CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES

THESIS TITLE  Ancient Hebrew Thought and Culture: Its Impact Upon the Multiple Redactor Hypothesis of the Pentateuch Narratives

AUTHOR:  David Parsons

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: 05-03-2005

THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES

Professor Oliver Berghof
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR (TYPED)

[Signature]  5/3/05

[Date]

Professor Susie Lao Cassel
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER (TYPED)

[Signature]  5/3/05

[Date]

Rabbi Richard Shapiro
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER (TYPED)

[Signature]  5/3/05

[Date]
Ancient Hebrew Thought and Culture: Its Impact Upon the Multiple Redactor Hypothesis of the Pentateuch Narratives

MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literature and Writing Studies

by David Parsons

May 2005
Abstract: Ancient Hebrew Thought and Culture: Its Impact Upon the Multiple Redactor Hypothesis of the Pentateuch Narratives

While many fundamentalist Christians and conservative Jews still generally accept that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, the prevailing view in the field of Biblical scholarship and religious studies for the past three to four hundred years has been that Moses did not write these books. The consensus of this scholarship is that the Pentateuch is a compilation of intricately woven and elaborately layered texts collected by numerous editors over an extended period of time involving hundreds of years.

Although numerous elaborate theories as to the authorship of the Pentateuch have been promulgated over the centuries, the most generally accepted theory, known as the Documentary Hypothesis, (also called the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis) holds that the Pentateuch is a composite work containing at least four major documentary sources or strands that were written over a lengthy period of time by multiple editors (or “redactors” as scholars prefer to call them). The four strands have been assigned the letters J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly), each representing a different document or source that was woven into the fabric of the Biblical narratives.

Ongoing research continues to tackle the thorny issues involving the disparate and confusing layering of the narrative versions contained in the Pentateuch. However, as problematic as it is to understand the codification process of the Pentateuch narratives, it is possible to promote the notion that these narratives, despite being written in a sequence that suggests to the contemporary reader a chronological progression, do not occur chronologically, because the ancient Hebrew redactors had a world view that differed significantly from that of a contemporary reader. According to this interpretation, a single editor of the Pentateuch could have cut and spliced oral narrative details to present a multifaceted truth concept by setting in sequence two different written versions that bring into focus two different dimensions of the issue or event being discussed. Additionally, the linguistic quandaries, reiterations, discrepancies, stylistic disparities and unexpected gyrations in theological viewpoint that characterize the Pentateuch narratives would not create misunderstandings for the typical editor and reader of the second millennium B.C., since apparently conflicting versions of the same event set side by side, far from disturbing their original audience, would have been perfectly justified in a form of logic that many contemporary readers no longer subscribe to. These narratives incorporate multiple facets of “truth” in a story that although disjointed logically, chronologically and substantively (at least from the perspective of many readers), would make sense to the ancient Hebrew listener and reader.

Thus, contemporizing the ancient Pentateuch texts by squeezing them into a mold that advocates contemporary methods of analysis, which in turn promote notions of unity and logical coherence (as determined by Western societal and literary norms) does not accept these texts for what they are: a purposeful patchwork of texts that have their own definition of literary unity and comprehensiveness that is in agreement with the ancient Hebrew world view and which may or may not encompass our own contemporary explanatory systems.

David Parsons
CSUSM, May 2005

Keywords: narrative logic, multiple facets of truth, Pentateuch narratives, Documentary Hypothesis, Hebrew thought, Hebrew culture, time
Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
Mechanical and Logistical Reasons for Narrative Duplication .............................................................. 7
Ancient Hebrew Thinking and Its Non-chronological View Of Time .......................................................... 10
Creation Narrative Of Genesis: Multiple Facets Of God In a Non-sequential Fashion.............................. 22
The Ancient Hebrew Peculat For A Double Dialectic .......... 28
Flood Narrative of Genesis Chapter 7: Two Perspectives ......................................................................... 32
Didacticism, Not Contradiction, In the Narrative Of Joseph Being Sold Into Slavery .............................. 38
Discovering Hidden Money Twice: An Entangling, Yet Instructive Narrative ........................................ 46
The Problematic Identity of the Single Redactor .......... 51
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 56
Endnotes .......................................................................................................................................... 60
Works Cited..................................................................................................................................... 66
While many fundamentalist Christians and conservative Jews still generally accept that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, the prevailing view in the field of Biblical scholarship and religious studies for the past three to four hundred years has been that Moses did not write these books. During the seventeenth century, the philosophers Hobbes and Spinoza wrote treatments that synthesized the writings of medieval commentators who were the first to raise doubts about the authenticity of the Pentateuch because of its many textual anachronisms and conflicts. Later, scholars (mainly from Scandinavia) continued to meticulously examine Genesis through Deuteronomy through a critical process (now called “Higher Criticism”) that focused on the Pentateuch’s linguistic problems, repetitions, duplications, discontinuities, inconsistencies of narrative data, stylistic differences and abrupt swings in theological outlook (Anchor 6: 618). The consensus of this highly complex scholarship is that the Pentateuch is a compilation of intricately woven and elaborately layered texts collected by numerous editors.
over an extended period of time involving hundreds of years.

Although numerous elaborate\textsuperscript{1} theories as to the authorship of the Pentateuch have been promulgated over the centuries, the most generally accepted theory, known as the Documentary Hypothesis, (also called the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis after the two nineteenth-century German scholars who most vigorously presented evidence for it) holds that the Pentateuch is a composite work containing at least four major documentary sources or strands that were written over a lengthy period of time by multiple editors (or "redactors" as scholars prefer to call them). The four strands have been assigned the letters J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly), each representing a different document or source that was woven into the fabric of the Biblical narratives (Harris 41-43).

The large volume of impressive and exhaustive research that supports the hypothesis of multiple redactors is widely accepted by most Bible scholars and is almost considered sacrosanct by some of them. Yet, it is important to remember that not all scholars
subscribe to this hypothesis. Professor Kaufmann (a leading twentieth century Hebrew scholar from Israel) reminds readers that "the evidence and the arguments supporting [the Graf-Wellhausen theory] have been called into question and, to some extent, even rejected" (Kaufmann 1). He further states that the critique of the Graf-Wellhausen theory, which began around the turn of the twentieth century, "has not been consistently carried through to its end" (1). For example, the Graf-Wellhausen theory gives no credence to the influence that the Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian cultures had on the ancient Hebrews, since Israel's culture (according to Graf-Wellhausen) was considered a direct and exclusive outgrowth of primitive Bedouin origins (Kaufmann 205). Recent archaeological findings now show that there was substantial cross-cultural influence between Israel and the empires that surrounded them. This finding alone suggests that some of the underpinnings of the Documentary Hypothesis need to be reevaluated, since outside cultural influences could have substantially impacted how ancient Hebrew literature was written and perceived by readers.
Professors Campbell and O’Brien, in their text *Sources of the Pentateuch*, also recognize that there are new ways of analyzing features of the Pentateuch "that would once have been exploited as evidence for multiple sources and authorship, but now may be accounted for on grounds of literary style, emphasis and sensitivity"(x). For example, the last couple of decades attention has been drawn to the way "repetition and reduplication function as integral parts of the Old Testament to recapitulate key elements of a story at strategic points or to produce a desired literary effect, such as creating tension by momentarily slowing the pace of a story (14). Because much of the evidence for source criticism was rooted in the observation of such repetitions, one outcome of this literary analysis has been the assertion that fundamental arguments for source criticism was baseless.

Obviously the Documentary Hypothesis, which, as Professor Kaufman observed, was once touted as "a solid foundation upon which to build [a] house of biblical criticism" (1) is still being heavily scrutinized. More and more alterations are continually added to this
hypothesis as brought about by advancements in literary theory, archeology and linguistic studies.

Ongoing research continues to tackle the thorny issues involving the disparate and confusing layering of the narrative versions contained in the Pentateuch. However, as problematic as it is to understand the codification process of the Pentateuch narratives, it is possible to promote the notion that these narratives, despite being written in a sequence that suggests to the contemporary reader a chronological progression, do not occur chronologically, because the ancient Hebrew redactors had a world view that differed significantly from that of a contemporary reader. According to this interpretation, a single editor of the Pentateuch could have cut and spliced oral narrative details to present a multifaceted truth concept by setting in sequence two different written versions that bring into focus two different dimensions of the issue or event being discussed. Additionally, the linguistic quandaries, reiterations, discrepancies, stylistic disparities and unexpected gyrations in theological viewpoint that characterize the Pentateuch narratives would not create
misunderstandings for the typical editor and reader of the second millennium B.C., since apparently conflicting versions of the same event set side by side, far from disturbing their original audience, would have been perfectly justified in a form of logic that many contemporary readers no longer subscribe to. These narratives incorporate multiple facets of "truth" in a story\(^3\) that although disjointed logically, chronologically and substantively (at least from the perspective of many readers), would make sense to the ancient Hebrew listener and reader. Thus, contemporizing the ancient Pentateuch texts by squeezing them into a mold that advocates contemporary methods of analysis, which in turn promote notions of unity and logical coherence (as determined by Western societal and literary norms) does not accept these texts for what they are: a purposeful patchwork of texts that have their own definition of literary unity and comprehensiveness that is in agreement with the ancient Hebrew world view and which may or may not encompass our own contemporary explanatory systems.
Before embarking on an analysis of the specific narratives that scholars frequently highlight as instances of multiple redactions, it is imperative to comment on certain mechanical and logistical circumstances that would create an environment in which duplications and replications of oral narratives would come to be expected by the ancient Hebrew people.

Mechanical and Logistical Reasons for Narrative Duplication

The Pentateuch narratives were first and foremost part of a deeply entrenched and long standing oral tradition (Alter, *Biblical Narrative* 90) that was verbally repeated over and over again in multiple venues and in multiple formats, centuries before being codified (around the tenth century B.C.) as part of a written text. In fact, so important was it for the Israelites to gather regularly for spiritual instruction, which included hearing such narratives, that the Pentateuch uses a variety of different words or phrases for "assembling together" (edhah, meaning to "meet by appointment," mohedh, meaning "to meet at an appointed place," migra, meaning a "holy convention" and qahal,
meaning "to assemble together") (Strong 85). For example, Israel's older men are commanded to "come together" to receive religious instruction and to observe signs (Ex. 4:29-31); later all the Israelites are instructed "to assemble" at the base of Mount Sinai to experience the spectacle of the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19:10-19). Later, as the Israelites wander in the Wilderness for 40 years, they are ordered "to convene" for assembly when a single silver trumpet is blown (Ex. 29:42). After four decades of wandering, the Israelites are instructed "to assemble" regularly at the temple in Jerusalem, gathering there for the three major annual festivals (Ex. 34:23).

The mere logistical challenge of repeating these instructional narratives over and over again in assemblies held outside without the aid of modern amplification devices would be enormous. Some scholars have speculated that the Israelites, who now would number many thousands⁴ during the years 1300 to 1200 B.C. (Anchor 4:909), would have had to use numerous humans, like an auditory wave, to repeat these stories from the front of the assembly (where Moses and other leaders
spoke) to the rear of the assembly. These narratives would typically have been read out from a scroll to some sort of assembled audience (many of whom would presumably not have been literate) rather than passed around to be read in our sense. The unrolling scroll, then, was in one respect like the unrolling spool of a film projector, for time and the sequence of events presented in it could not ordinarily be halted or altered, and the only convenient way of fixing a particular action or statement for special inspection was by repeating it (Alter 90).

Common sense would dictate that some of the Israelites would be somewhere in the middle between these human message repeaters and would hear the same phrase repeated at least two different times. This time-honored way of story telling through habitual oral reiterations became a "prescribed mode of narration in which frequent verbatim repetition was expected" (Alter 91). The authors of the biblical narrative did soon discover that the "slightest strategic variations in the
pattern of repetitions could serve the purpose of commentary, analysis, foreshadowing, thematic assertion, with a wonderful combination of subtle understatement and dramatic force " (91). With the foregoing in mind, it is easy to see how the Israelites would come to expect that their highly treasured narratives would be repeated more than once. Thus, even though it is distressing for a contemporary reader to read passages that are repetitive and that engender a disconcerting chronological time gap, it is crucial to remember that such duplication of thought and words may not have troubled the original audience and would be perfectly justified by the physical exigencies of human re-amplification of other human voices.

But it is not just for mechanical reasons that the Pentateuch is replete with duplicative and non-sequential narratives; the culture and mind-set of the ancient Hebrews also influenced their literature.

Ancient Hebrew Thinking and Its Non-chronological View Of Time

Most Westerners would believe that telling (or retelling) a story that chronicles something as
important as the explanation of a culture's origin in a way that sets the narrative events outside a chronological time sequence is so far from being the norm that we have difficulty even contemplating this concept. This is because Western cultures view time as progressing in a linear fashion; but this is not the only possible way to view time.

Professor Boman explains the western way of analyzing the passage of time, commonly referred to as rectilinear time:

Our minds represent time as a straight line upon which we stand with our gaze directed forward; before us we have the future and behind us the past. On this line we can unequivocally define all tenses by means of points. The present is the point on which we are standing, the future is found at some point in front of us, and in between lies the perfect, still farther back the imperfect, and farther yet the pluperfect (Boman 124).

Like other Western languages the Greek language has "corresponding verb-forms which can be delineated in
quite similar manner on a straight time-line; therefore the popular time conception of the Greeks is as rectilinear as our own" (125).

Aristotle said that time must be represented by the "image of a line, either a circular line to indicate objective, physical, astronomical measurable time, or a straight line as demanded by the grammatical time of past, present and future" (Boman 126). These two ancient Greek ways of looking at time do not "cancel each other out" (126), but rather generate a metaphor of a line by which the Western culture views time, be it elliptical or straight.

This linear notion of time has become so ingrained in our Western psyche that we speak of "a space of time, a point of time, a time span, a segment of time" (Boman 126) or other similar phrases such as "the past lies behind us and the future before us" (126). For those raised in the Western world, this philosophical way of viewing their lives and their world on a single line of trajectory has become so engrained that they hardly ever question the "logic" of it.
On the other hand, the ancient Semitic languages and their accompanying world-views do not place a person on an imaginary time line, since ancient Semitic peoples "proceed from the time-rhythm of their own [lives]; relative time is then reckoned from the standpoint of the person speaking" (Boman 145). The ancient Hebrews therefore viewed time as rhythmically alternating, as opposed to rectilinear (124,125). For the Hebrews, relative times, present, past, and future, "become strictly relative because every connection with space (time-point, time-line, extent of time) is suppressed, and every movement of time is defined with the aid" (146) of their own life movement. The ancient Hebrews became so accommodated to "another series of occurrences that they would become contemporaneous with it and live within it" (146). From their standpoint as interlocutors, there would only be "two kinds of actions, those which are complete and those which are not" (146).

Whether the philosophical outlook of the ancient Hebrews most influenced their linguistic development or vice versa, or whether there was a combination of mutual influences is not known. What is known is that the
Hebrew language developed only two verb tenses: complete and incomplete. Thus, in Hebrew the condition of the action being complete or incomplete is the important point, rather than the time involved. Therefore, the Hebrew complete verb form defines the action from the viewpoint or intuition of an experiencing person, but past (as used in Western languages) defines it with reference to an impersonal, objective point on the time-line (146). Simply put, the Western languages developed "definite verb-forms which could express the distinction between past, present and future; Hebrew did not" (147).

Since the Greeks view time as unfolding objectively, without influence from human events, as it moves along a linear or spherical line, it is only reasonable that they would apportion time neatly and "logically" into seconds, minutes and hours. The Hebrew perception of time, on the other hand, does not date events by placing them in secure niches of time (Chase 34). This is not to say that the Hebrews did not note the passage of time, they just referenced it in general, somewhat vague terms. For example, the Pentateuch contains many generic time markers: "breezy part of the
day” (Genesis 3:8), “in the heat of the day” (Genesis 18:1), “when women go out to draw water” (Genesis 24:11), “noon” (Genesis 43:16), “when the sun is down” (Leviticus 22:7), and “noonday” (Deuteronomy 28:29). Thus the Hebrews noted the different “times” during the day, but simply referenced them in nonspecific terms.

Interestingly, the ancient Hebrew language has no word for hour, and Bible writers who speak and write about the passage of time have no idea of such a period of time. It is true that the King James Bible does use the word sha’ah (sometimes translated as hour) five times in Daniel (3:6, 15; 4:19,33; 5:5), but this word is from a Hebrew root term that means, literally, “a look or a glance and may be properly translated a moment” (Aid to Bible Understanding 797). The only references in the OT to a time-telling device occurs in 2 Kings chapter 20 and Isaiah chapter 38, where the sundial is ascribed to King Ahaz; but the word as translated is still questioned by scholars and may mean something entirely different, such as the shadow of an object on the steps that came to be used to determine the time of day (Chase 34). This lack of reference to
specific small increments of time is in striking contrast with the New Testament, which is replete with references to the word hour, as was customary for that time period due to the influence of the Roman calendar (Chase 33).

As different as the ancient Hebrew notion of time is to Westerners, it is interesting to realize that other civilizations across time have also viewed time in a similar way. Further scrutiny in this regard will help to clarify this not so unique way of analyzing time. In the early twentieth century, linguists Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf pioneered groundbreaking work (previously known as the "Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis," but now known as the theory of "Linguistic Relativism" or "Ethno-Lingual Relativity") in the study of Native American languages and how their worldview was impacted by the structure of their languages, most notably their different way of viewing time and comparing it with the "Standard Average European" (SAE) notion of time. For example, SAE languages apply plurality and cardinal numbers to both spatial and temporal entities. "We say ten days and ten
men. Yet physically they are quite different. It is possible to place ten men in an objective group, but not ten days or ten steps forward. Physically, such events are cyclical rather than spatial, but our language predisposes us to lace them in an imaginary mental group” (Stewart 471). Furthermore, in the Hopi language, one would not say they stayed ten days, because time is expressed by adverbs rather than by count nouns; instead, one would say they left after the tenth day. “Ten days is not viewed as a collection of different days but as successive appearances of the same day” (472). It is for this reason, among others, that Professor Stewart asserts that our Western attitudes toward time are “reinforced by our tense system, in which past, present and future are obligatory categories [...that force us] to think of ourselves as on a point, [...] moving on the line of time, which extends indefinitely into the past and future” (Stewart 472).

Additionally, the Hopi, like the ancient Hebrews, do not have a concept of time as linear progression and are unconcerned with exact dates and records, which are so important in Western society. They view whatever has
happened as still continuing to exist, but in an altered form; they do not record the present, but treat it as "preparing" (472), not totally unlike the ancient Hebrews.

The Hebrew thought pattern that views "time of an action" as of little importance (Yates 129) is, of course, in stark contrast to the "Indo-Germanic thinker [who] has an overemphasized estimation of time" (129). Thus, to the Hebrew mind and imagination the action in the "past" is never truly completed, but still lives on in the present.

Like the ancient Greeks and even modern Westerners, the ancient Hebrews determined the passing of time with the aid of the sun, moon and the stars. These expressions were based on celestial phenomena, yet there was a crucial difference in how they viewed these celestial phenomena. The Greeks, "like other Indo-Europeans" (Boman 130), observed that the sun, moon and stars were spherical in form and were therefore labeling them heavenly bodies. "The Greeks first consider the form of the heavenly bodies; they observe where they are in the heavens and in that way they determine time"
In other words, the shape or form\(^5\) of the planetary bodies and their mutual interaction and movement governed the determination of time for the Greeks. The most important heavenly body was the sun, and complex celebrations became established to mark the yearly equinoxes as well as the longest and shortest days of the year.

Contrary to the Greek view of the heavenly bodies, the ancient Hebrews did not even call the planets and moons heavenly bodies, but rather called them lamps (Gen. 1:14) or lights (Ps. 136:7), as both names refer to their function; after all, lamps and lights help people to see as well as to warm them. The function of the sun is to be a provider of light and warmth during the day and the function of the moon and celestial luminaries is to provide light during the night (Gen. 1:16). Thus, day and night are determined by the illumination (i.e. their function) of the heavenly bodies, not by the movement of the heavenly bodies.\(^6\) Again, the Hebrews focus is on the role of the celestial phenomena in generating light and heat, not upon their ability to help humans track the passage of time, as is customary
in Western belief systems.

Since the early Hebrews viewed the movements of the moon and sun as a time-rhythm, as opposed to a time-cycle, as the Greeks did, the Hebrews predictably oriented themselves temporally, not toward the circular movement of the sun, but "toward the regular change of the moon's phases and toward the rhythmic alternation of light and darkness, warmth and cold" (Boman 134). In other words, life for the Hebrews ran on a rhythmic alternation or a "beginning, continuation, and a return to the beginning. Lines and forms play no role for them, hence not even the circular line" (134). For the ancient Hebrews then, reality was the functional aspects of the heat and light emanating from the rhythms of the celestial bodies (93, 134).

Hebrew time reality, based upon the consistency and constancy of rhythm, is found throughout the OT. For example, the accounts in Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 remind the reader of the Hebrew period of a day and night as a rhythm; Job 1:21 also reminds the reader of the rhythm of the human life cycle. Within this predictable rhythmic cycle the ancient Hebrew mind
created a time concept that fixes itself to the peculiarity of the content or events of time, without which time would be quite impossible. The quantity of duration of time—the Greek view—completely recedes behind the characteristic feature (i.e. historical events and rhythms) that enters with time or advances in it.

How the Greeks and ancient Hebrews viewed time differently can be illustrated by comparing the account in Joshua chapter 10, when Joshua commands the sun to stand still so the Israelites can continue battling the five kings of the Amorites, with the instance in Homer’s Iliad (ii, 412-414) when Agamemnon prays that Zeus not let the sun sink into the sea before the Achaeans can achieve victory. In the Biblical account, the focus is on the function of the sun as far as its ability to illuminate the battlefield, so the slaughter of the infidels can continue and God can be lauded: "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that
before it or after it...for the Lord fought for Israel” (Joshua 10:12-14). Again, in the Biblical narrative, the poet does not reference the sun as an objective and visible heavenly body, but rather references the sun’s utilitarian ability to provide light for further slaughter. Conversely, the account in the Iliad focuses on the trajectory of the sun: “grant that the sun may not go down, nor the night fall, till the palace of Priam is laid low” (2:212-214). The implication in the second passage is that Agamemnon be granted enough time to successfully battle against his enemies. The similarity in both narratives is that the sun is requested to stand still; the dissimilarity is that the focus is on the task of the sun in the sky in the Joshua narrative, while the focus is on the location of the sun in the sky in the Agamemnon narrative.

Creation Narrative Of Genesis: Multiple Facets Of God In a Non-sequential Fashion

One narrative, which many scholars consistently point to that supports an argument in favor of multiple authors of the Pentateuch, is the one that deals with the incongruity of the portrayals of God in the Biblical
creation account (Pagels xxi). In Genesis chapter 1 the narrative opens with God creating order out of chaos and light out of darkness through the sheer power of his word alone: "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw the light was good" (Gen. 1:3). Indeed, throughout the entire first chapter, the omnipotent creator exercises absolute and undisputed control of the universe, as demonstrated by His acts that created the earth, the seas, the flying creatures and the creatures of the sea. In contrast to the sublime homage to God's creative might and prowess, which culminates in the appearance of humankind made "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27), chapter two of Genesis introduces an abrupt change in the viewpoint of the type of God presented to the reader in the previous chapter.

The second creation account (Gen. 2:4-25) is somewhat less exalted than the first and presents a more anthropomorphic or man-like view of God. This account paints Him as a just, but stern, father figure who is capable of suspicion, anger, and defensiveness when His authority is threatened, as it is by the first human couple. This anthropomorphic quality of God continues
when He becomes jealous of the growing independence and knowledge of Adam and Eve, indicated by their eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

This theme of competition between God and His intelligent creation reoccurs later in the Tower of Babel episode (Gen. 11-1-9), when God recognizes that humanity is united in a common language and culture and will "find nothing too hard [...] to do." To weaken the human potential, God overthrows their united efforts (represented by the temple-tower or ziggurat), confuses their languages, and scatters them over "the whole face of the earth." By including this incident the narrator can express his view of God's contempt for human ambition (Harris 46).

To the contemporary reader with a sense of contemporary notions of consistency and sequence in time, there seems no doubt that there is a real contradiction between these portrayals of the personality, behavior and qualities of God. On the one hand, God is portrayed as all-powerful, assumes control of all aspects of the creation process and pays no heed to the interests of others, as indicated in Genesis chapter 1. Yet, later
narratives portray God as one who becomes jealous of the growing power of others (be it humans or even angels) and avenges himself on disobedient humans (see the Flood narrative in Genesis chapter 6) and one who even feels sadness and grief (see Genesis 6:6). Many literary scholars argue that the perplexing and incongruous disparity between the two types of God, (the "first" one, who is the all-powerful emotionless God and the "second" God who shows human frailties) could be reconciled only by believing that the two different versions are proffered by a multitude of redactors, some of whom may have even been influenced by Babylonian creation stories (Speiser 11). But there is an alternative explanation.

The alternative view would encompass the idea that two separate accounts, which portray the composite and complex personality of a single God, are placed in sequence. Each of these two accounts, although placed in a chronological progression—which could give the impression to a contemporary reader that a later redactor created a different version of God—would instead, provide the reader with a different, more complete kind of description of a single God. In other
words, in the "first part" of the creation account, the
description of God (who is all knowing and has the power
to create "good" things in the universe) is the same
God—who is bitter and unforgiving—portrayed in the
"second part" of the creation account⁸. The single
editor of this narrative, therefore, writes it from the
perspective of "narrative logic" versus "chronological
logic" (Alter 138).

In the Hebrew tradition, God is undeniably a
complex being with polarized and conflicting qualities
that can be confusing to the believer. The polarization
involving the personality and traits of God can be
expressed by developing a creation account that mimics
this duality; in other words, the Hebrew redactor weaves
a creation narrative that incorporates both of these
contradictory elements into a single story and does so
in a mode that suggests to the contemporary reader
chronological time. Although this could lead a modern
observer to the conclusion that a different redactor
must have written the second portion of the narrative
because of the numerous substantive changes that occur
to the personality of God, this discontinuity in
actuality is a literary mosaic that merely displays the multi-faceted traits of God in a non-chronological narrative.

With this understanding of how the ancient Hebrews view time, with its emphasis that the "judgment of the speaker is the fixed point to which the actions are oriented" (Boman 145), as opposed to our Western view of time that "actions move about in space" (145) while falling upon a straight time line, it is easy to see how a single editor of the Genesis (chapters 1, 2 and 6) narrative could write this critically important narrative about the creation of the cosmos (with its accompanying "illogical chronology") from his vantage point, not the vantage point of a contemporary reader. Furthermore, a single redactor who is concerned not the least with Greek notions of chronological time, could write a single narrative of the mutable personality traits of his Creator by means of "presenting several disparate points of view, which gives the narrative depth, and, to a large extent, makes it good narrative" (Berlin 51) and could therefore be "one of the best vehicles for conveying a subjective presentation of one
viewpoint [italics added]" (67). Over the centuries, writers have utilized personification, sarcasm, metaphors and many other different ways to express complex, confusing and even contradictory personalities; the Hebrew editor in this narrative conceivably could have presented two conflicted perspectives of a single entity in a sequential fashion.

The Ancient Hebrew Peculiarities of a Double Dialectic

Analyzing the Old Testament texts in such a way that promotes the notion that contradictory texts reveal further evidence for multiple redactors does not always take into consideration the ancient Hebrew predilection for expressing "an idea in two different ways" (Boman 181). The OT is replete with examples of supposed contradictions that merely reflect two different ways of looking at the same issue. For example, Ecclesiastes 5:2 says:

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God:
for God is in heaven and thou upon earth:
therefore let thy words be few.

On the other hand, Exodus 29:45,46 says:
And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.

From a geographical standpoint, God living in heaven and on earth among his people is nonsensical, but analyzed under the rubric of a single idea expressed in a dual fashion the interpretation of this concept makes sense.

In the above-mentioned case, it can be stated that when God's spiritual transcendence and awesome power are implied, reference is made to His dwelling place as being in the heavens, as is done in Ecclesiastes 5:2. Therefore the indirect admonition for humans is to remain humble and remember their subservient status. After all, the ungodly are those who dare to build a tower whose pinnacle reaches to the very heavens (Genesis 11:4) as well as "speak wickedly against the heavens" (Psalm 73:8,9).

When reference is made to God living in close proximity to His people, as is done in Exodus 29:45,46,
the message implies the fatherly and protective qualities that God displays toward His people.

Professor Alter recognizes the ancient Hebrew predilection for presenting an idea in two or more different ways, but advocates that the concept also applies to Biblical narratives. He reminds the reader that one must always remember "the depth with which human nature is imagined in the Bible is a function of its being conceived as caught in the powerful interplay of a double dialectic" (Biblical Narrative 33). This "double dialectic" can take many forms: disorder versus design, divine providence versus personal freedom, military triumphs versus military reversals, divine promises versus historical reality, personal and national obedience versus personal and national disobedience, political realities and political idealness, ideal social institutions versus actual social institutions, prophecies about national greatness versus prophecies about national decline, pronouncements about divine approbation versus pronouncements about divine castigation, clemency versus culpability, sinning versus forgiveness and positive results of submission
versus negative results of opposition (32-36). Since many of the narratives are told and retold with dialectical tension between antithetical concepts, it must be remembered that these tales are organized to convey, not chronological narratives, but rather thematic narratives. Thus a single redactor can tell a narrative in two different versions since his objective is to highlight two or more themes.

The double dialectics contained in the OT are not always easy to ascertain since the narratives are written in such a way as to have scant soliloquies, abrupt endings and negligible transitions between narratives. In referencing the moral, religious and social instructive value that the redactors of the Biblical narratives voice, Professor Alter reminds us that "the Biblical writers like to lead their readers to inferences [of thematic meaning] through oblique hints or instructive nuance rather than insisting on explicit statement" (Biblical Narrative 183).

The ancient Hebrew model of a double dialectic is examined in detail in the following three Pentateuch narratives.
Flood Narrative of Genesis Chapter 7: Two Perspectives

The Flood narrative (Genesis chapter 7) is frequently referred to by scholars as further evidence for multiple Pentateuch redactors (Oswald 291-293), because the syntax of the narrative mentions that Noah and his family enter the ark on two separate occasions that span a time period of some 40 days of diluvial rains. Genesis 7:7 says: "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood." After provisioning the ark and leading the animals into it, the rain falls for "forty days and forty nights" (verse 12). The very next verse (13), begins by describing how Noah and his three sons and their wives enter the ark as well escort "every beast of his kind" ((verse 14) into the vessel. Then in verse 17, a description is given of the rain falling for forty days and forty nights.

Obviously it is impossible for Noah and his family of seven members to load up the ark with supplies and then usher all the animals onto the ark and then patiently wait as the torrential rains pelt the earth
for forty days, two times in a row. The advocates of the multiple redactors concept explain this “discrepancy” by theorizing that Genesis chapter 7, verses 7-12 is part of the “J” strand, while chapter 7 verse 13 through chapter 8 verse 22, belong to the “P” strand.

There is an alternative to the multiple redactor theory, which would hold that one editor could create two oppositional versions of Noah and his family entering the ark. The first “version” in the Flood narrative (Genesis 7:7) is given as a behavioral tale, to show how important it is for ancient Hebrews to obey instructions from their fathers or any other father figure who is in authority, while the “second” version shows the results of disobedience to authority figures.

The context into which the first Flood version (7:7) falls, is established in chapter 6 of Genesis where details are given regarding the great wickedness of mankind. Upon the background of this iniquitous human behavior, Noah appears in the narrative as the “father figure” to set things straight on earth regarding human allegiance to God. After all, “the
Bible knows only one supreme law: the will of God. Destiny is determined only by God; from him emanate the decrees that bind all. God alone has fixed the laws of heaven and earth, the world and all that is therein. Typical is the notion that the order of the cosmos is a covenant\(^9\) which God has imposed upon it” (Kaufman 73). Fittingly, the Genesis narrative praises Noah’s dutiful and obedient actions as “one who did according to all that God commanded him” (Genesis 6:22).

Not only is Noah obligated in the first version to amass everything “that creepeth upon the earth” (vs. 8), but his three sons and their wives also must assist in this labor-intensive divine mandate. It does not matter that Noah’s three sons are married, as the basic community in the Bible “was the extended family or household headed by a father, which is made up of many sets of childbearing adults and their dependents” (Matthews 7). The power of the father to guide and direct his clan is so central to the Hebrew world-view that disobedience to the father could result in death. Even though blood relation contributes greatly to the creation of the Israelites’ extended family, “the
critical requirement for membership was not kinship, but covenant. Hebrew households were not just households with the same biological parents, but households with the same sociological experience and a shared legal commitment to one another" (8). In other words, the Israelites were a tightly bound social collective with shared religious and historical experiences and mutual obligations, which was led by a literal or figurative father figure, a requirement of their covenant with their God. The powerful family unit, which without question obeys the father figure, has provided the basis for the structure of Jewish society for thousands of years.

Since the first "biological" father (Adam) proves to be disloyal to God, he must be replaced with another "father," who is designated in the narrative as Noah. As an Israelite, Noah of course is obligated to abide by the mandates of his father; but since Noah's father, Lamech, dies before the Flood (Genesis 5:30,31), Noah is obligated to adhere, now more than ever, to the theocratic directives of his "heavenly father," which are officially defined in a covenant between God and
Noah. This covenant is detailed in Genesis 6:17-18:

"And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."

Thus Noah, as a loyal progenitor of God's "earthly family" (Aid to Bible Understanding 387), receives the opportunity to survive the watery destruction that befalls the wicked world of that time due to his fidelity to his "father's" mandates.

It is important to realize that the English word—"contract" (which is sometimes used to translate berit) as it is used in a legal sense—implies that there is a reciprocally agreeable decision between two parties; however, the covenants between God and the Hebrews are not entered into through mutual agreement. In fact, "God takes the sole initiative in covenant making and fulfillment" (Vine 50). In other words, Noah has no choice but to comply with the details of the covenant imposed upon him by God. Likewise, all humanity after
Noah must similarly obey their genetic fathers or any other "father figure," whether it be tribal elders, judges or kings (who do not show up in Jewish tradition until centuries later).

The second "version" of the Flood narrative (Genesis 7:13-8:22), while repeating some of the information contained in the first version (7:1-1:12), such as what type of animals to collect, contains critical information that the first version does not: what happens to those who are disobedient. After describing how the waters ascend 15 cubits past the highest mountaintop, the narrative says:

And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle. . . only Noah remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.
Thus, although the second "version" of the Flood narrative repeats some of the elements of the first "version," this is done to provide further vital didactic information about the mortal consequences of disregarding ancient Hebrew mores concerning subservient and dutiful conduct toward those in power positions, whether they be literal fathers, fathers-in-law, tribal father figures and of course, the ultimate father, God Himself.

Didacticism, Not Contradiction, In the Narrative Of Joseph Being Sold Into Slavery

The proponents of the Multiple Redactor Hypothesis also use the dual narrative of the selling of Joseph into Egyptian slavery as further evidence of their view (Campbell 261). In this story (Genesis chapter 37), Joseph's jealous brothers victimize him by throwing him into a dry well. While Joseph's brothers debate his fate, they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. Come, and let us sell him to the
Ishmeelites and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Later in verse 36, the narrative declares that “the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar and officer of Pharoah’s and captain of the guard.”

Obviously, it is impossible for Joseph to be sold to both the Ishmeelites and the Midianites; this narrative, therefore, can “only” be explicated, according to some scholars, by reasoning that two different redactors wrote this narrative and at different times in history. However, this is not the only way to evaluate this story.

The first theme contained in this particular narrative deals with the Hebrew editor’s intent to emphasize the loathsome consequences of hatred, jealousy and its subsequent manifestation: rebellion (as demonstrated when Joseph’s brothers betray Joseph by
selling him into slavery to the Ishmeelites for twenty silver pieces). The second theme (as demonstrated when the Midianites lift Joseph out of the pit and sell him as a slave) highlights the theme of the power of God’s forgiveness of his erring people.

In the narrative portion describing the abduction and selling of Joseph to the Ishmeelites as a slave, the theme presented by the Hebrew redactor focuses on the corrupting influences of hatred and jealousy within the family, especially as it pertains to insolence toward the head of the family. In the verses leading up to the abduction of Joseph, the concept of odium, envy and revolt are repeated continuously. For example, Genesis 37:4 and 5 read: “And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.” Verse 8 continues this theme and says: “And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hate him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.” Again in verse 11, the narrative
reminds the reader of the resentment Joseph's brothers feel for him: "And his brethren envied him."

It is no surprise that in the Hebrew way of life, hatred, envy and public protestations over who has the right to rule are traits that were viewed as antithetical to religious and social norms. During the time of the ancient Hebrews (about 1600 B.C. to 1000 B.C.), the distribution of power followed a standard pattern, whereby the fathers of the households in the village served as leaders. Hebrew village elders derived their authority from God and the confidence placed in them by the villagers who recognize the wealth of experience they hold and its value to the community (Matthews 122). If a Hebrew were charged with challenging the authority of the family head, then this person and his case would be brought to the threshing floors (later replaced by the city gates), which would mark the "frontier between the divine plane and the human plane" (123). Such a challenge to the distribution of social and political power was not taken lightly, as it was viewed as not just contrary to the Israelite way of life, but as an affront to God.
personally in defying His plan for mankind and degrading the dividing line between the unity of the world “inside the city or village and the chaos beyond” (123).

The ancient Hebrews were extremely aware of what would happen to those who disrupted the placidity inside their religiously structured society, as the Pentateuch is replete with narratives that explicitly lay out the deadly consequences for individuals who challenge the right of God’s chosen to rule their extended families, tribes or nations. In one story outlined in Numbers chapter 16, Korah, in league with 250 chieftains of the assembly, rebels against the authority of Moses and his fleshly brother Aaron by complaining that these two leaders have no right to lift themselves up as leaders “above the congregation of the Lord.” Moses, while trying to reason with these malcontents, discovers that they stubbornly refuse to respond to his summon. Later, while carrying fire holders with burning incense, the rebels stand at the entrance of the meeting tent when God speaks to Moses and Aaron, telling them to separate themselves from the midst of the assembly, “that I may consume them in a minute.” Soon thereafter, and in
chilling detail designed to discourage future mutiny, the narrative reads:

And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses and all the men that appertained unto Korah and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, lest the earth swallow us up also (verses 32-34).

Even rebellion by family members is contrary to ancient Hebrew custom. In the story of Miriam, Moses’ fleshly sister, the reader is told that Miriam speaks against her brother because of his prominence among the Israelites. The national eminence that Moses enjoys among the Hebrews incites Miriam’s jealousy, as she is older than Moses and therefore should be receiving some distinction herself. Yet, despite her closeness to Moses (after all, it is Miriam who helps to ensure that the baby Moses is plucked out of the Nile while floating
down in a basket), she is struck with leprosy and becomes "white as snow" (Numbers 12:10). Only when Moses intercedes on Miriam's behalf does the leprosy vanish (12:15).

The second "dialectic" portion of the narrative that deals with the selling of Joseph into slavery to the Midianites (versus the Ishmeelites) does not create a contradiction within the text, but rather reflects another angle of understanding to this narrative: God's mercy and forgiveness toward his erring people.

Although the Pentateuch contains numerous strong and detailed warnings concerning how to avoid all types of personal and national sin, there are many texts that highlight God's willingness to forgive His people, should they fall into sin. Moses says, for example, in Numbers 14:19,20:

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word.
As the Joseph narrative continues, Joseph personally and conclusively perceives the repentant attitude of his brothers and in an emotionally charged moment finally reveals himself to them in Genesis chapter 45 and forgives them for selling him into slavery and almost certain death. The theme of Joseph’s forgiveness for his brothers, reflects God’s willingness to extend the possibility of forgiving Israelites as well when they transgress against Him.

In the “double didactic” thread of meaning contained in this narrative, it is understandable why the narrator uses the Ishmeelites to represent rebellion against God. Scriptural evidence is contained in the OT that shows that the animosity Ishmeel has toward Isaac seems to have been handed down to Ishmeel’s descendents (Genesis 16:12; Numbers 22:4-7, 25:1-9), even to the extent of hating the God of Isaac, for the psalmist in enumerating those that are the “ones hating God,” includes the Ishmaelites (Psalm 83:6). True, the Midianites are also included in verse 9 of this list of divine condemnation. But it is only the Midianites, not the Ishmeelites, who overcome their earlier divine
denunciation and eventually have a part in divine prophecy when "young male dromedaries (camels) of Midian" (Isaiah 60: 5, 6) are brought to Zion as gifts. Thus the symbolic implication is that even though rebellion (represented by the Ishmeelites) can quickly bring about divine denunciation that can involve death, there is the hope of divine forgiveness (represented by the Midianites).

**Discovering Hidden Money Twice: An Entangling, Yet Instructive Narrative**

The concept of the "double dialectic" continues in a more compact version toward the end of the story of Joseph. In a short segment of the narrative, a "money sack" is discovered two different times; this apparent duplication along with contradiction provides some evidence for believing that redactors E and J participated in writing this narrative (Anchor 3: 979).

Chapter 42 opens with Joseph creating several tests to evaluate the repentant attitude of his brothers, the very same brothers who previously sold him into slavery. In creating a penultimate test, the narrative reads (versus 25-29):
Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

After leaving the inn, the narrator hurries the brothers home to Canaan, where they relate to their father Jacob the troubles they have had with the Egyptian viceroy, concluding with an explanation of Simeon's absence and the Egyptian's demand that Benjamin be brought to him. Just at this point, the money hidden in the sacks makes an odd reappearance (verse 35): "And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and
when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."

According to our own understanding of narrative logic, it is obviously impossible that the brothers could discover the hidden money twice—once at the inn and once in Canaan in their father’s presence—and be surprised and frightened both times; hence, many scholars explain that redactors E and J were involved in editing this narrative.

Since the Hebrew proclivity for writing narratives with a "double-dialectic," was commonplace (at least according to some scholars¹²), the discerning reader needs to unravel them to ascertain their mutually complementary implications and their subsequent moral insinuations.

The first dialectic that the ancient Hebrew redactor wishes to emphasize in this compact narrative (when the brother first discovers the money in the bag at the inn in verse 28) is how the entire Joseph narrative (one of the longest in the Pentateuch) "emphasizes the sense of the strange ways of [God’s] destiny" (Alter, Biblical Narrative 138). Not only are
the brothers "afraid," but "their hearts fail them" and they say: "what hath God done unto us." This implies to the reader that "Joseph in fact is serving as the agent of destiny, as God's instrument, in the large plan of the story" (139). The broader sense of how the outcome of this story was divinely staged all along (and one of the dialects involved) is again alluded to later in Genesis 45:5, 7-8, when "Joseph insists that God has been at work throughout" (Anchor 2: 954); this passage reads:

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler through all the land of Egypt.

The second dialectic (when the bag of money is discovered in front of Jacob, their father) emphasizes
“simple fear without wonder because it means to convey a
direct connection between finding the money and the
brothers’ feelings of guilt over what they have done to
Joseph” (Alter, Biblical Narrative 139). In
characteristic Biblical fashion (139) the guilt of the
brothers is not spelled out by the narrator, but only
intimated in the word “afraid” (Genesis 42:35). The
fact that the discovery takes place in front of Jacob,
their father, further implies their guilt in selling
their brother as a slave, because now they have to come
face to face with the one individual who was the most
wounded by their wicked actions. Jacob further
intimates their culpability by saying in verse 36: “Me
have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and
Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all thee
things are against me.”

Thus, the Hebrew compiler in this narrative first
highlights the long and venerated belief that the
ancient Hebrews had regarding their special role in
God’s plan for humankind (Genesis 26:2-4; 28:13-15;
35:11-15; Deuteronomy 28:1-29) and especially how Joseph
fits into this destiny. The second “version” highlights
the guilt that the nation of Israel can feel if they rebuff God's destiny for them; after all, God's destiny for the Hebrews is not guaranteed, but rather incumbent upon their continued divine obedience (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Since the Pentateuch narratives are replete with subtle, nuanced and even incomplete versions, the reader who has a broader understanding of Hebrew cultural norms can learn to read these stories with an eye toward incorporating both versions of an event, "because together they bring forth mutually complementary implications of the narrated event, thus enabling [the original Hebrew editor] to give a complete imaginative account" (138) of the story.

The Problematic Identity of the Single Redactor

After all the arguments that allow for a single redactor of the Pentateuch, a logical question arises: what is the identity of this compiler? This question has no easy answer and is indeed highly problematic, since no original documents are extant of the Pentateuch and what we have are fragments of ancient copies that are copies of writings that are even older still.
The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 has been extremely helpful to place the Pentateuch into its historical context, but many questions still remain concerning its authorship and when it was originally redacted. What is definitively known is that through palaeography and especially through Carbon 14 dating, the Dead Sea Scrolls were composed at different times between the time span of 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. (Pfeifer 33). Nonetheless, 200 B.C. is still not even close to when most scholars date the time when the Pentateuch was put into a written form.

Those who advocate multiple threads for the Pentateuch typically date the J Document, which is considered the oldest of the four main threads, to about the 9th or 10th century B.C. (Anchor 6:1013). Since the J thread is considered to “contain the most important testimony found in the Pentateuch narrative” (6: 1014), many scholars have dated this portion of the Pentateuch to the “enlightened” period of Solomon’s reign (950-930 A.D.); some have even been more specific and have identified the author of the J thread as Abiathar, who is identified as a priest during the Solomonic reign (1
Kings 2:26-27). Nonetheless, after some particularly intense scholarly debates occurred in the 1970’s and 1980’s concerning the J Document, most “scholars, perhaps waiting for better days, seem to refrain from writing much on the Pentateuch, and many of those who do, venture into the field with great prudence” (6:1017).

The writing of the Elohist thread (E Document), is usually dated to about the 8th century B.C., although this is a change from earlier analyses that postulate that this thread was written closer to the 10th century B.C. (2:481). But like the J Document, much disagreement exists among scholars and the “assigned date to E, will in the last analysis, depend on a given scholar’s total reconstruction of the religious history of the kingdom of Israel” (2:482).

The Deuteronomist thread (D Document) has been identified by such scholars, such as M. Noth, as a product of a single compiler who wrote the thread in exile from Israel during the “second half of the 7th B.C.” (2:162); other scholars, such as E.W. Nicholson and M. Weinfield, agree to this date, but believe that the D thread was “a product of a circle of
traditionalists” (2:162). Even though this “circle” has not yet to be clearly identified, the Anchor Bible Dictionary summarizes the sources, date and authorship of the D Document as an “ongoing endeavor” (2: 167).

Many Biblical scholars have dated the Priestly thread (P Document) to the end of 8th century B.C. (5:460). Yet, whether this Document was written by a single redactor or a group of redactors remains much in debate and much conjecture swirls around the historiography of this portion of the Pentateuch.

With so many theories and sub-theories in the Biblical scholarship community regarding the identity of the Pentateuch’s supposed redactors, it has been impossible for them to arrive at any consensus. Likewise, to postulate any specific theory as to the identity of a single compiler of the Pentateuch oral traditions would be fraught with intellectual danger. Yet, the evidence for a single gatherer of the numerous oral traditions who then later memorialised them into a written form is so compelling that this question begs an answer, as incomplete as it may be.
Logic would dictate that the single redactor of the Pentateuch would have been part of the educated class, which based upon historical realities of an agrarian society, would most likely have necessitated a person from the priesthood. This man (since women were precluded from the Levitic priesthood), could very well have lived during the reigns of King David or his son Solomon (9th century B.C.), which was during the intellectual zenith of the nation of Israel. The glory and cultural achievements of this time period reached even to the Queen of Sheba, now identified as from a location in the SW corner of the Arabian Peninsula (5:1171). According to 1 Kings 10:1,2, the Queen was highly impressed with what she saw and heard.

Granted, no contemporary extrabiblical sources clearly substantiate the historicity of David or Solomon nor have any remains of Solomon's Great Temple been discovered, yet "no other building of the ancient world has been the focus of so much attention through the ages" (6:350). Interestingly, although no remains of the temple have been found, a rock-cut tunnel that was built on the west side of the city of Jerusalem to divert
water to the city (2 Chronicles 32:30) was discovered in 1923 (6: 183), thereby verifying at least some of what is chronicled about the temple and city that David and Solomon built.

Since the Golden Age of Hebrew society occurred during the reigns of David and Solomon, it seems reasonable that a priest or someone serving high in the priestly society could have undertaken the labor-intensive job of collecting all the oral traditions and editing them in a narrative fashion. By incorporating varying literary writing styles and using different voices and techniques, he could have composed a sophisticated series of narratives comprising the first five books of what we now call the Holy Bible. Granted, some scholars date the D and P Documents as perhaps being edited some one to two hundred years after the time of Solomon, but there is still much debate and varying calculations about the dates of all four Document strands, especially D and P. Therefore, to select the Golden Age (the reigns of David and Solomon) of the Hebrew nation as the approximate date of when the Pentateuch narratives were first penned seems reasonable.
Conclusion

Just because the composite texts of the Pentateuch, with its discontinuities, duplications, contradictions, digression, jarring shifts in the time-scale of narrated events and abrupt endings to conversations cannot readily accommodate our own assumptions about literary unity does not mean that we should attempt to "contemporize" these texts. Even though some moderns think that unity and logical coherent development of texts is canonical, it would be folly to impose this rubric upon the interpretation of the literary works of a previous age and a culture that was so distinct from our own. Some of the scholars who continue to study the Pentateuch narratives are now beginning to rethink their positions regarding some of these tales, like the Joseph story, that used to serve OT scholars as a showcase for evidence to support identification of the classical Pentateuch sources. "Yet, more recent examination of the story [and others] soften the argument for two sources by suggesting that one author can use repetition as a narrative technique for emphasis, perhaps simply for variety" (Anchor 3: 979).
Over the centuries many brilliant, dedicated and highly educated scholars have made impressive attempts to decode these Pentateuch narratives. Modern archaeological discoveries, coupled with greater understanding of ancient languages, geography, history, social sciences and more powerful tools of literary analysis continue to enable scholars to understand these ancient texts better. It is only logical to expect that the diversity in interpretive and literary theoretical approaches toward these narratives will increase for many more centuries to come.

As all Bible students study the narratives through the distortion of a distance of three-thousand years, they ought not to forget to put aside their acquired habits and the expectations they have as modern-day readers and look at the blurred and faded meanings in the Biblical narratives to try to perceive how these narratives were originally written and meant to be understood. As this investigative project has shown, the substantially different way in which ancient Hebrews viewed time helps us to realize that if the non-sequential nature of the narratives did not bother the
typical ancient Hebrew reader, then it should not bother
us either. If the ancient Hebrew readers were
culturally accustomed to parallel narratives that
contained slightly different versions that reflect more
than one thematic meaning, then likewise should we read
these narratives within a similar mental framework.

It is my hope that I have been able contribute to
this ongoing and important question of whether there
were multiple redactors involved in the composition of
the Bible. I want to encourage all to enjoy the Biblical
stories more fully as stories; after all, by adjusting
the fine focus of our literary binoculars to the
Pentateuch narratives we could see more clearly what
they tell us about God, our origins, our existence and
even our future.
End Notes

1 The mind-numbing number of permutations involved in the multiple-redactor hypothesis can be traced back to the Middles Ages. "The distinguished Jewish commentator Abraham Ibn Ezra (twelfth century) managed to suggest his acute awareness of the problem implicit in the assumption of the Mosaic authorship of the Torah" (Speiser xx) by carefully intimating that certain passages in the Pentateuch must be post-Mosaic. Later, the Jewish philosopher Spinoza launched what came to be known as "higher criticism" (internal analysis) of the Bible, which criticized, among other things, "the axiom that Moses was the sole author of the Pentateuch" (xix). From the seventeenth century onward, many European scholars, such as Gerhard von Rad, Martin Noth and Otto Eissfeldt, have contributed to the multiple-redactor hypothesis by suggesting theories that promote different strands or variations of strands in the narratives.

2 In the last couple of decades, a novel approach toward Pentateuchal study has occurred that attempts to blend a diachronic and synchronic analysis of the Pentateuch narratives. Through this investigative
technique (called the "Interplay of Diachronic and Synchronic Dimensions), "a synchronic reading of the present text can help to clarify which literary phenomena are evidence of the narrative art of the OT and which are potential evidence of the art of redaction in the OT. This evidence can be clarified further by the interaction of diachronic and synchronic analysis" (Campbell 17).

3 As important as telling is to the ancient Hebrews, they have no word for "story," although this concept is conveyed by other biblical words such as "songs," "hymns," and "parables" (Berlin 11).

4 Scholars have spilled much ink debating the number of Israelites who departed Egypt during the Exodus. Exodus 12:37, renders this number as "600,000 [men] on foot," plus family members. While across the centuries one small clan could reproduce to very considerable numbers, yet the implied scope of 2 million or more total persons has prompted scholars to query this "600,000" translation" (Anchor 2: 705). However, a far more thorough and comprehensive study of all biblical "large numbers by J. W. Wenham (1967: 27–32, in
particular) deserves careful consideration. His results would suggest an exodus of perhaps 72,000 overall. His work would indicate about 40,000 able-bodied in Israel in the early settlement (Iron I) [1300 B.C. to 800 B.C.; see also Anchor 5:431] period, both E[ast] and W[est] of the Jordan. This begins to approach recent estimates of 30,000 to 50,000 people who settled in W[estern] Palestine in this period" (2: 705).

5 It is important to remember that the mathematics of the shape and orbital patterns of the celestial bodies dove-tailed well with the Greek thinking that geometry was "timeless" or immune to the "destructiveness" of the passage of time. This played a key role in the mythology that grew out of Greek philosophy and required that in these legends the gods live primarily in the heavens.

6 The function or role of these bodies is emphasized further by breaking the day into divisions based upon the "kind and intensity of the sun’s light and warmth" (Boman 133). For example, Nehemiah gives as the time for opening the city gates, "let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot" (Nehemiah 7:3).
7 Willa Cather describes the Hebrew idea of time with great literary wit: "This same dreamy indefiniteness, belonging to a people without any of the relentless mechanical gear which directs every moment of modern life toward accuracy, this indefiniteness is one of the most effective elements of verity in this great work [the story of Joseph]. We are among a shepherd people; the story has almost the movement of grazing sheep. The characters live at that pace. Perhaps no one who has not lived among sheep can realize the rightness of the rhythm. A shepherd people is not driving toward anything. With them, truly, as Michelet said of quite another form or journeying, the end is nothing, the road is all. In fact, the road and the end are literally one" (Cather 99).

8 The Pentateuch is replete with evidence concerning the polarized traits of God. On the one hand He is all-powerful (Gen. 17:1), yet He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness" (Ex. 34:6). The Bible states that God is invisible (Ex. 20:4); yet of God the Bible also says that He is "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" and that "He will stretch
out His arm” (Ex. 5:6) to His people. To the Hebrews, God proclaims that He “loved them” (De. 7:8), yet this same God allows His “wrath [to] wax hot against” (Ex. 32:10) His people. The Hebrew God “forgives iniquity and transgression and sin,” (Ex. 34:7), yet “will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children” (Ex. 34:7). God is long-suffering (Ex. 34:6), yet he exacts “exclusive devotion” (Num. 25:11).

9 The Hebrew word here is berit. This word is used over 280 times and in all parts of the Old Testament. It is translated into English most often with the words “covenant,” “league,” or “confederacy”. Berit is most probably derived from an Akkadian root meaning “to fetter” (Vine 50).

10 Professor Kaufmann counts that God has at least six different covenants with the Israelites (Kaufmann 473); other Bible reference books count as many as nine different covenants (Aid to Bible Understanding 387-389).

11 Not only are divine/human covenants one-way, but covenants made between warring nations are likewise lopsided; when military “terms were imposed by the
superior military power; they were not mutual agreements" (Vine 50); see 1 Kings 20:34 and Ezekiel 17:13.

12 See Alter, Biblical Narrative 32-33.
Works Cited


Chase, Mary Ellen. Life and Language in the Old


Speiser, E.A. Genesis: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. New York: Doubleday,
1978.


