentence is dropped out of the MT.

16Literally, *and*

17This appears to be the first meeting of Saul and David in DG2, whereas they were already well acquainted in DG1.

18This verse is perhaps better translated, "And this [the events of vss. 1-5] happened at their coming back when David returned from striking down the Philistine."

19women in MT

20Saul in MT

21The words "the lyre" are not in the Hebrew text.

22This period makes sense when translating the MT, but it should be left out when translating or reading DG2.

23The MT editor made this sentence to be a part of Saul's words from the previous verse and changed it to read, "and the hand of the Philistines may be against him" thus tying this passage to a passage in DG2 (18:17). The MT editor also adds the words, "So Saul said to David, 'You now have a second chance to become my son-in-law.'" These words are an attempt on the part of the editor to tie together DG2, wherein Merab was to

be given to David as his wife, with DG1, in which Michal is said to be given to David as his wife.

[24](#)The MT says, “Michal the daughter of Saul” instead of “all Israel.”

[25](#)Literally, *and*

[26](#)It must be kept in mind that all of the sources comfortably use both Yahweh and variations of ‘El to refer to God; it is only that J understands the name Yahweh to be known and used by humans prior to Moses’ lifetime whereas E and P understand the name Yahweh to only be revealed to humans during Moses’ lifetime. Because of this, E and P use “Yahweh” far less frequently in the parts of their writings which tell of events prior to the revelation of the name Yahweh to Moses in Exodus 3 (E) and 6 (P), respectively.

[27](#)‘Elohim is a form of the word ‘el which has the feminine suffix “oh” along with the masculine plural ending “im.” It often refers collectively to a group, or groups, of deities including both gods and goddesses.

[28](#)The Hebrew phrase would be more literally translated as “went into” and is a common idiom for sex.

[29](#)The Torah, in its combined form, has the phrase “these are the family records of Noah” at the beginning of verse 9, but it appears to be an editorial insertion.

[30](#)We have not included verse 6 here since it seems to have been inserted by the editor from a source other than J and P.

[31](#)“And Yahweh shut him in” is at the end of verse 16 in the Torah as we now have it. Most scholars agree that it is presently out of place, perhaps being moved in the editorial process in order to tie the sources together. If that was the editor’s intention (as would be natural), and since this J clause currently stands at the end of P’s account of the boarding on the ark, it stands to reason that the clause originally stood at the end of J’s account of the boarding of the ark. Thus, we have placed it here at the end of verse 7.

[32](#)While virtually all experts agree that this passage is a combination of J, E, and P, there is some debate over the attribution of certain phrases to one source or another. Thus, we have included explanations for some of the attributions in the footnotes.

[33](#)The verses here in () at the beginning of each column have been included to give some of the preceding context for each source.

[34](#)Most scholars attribute 13:18b to E, presumably because the surrounding verses are E. This said, E is the least likely to describe Israel exiting Egypt “prepared for battle” since it is E which says they left with Pharaoh’s permission. J is a better fit since it has Israel *flee* Egypt (14:5a), hence their need to be “prepared for battle.” Additionally, 13:18b fills a substantial gap in J between 5:2 and 13:21.

[35](#)Pharaoh, in context

[36](#)J, E, and P all speak of a pillar, though their descriptions of it differ. E has only a pillar of cloud, with no fire (e.g. Ex. 33:9-10). P’s pillar is of both cloud and fire simultaneously (e.g. Ex. 24:15-18). J has “a pillar of cloud” *and* “a pillar of fire” – as though distinct (e.g. Num. 14:14). This, along with linguistic connections to Num. 14:14, shows Ex. 13:21-22 to belong to J.

[37](#)The words “turn back and” have been left out since they are most likely an editorial insertion to make this P passage flow better with 13:20 (R).

[38](#)All the references to “the wilderness” in this passage are E (13:18a; 14:11-12).

[39](#)Leaving with a “high hand” (or, *defiantly*) fits only J (13:18b; 14:5a). J later assumes the story’s setting at the sea to be already known (14:21b) and this is the only candidate for its first mention in J. That 14:8b-9a is not P is strengthened by the resultant sentence structure of 14:8a flowing straight into 14:9b since it is repeated in 14:23 (P).

[40](#)Since both J and E contain words evidently spoken by Moses to the people in what follows, they both must have said something like, “And Moses said to the people”

[41](#)This only makes sense as a reply to Israel’s complaint in 14:11-12 (E).

[42](#)We have left out the words, “raise your rod and.” As William Propp has noted (*Exodus 1-18*, p. 480), they do not belong to P for at least two reasons: (1) P consistently has Aaron’s rod as the instrument of God’s deeds (7:9-12, 19; 8:1-2, 12-13), and (2) throughout the rest of this passage, Moses uses his hand alone, not his rod (14:21, 26, 27). R evidently added this clause in order to create continuity with E since E regularly has Moses’ rod being used (4:24, 17, 20; 7:15, 17, 20; 9:23; 10:13; 17:5-6, 9).

[43](#)That the pillar here is being introduced for the first time is indicated by the indefinite “a pillar” instead of the definite “*the* [aforementioned] pillar.” See also fn. 36.

[44](#)*Adams’ Argument for the Defense: 3-4 December 1770*