

"There are countless forms of narrative in the world ... in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies ... Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural."

Roland Barthes (1966)

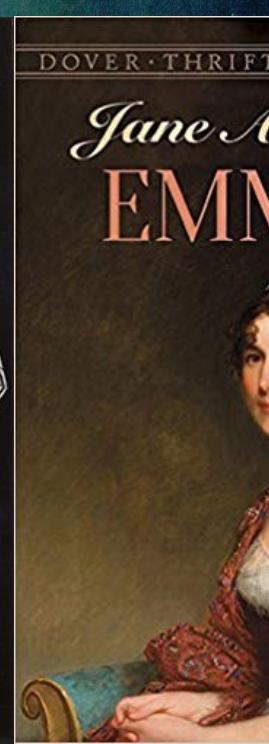
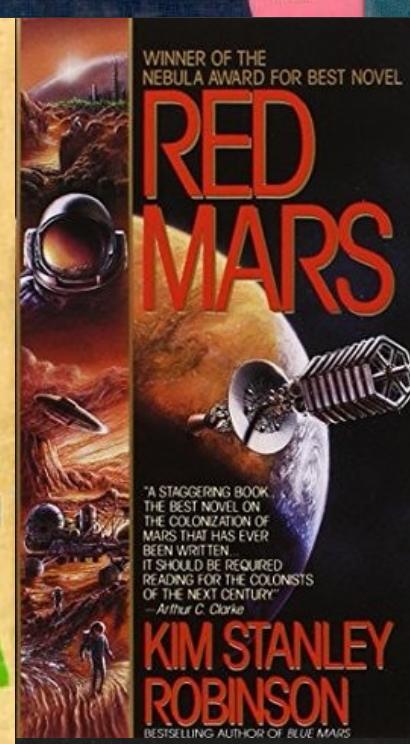
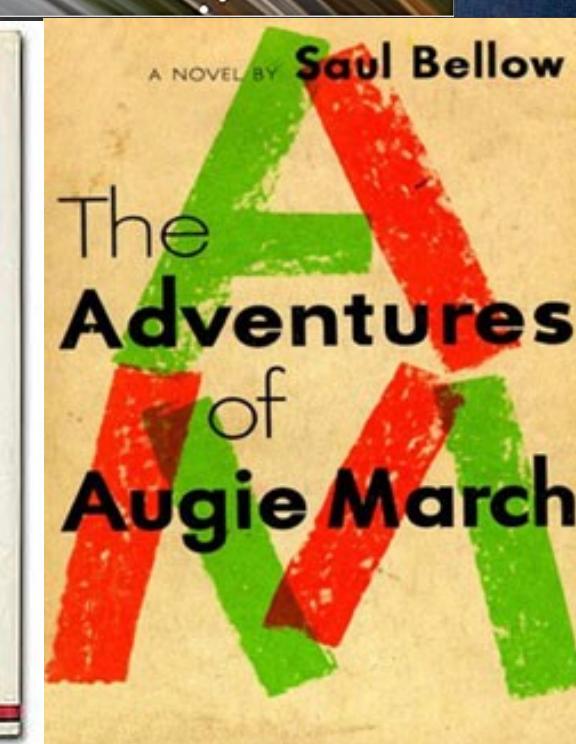
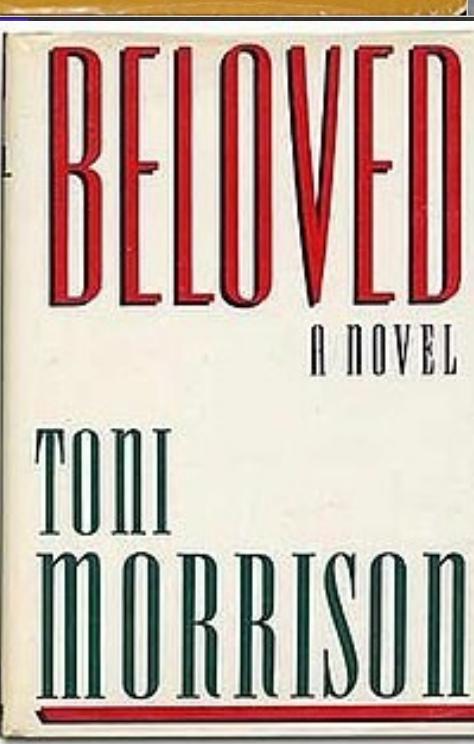
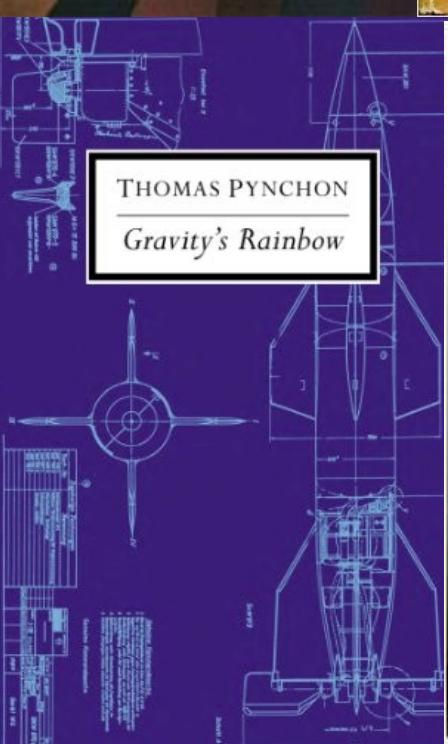
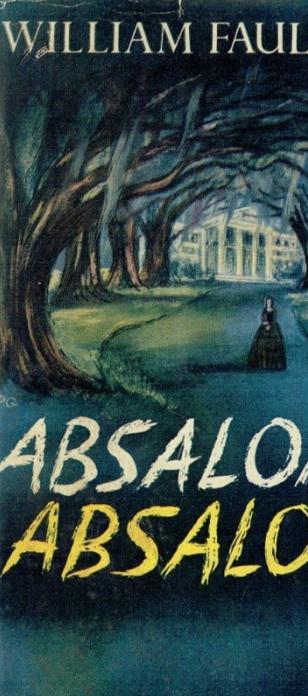
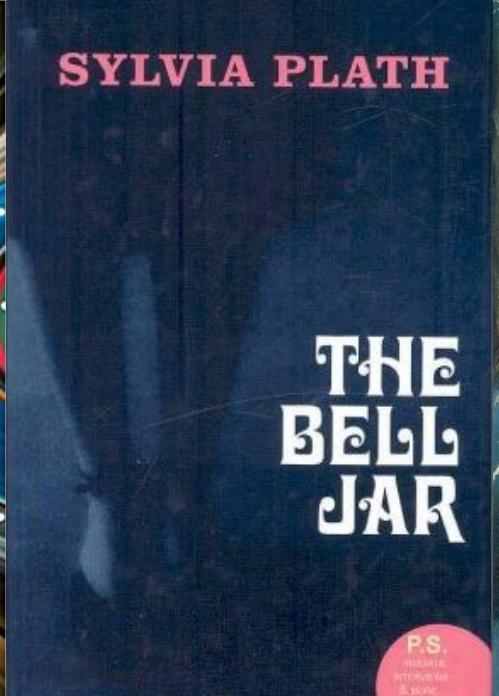
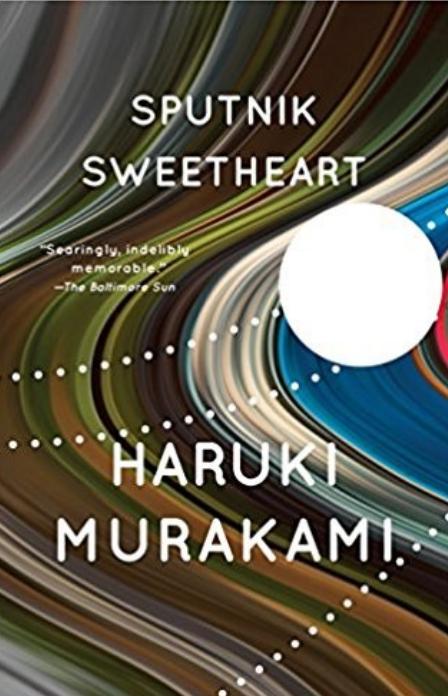
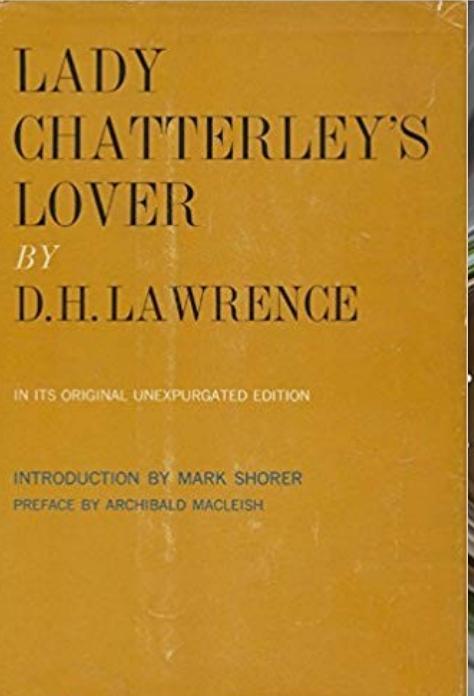
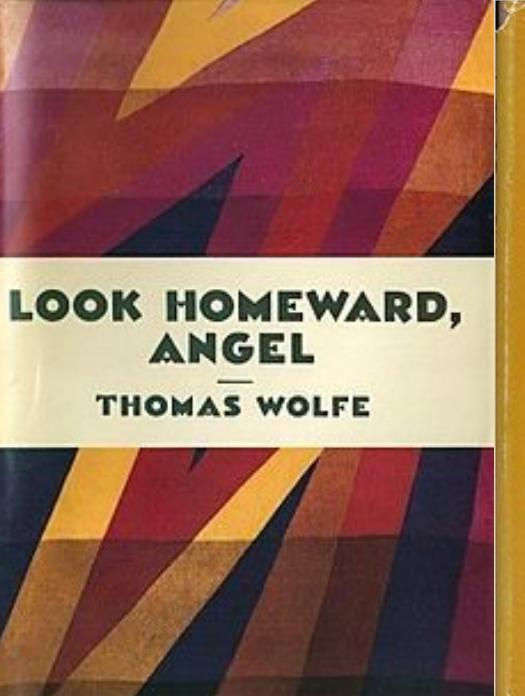
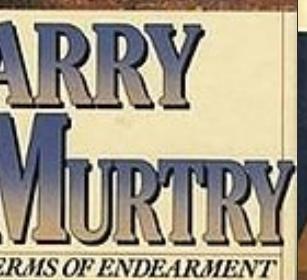
Books Without Authors

Who Wrote —And Read— The First Novels?

Joseph Cross

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Ph.D. candidate, University of Chicago
Egyptology & Biblical Studies



French roman
German Roman
Italian romanzo
(English romance)

Derived from Latin *romanice*
(linguistic: “what people ruled
by the Roman Empire speak”)

Spanish novela
English novel

Derived from Italian *novella*
(literary: “a work of literature
that is a short, new thing”)

The first novels were novellas

Hypothesis:

The first novellas are works that we would recognize as “novelistic” and as the ultimate ancestor of the novel.

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The first novellas are works that we would recognize as “novelistic” and as the ultimate ancestor of the novel.

They were written in the Southeastern Mediterranean starting in the 5th century BCE and were popular through the heyday of the Roman Empire.

Why “*novella*” and not “*novel*”?

- Distinct from the Graeco-Roman novel
(mid 1st century BCE to 3rd century CE)
- Shorter than novels (both Greek and modern)
but longer than short stories
- Preserved by themselves (not in story collections)

Today's talk

1. Background, facts, and overview
2. Discovering the novellas
3. Imagining ourselves as readers of two novellas,
with short readings from them

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)

The “Ages” of the Near East:

Bronze Age (3300 – 1200 BCE)

Iron Age (1200 – 550 BCE)

Persian Empire (550 – 330 BCE)

Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)

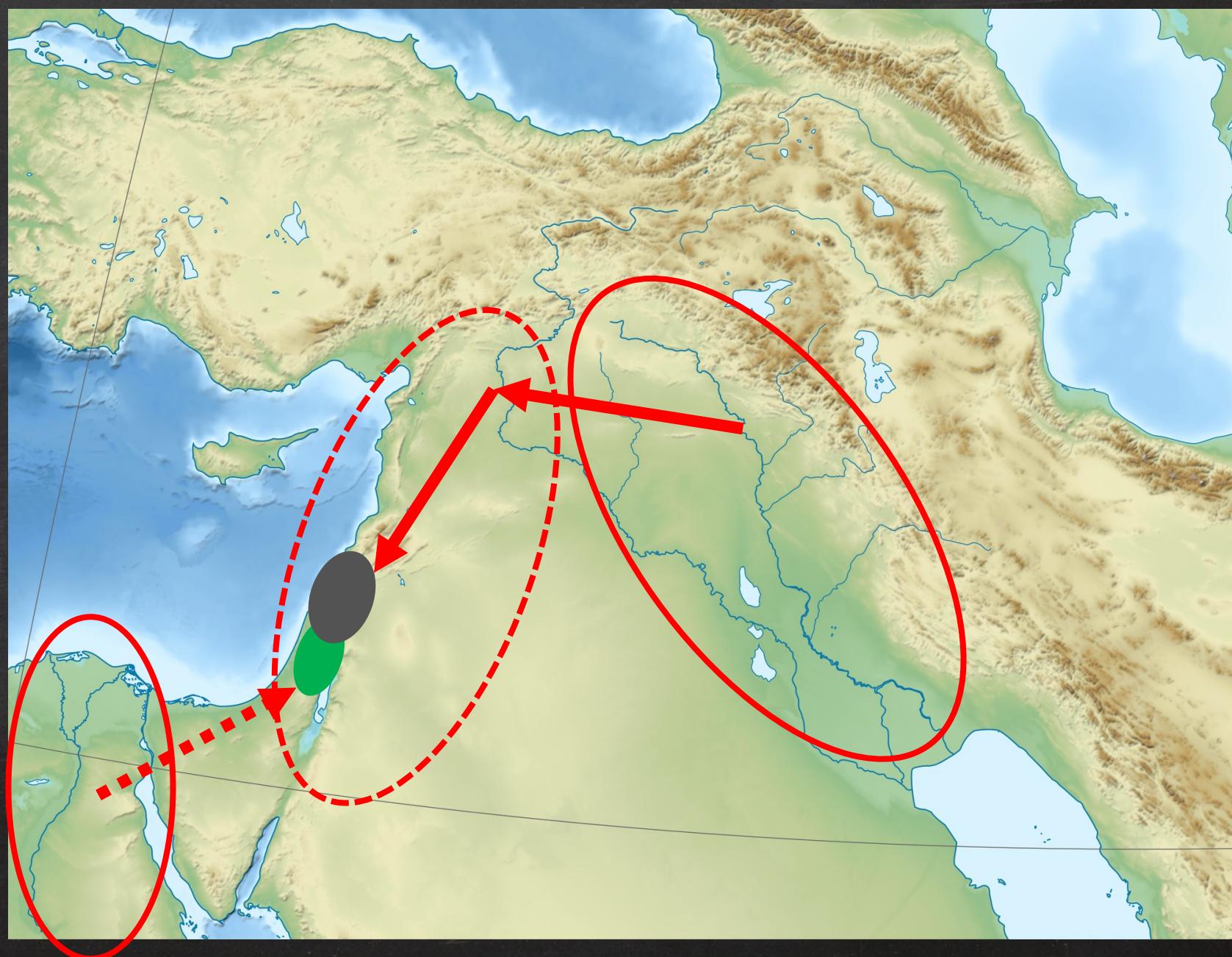
Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

Judea:

- Two kingdoms:
 - Israel, until 710
 - Judah, until 586
- Constant threat from Mesopotamian empires

Egypt:

- Weakening national power



The “Ages” of the Near East:

Bronze Age (3300 – 1200 BCE)

Iron Age (1200 – 550 BCE)

Persian Empire (550 – 330 BCE)

Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)

Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

Judea:

- A province in the empire (Yehud)

Egypt

- A province in the empire



The “Ages” of the Near East:

Bronze Age (3300 – 1200 BCE)

Iron Age (1200 – 550 BCE)

Persian Empire (550 – 330 BCE)

Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)

Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

Judea:

- Controlled by Ptolemaic then Seleucid Empires
- Period of national independence before Roman era (Hasmonean Kingdom)

Egypt:

- Ptolemaic Empire



The “Ages” of the Near East:

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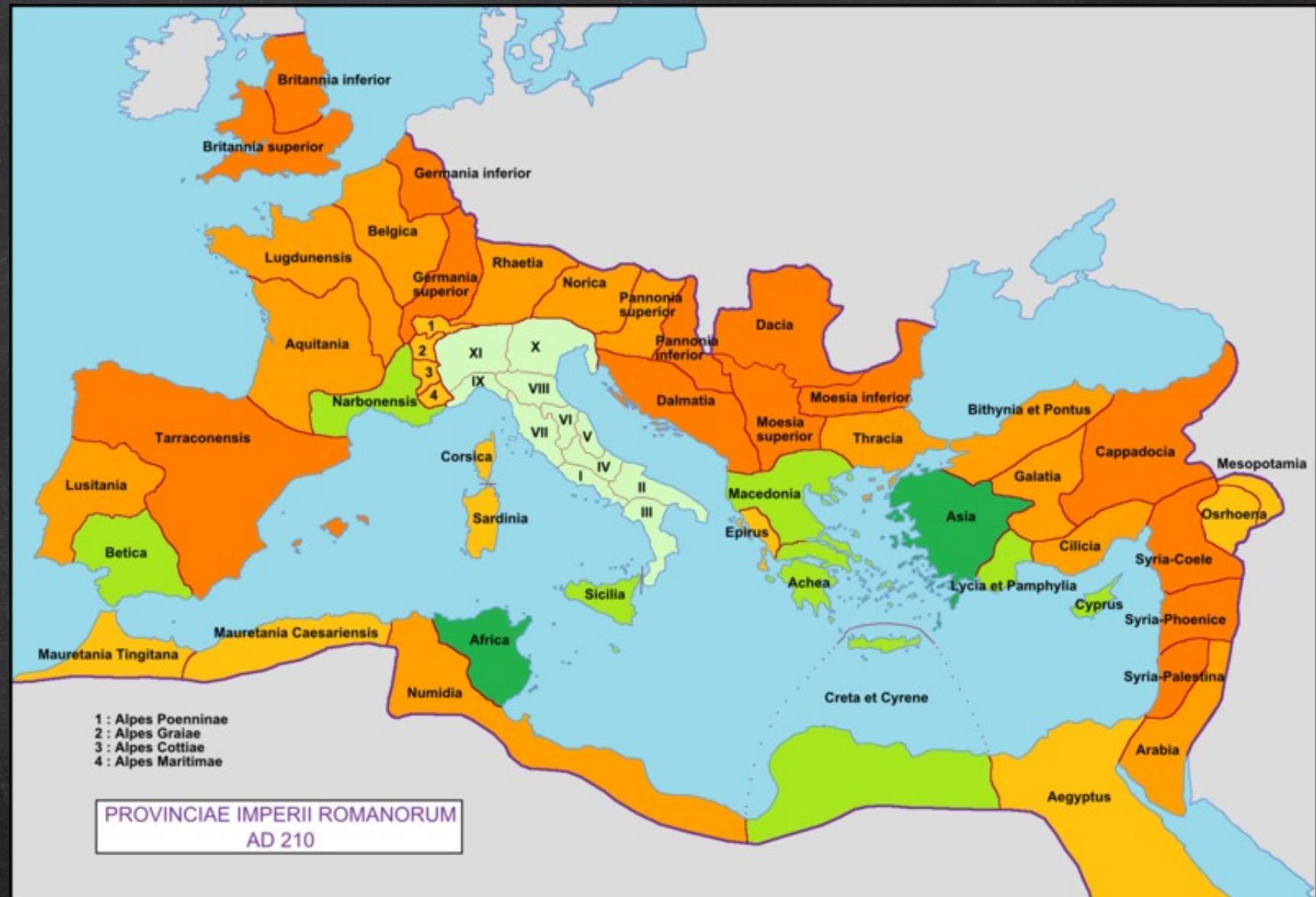
Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

Judea:

- Roman province

Egypt:

- Roman province



The era of Egyptian novellas (green)

Old Kingdom	Mid to late 3 rd millennium BCE
Middle Kingdom	Late 3 rd to mid 2 nd millennium BCE
New Kingdom	1550 to 1069 BCE
Kushite Period	744 to 656 BCE
Saite Period	664 to 525 BCE

Persian Empire	525 to 404, 343 to 332 BCE
Ptolemaic Empire	332 to 30 BCE
Roman Empire	30 BCE onward...

*

* Egyptians living in an Egyptian-controlled state

The era of Judean novellas (green)

Judeans in Palestine

Persian Empire 539-333 BCE

Hellenistic Empires 333-164 BCE

Hasmonean Kingdom* 164-63 BCE

Roman Empire 63 BCE – 70CE

Judeans in Egypt

Persian Empire starting in ca. 550 BCE

Ptolemaic Empire 332 to 30 BCE

Roman Empire 30 BCE onward...

*Judeans living in a Judean-controlled state

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)
- Same region (Southeastern Mediterranean)

Where novellas were found

Judean novellas
Egyptian novellas



Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)
- Same region (Southeastern Mediterranean)

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)
- Same region (Southeastern Mediterranean)
- Same political context (control by foreign empire)

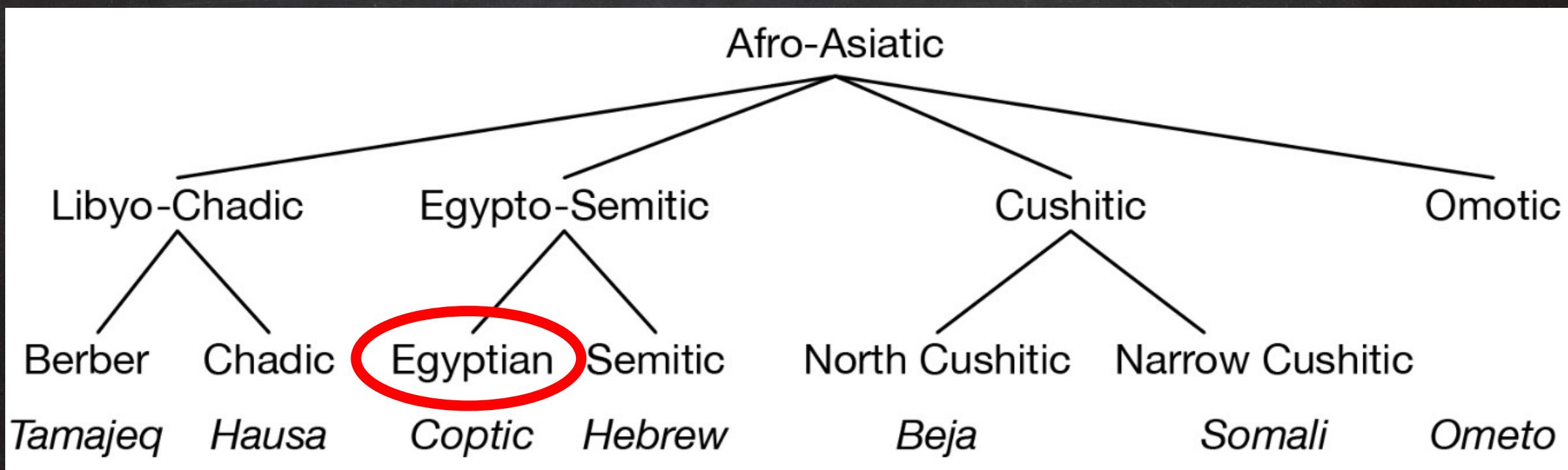
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- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)
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- Same social context (increasing influence of Greek culture)

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)
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- Same political context (control by foreign empire)
- Same social context (increasing influence of Greek culture)
- Same language-type (vernacular, once-national lang.)

The language of Egyptian novellas

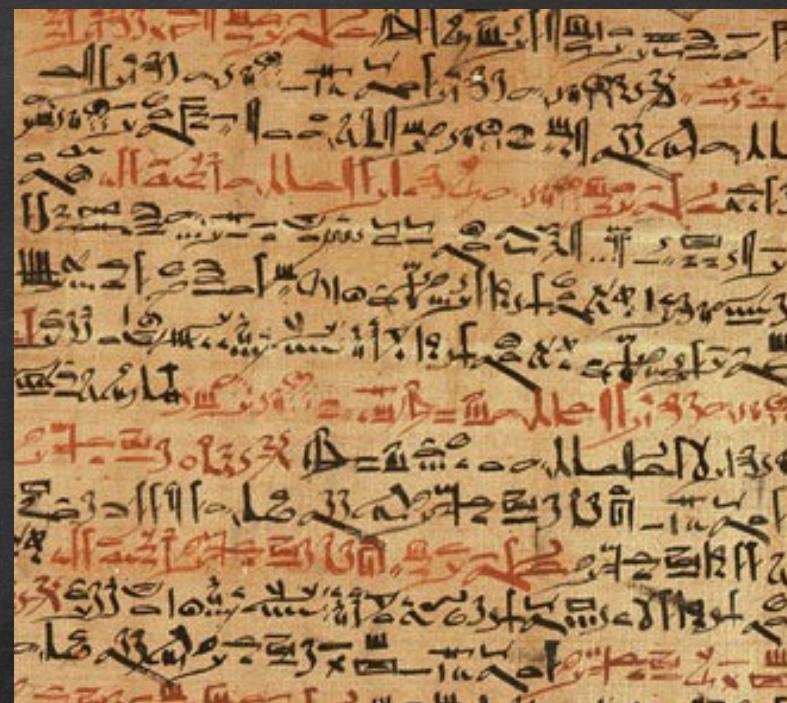


The language of Egyptian novellas



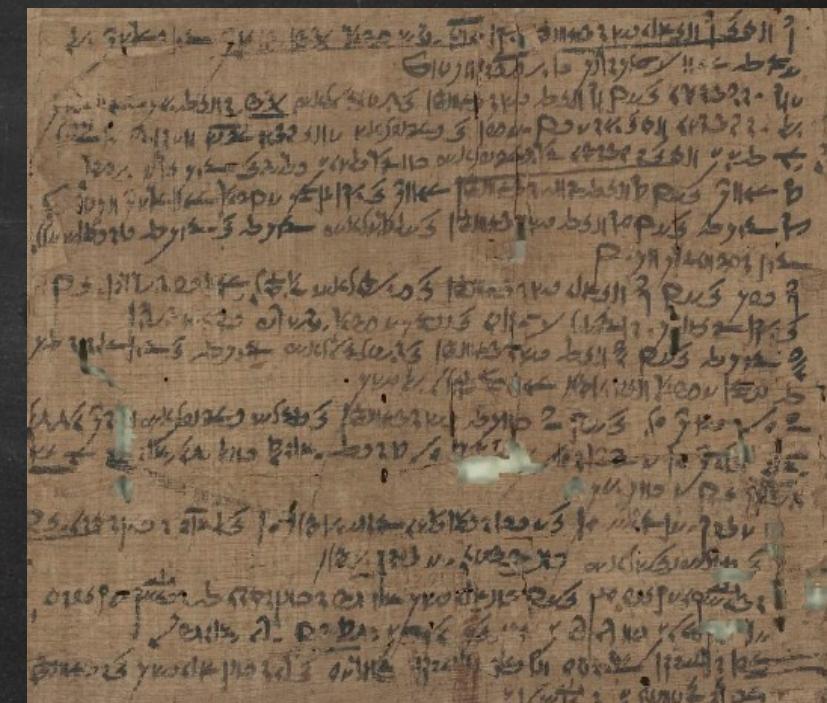
Hieroglyphs

Developed before Old Kingdom



Hieratic

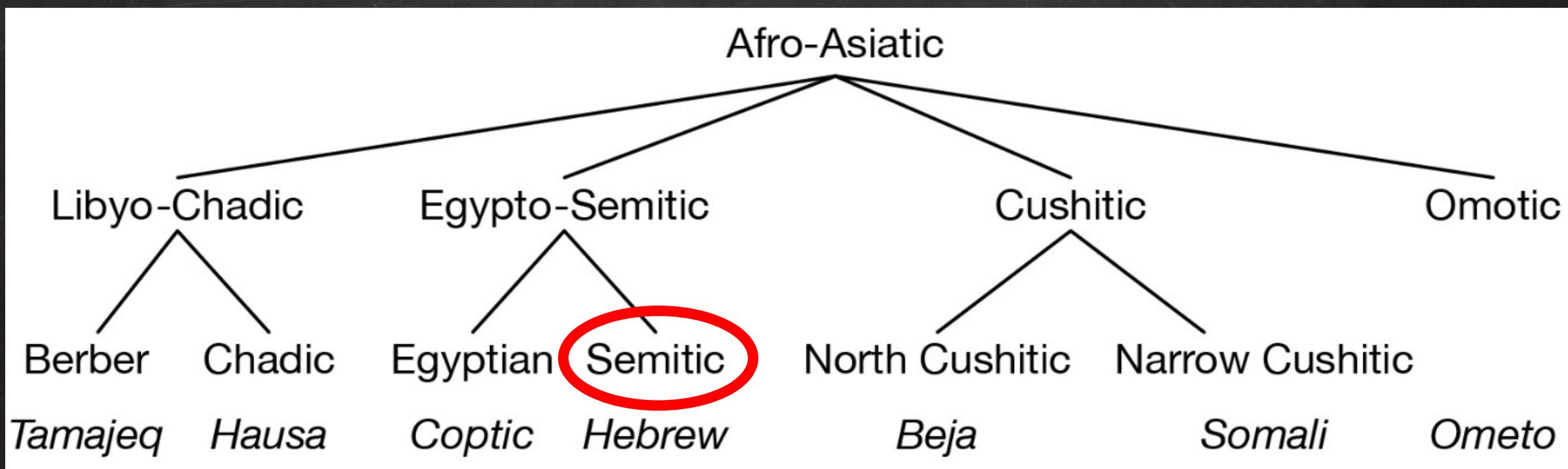
Developed in Old Kingdom



Demotic ✓

Developed in Persian Period

The language of Judean novellas



The language of Judean novellas

- Hebrew (Ruth, Jonah, Esther)

The traditional language of Judeans

- Aramaic (Tobit, other fragments)

A spoken language of Judeans, Persian period onwards

- Greek (!) (Judith)

A spoken language of Judeans, Hellenistic period onwards

Putting them side by side...

- Egyptian novellas continued to be written and read in the Roman Period (as late as the 2nd century CE).
- Judean novellas continued to be read only in the Roman Period, but new novellas were much more influenced by Greek literature and are better called novels.

Putting them side by side...

- Egyptian novellas were always written and copied in the Egyptian language (Demotic)
- Judean novellas **were gradually translated into Greek and written in Greek as well**

Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

- Same time period (Persian and Greek periods)
- Same region (Southeastern Mediterranean)
- Same political context (control by foreign empire)
- Same social context (increasing influence of Greek culture)
- Same language-type (vernacular, once-national lang.)
- Same genre (independent, short prose fiction)

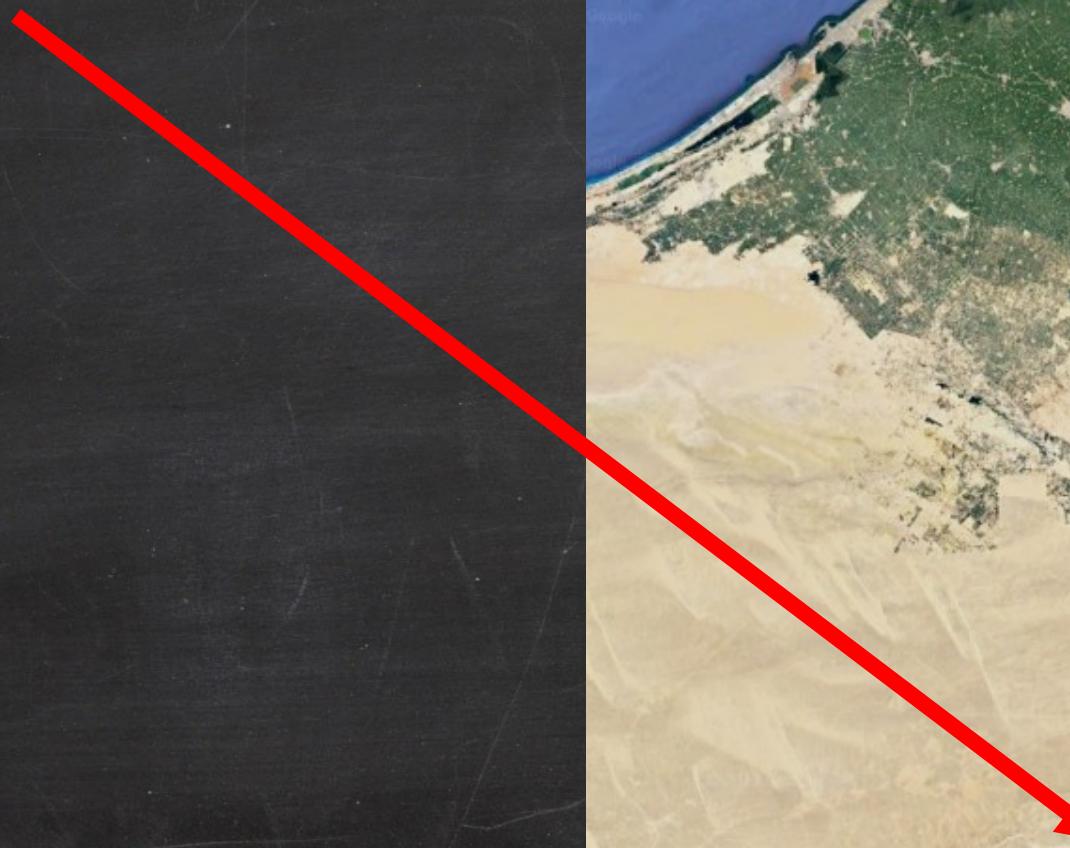
Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”

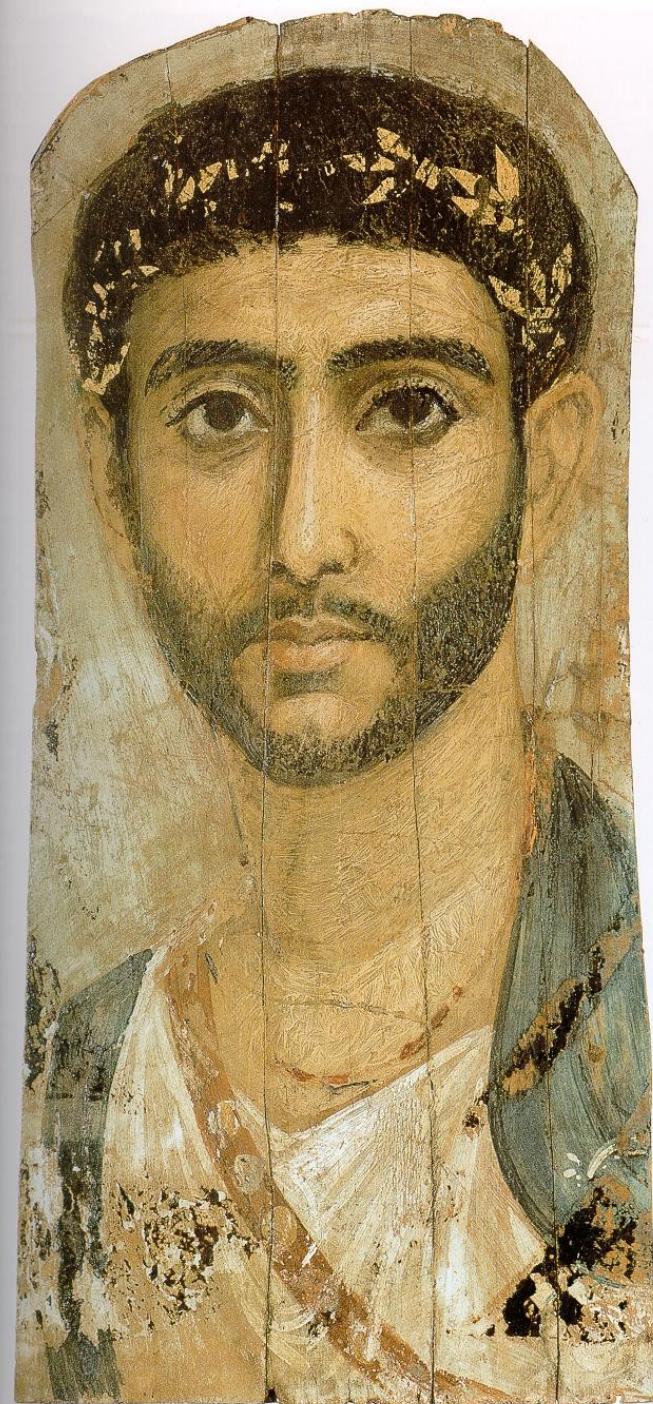
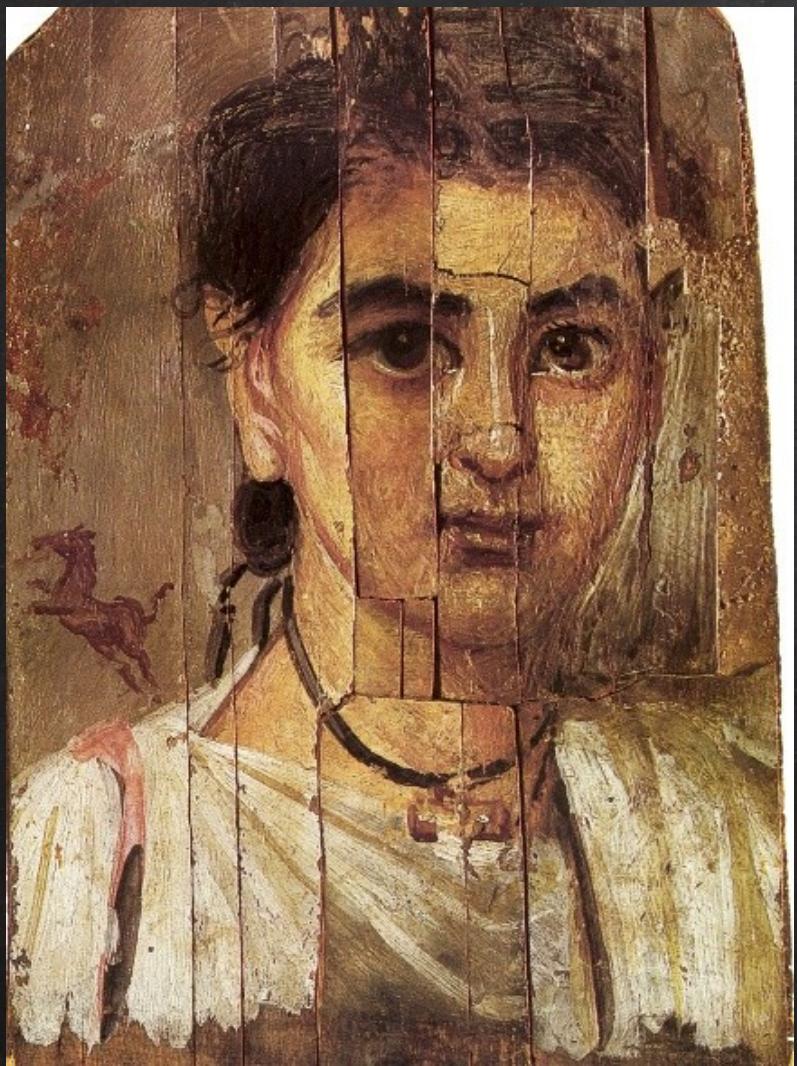
- Is there any cross-influence?

How are the novellas preserved?

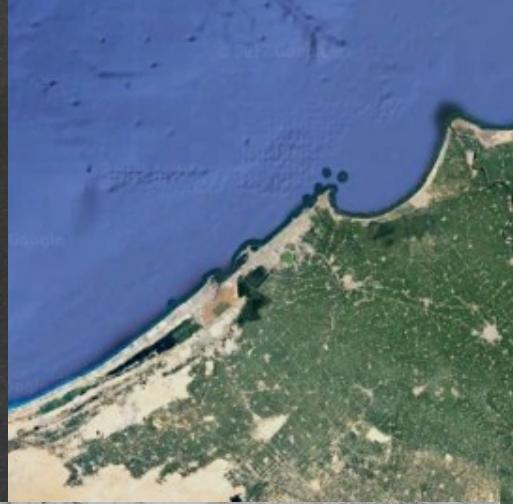
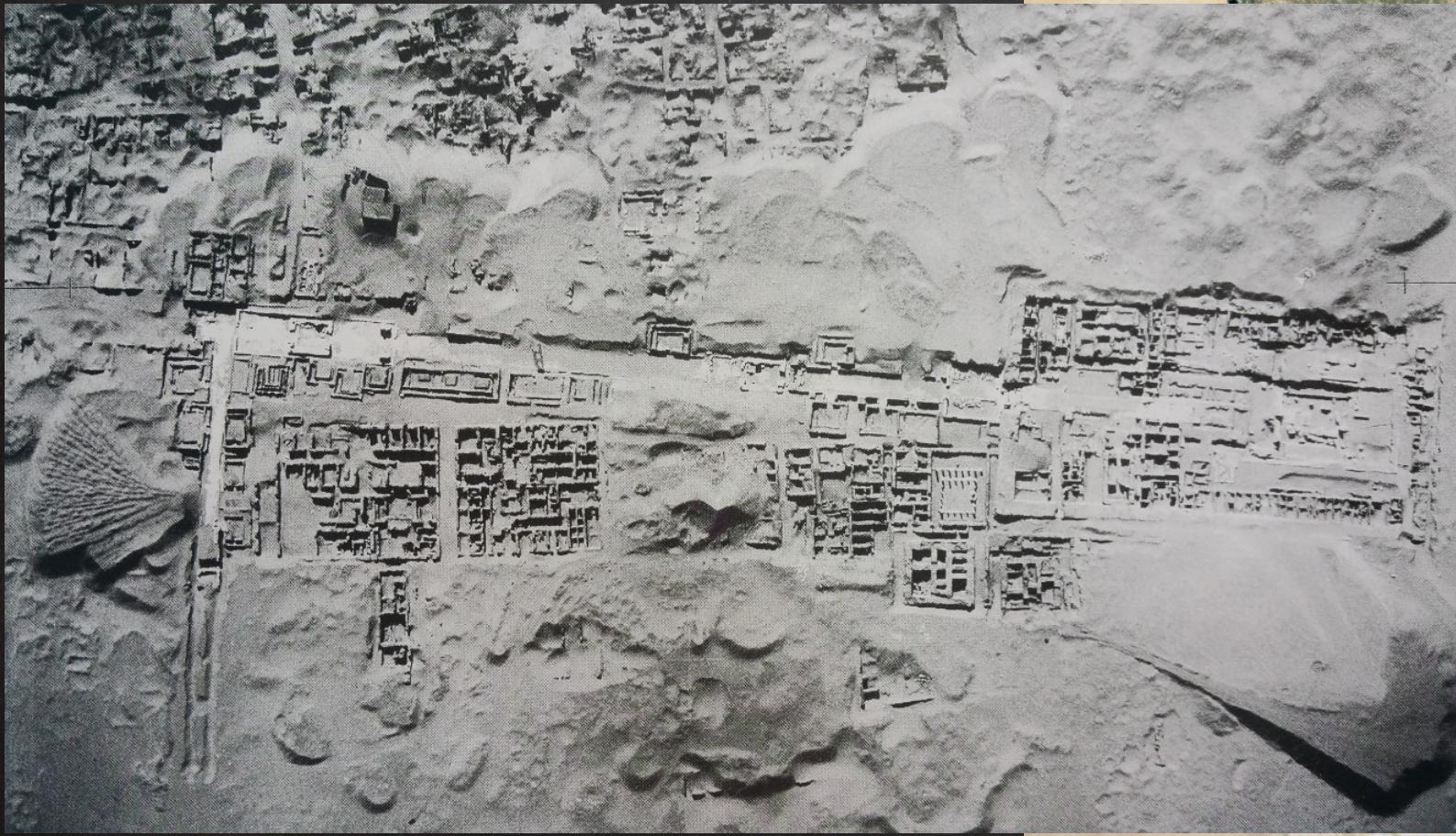
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Fayyum





Tebtunis





Dead Sea Scrolls

Israel

Sea of Galilee

Jordan River

Jordan

Site of discovery

Jerusalem

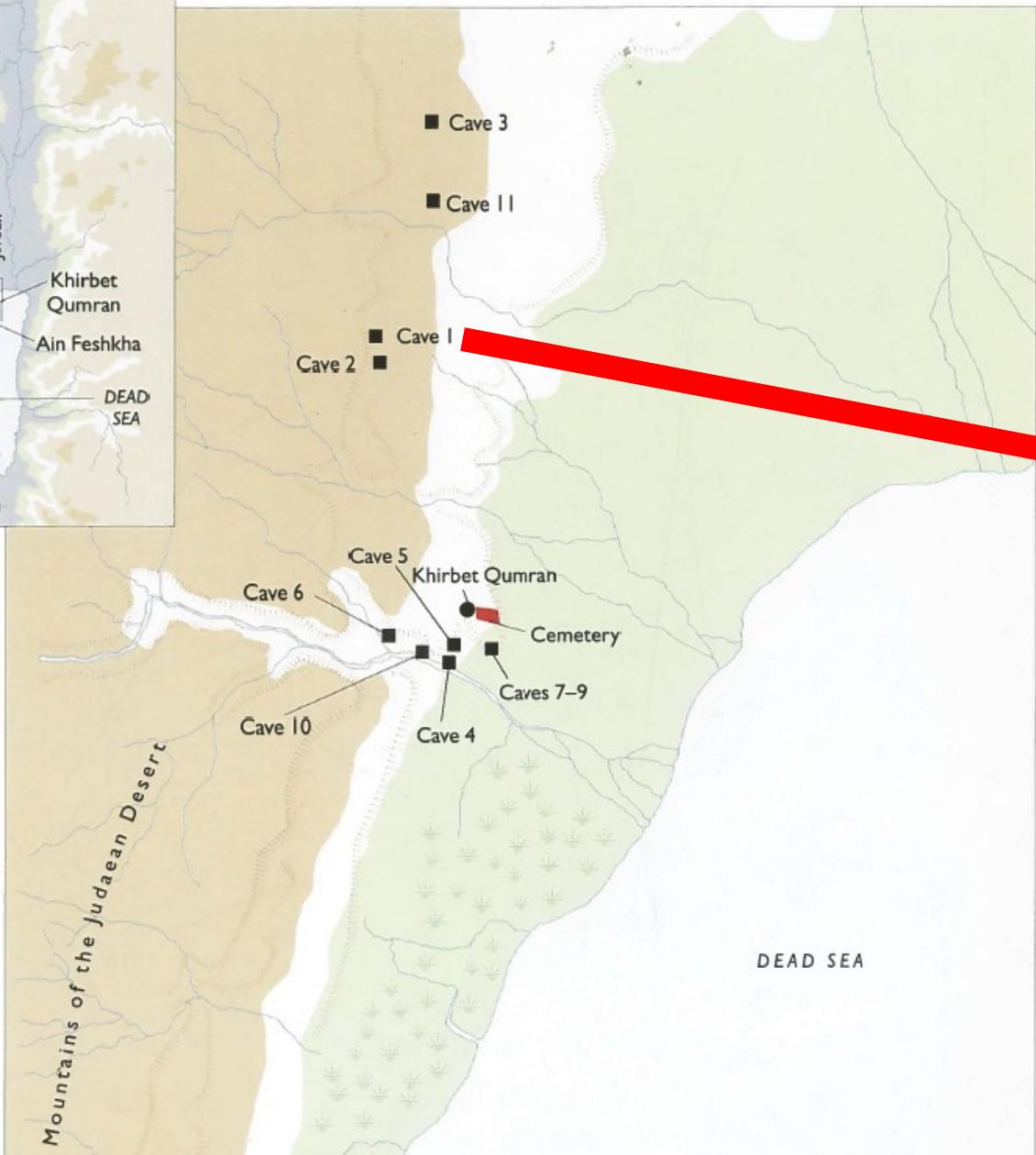
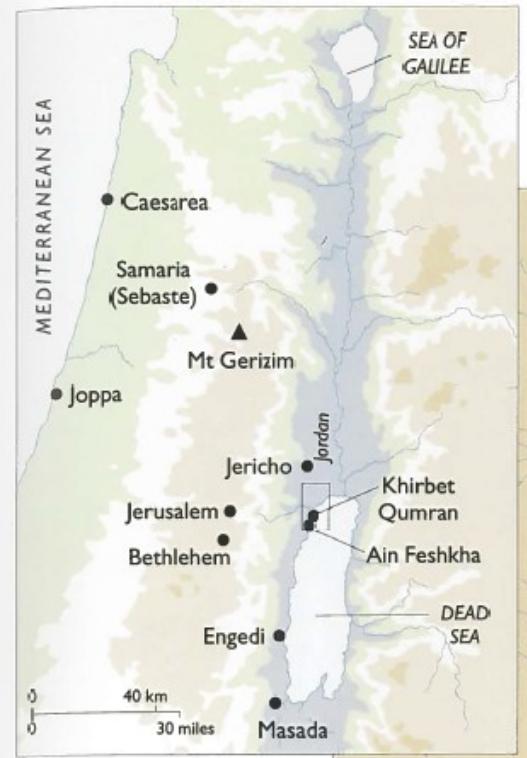
Israel

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Discovered in 1946-1947

Date to ca 100 BCE
to 50 CE





The “Great Isaiah Scroll” of Cave 1

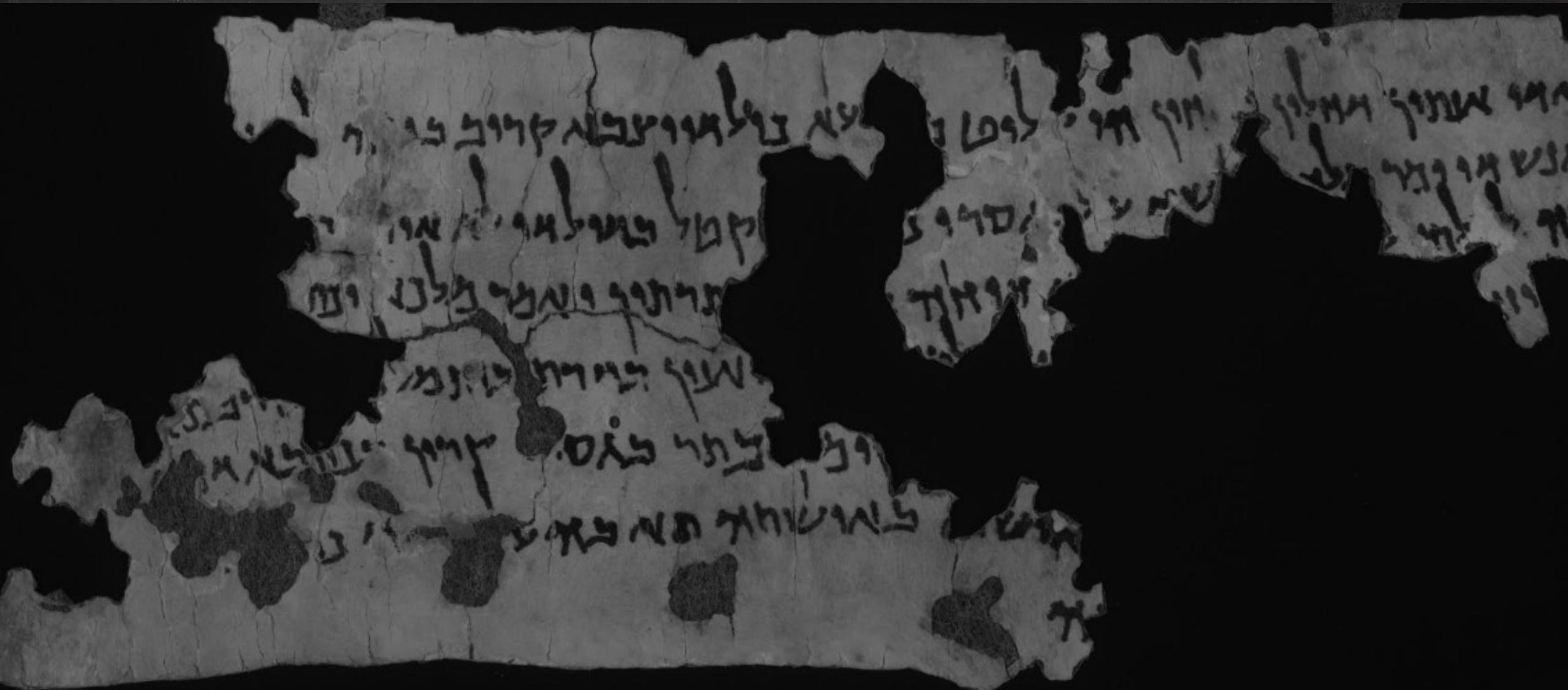


אות אשׂור בְּנֵי אֶרְזָא וְלֹא זָהָר וְצָהָר שְׁנָתָה
לְאַשְׁר פָּרָץ בְּקִרְבָּתָא רַעֲצָן אֲשֶׁר צָבָו וְזָהָר קַרְבָּא מִגְּדָר
כְּרִיךְ עַלְיָה צְרִיכָה וְצְרִיכָה וְבָהָא אֲשֶׁר וְמַלְאָה וְמַלְאָה
בְּשָׂתָם כָּא תְּחִזְקָה אֲחִזְקָה בְּשָׂתָם אֲזִזְקָה כָּלָל אֲשֶׁר וְהַלְלָה
בְּאַשְׁר וְלֹא יָבֹא בְּנֵי אֶזְרָא בְּנֵי וְהַזָּה בְּשָׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר וְהַלְלָה
לְאַגְּרָה בְּנֵי וְמַהְרָה מַעַל צְוֹנוּ וְרַעֲנוּ וְזָהָר צְעַדְעַד אֲשֶׁר
בְּזָהָר בְּנֵי וְמַהְרָה מַעַל צְוֹנוּ וְרַעֲנוּ וְזָהָר צְעַדְעַד וְבָעָד
בְּזָהָר בְּנֵי וְמַהְרָה מַעַל צְוֹנוּ וְרַעֲנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר עַפְתָּא וְשָׁעָד
עַזְוֹעַ וְוַאֲבָב שְׁלָשׁ שְׁנָת אֲזָה וְבְּנֵי לְפָצָרְעָה וְלְזָוָעָה בְּזָהָר
בְּלֵב אֲשֶׁר אֲזָבְרָה צְרִיכָה וְאֲזָבְרָה בְּזָהָר צְרִיכָה וְזָהָר צְרִיכָה
וְזָהָר וְזָהָר שְׂמָעוֹת צְרִיכָה וְזָהָר וְזָהָר וְזָהָר שְׂמָעוֹת
וְזָהָר צְרִיכָה וְזָהָר וְזָהָר וְזָהָר וְזָהָר אֲזָה צְרִיכָה אֲזָה
בְּאַתְּבָלָן אֲשֶׁר נִלְפָא אֲבָב גְּדוֹתָה לְאַרְעָלְמָנָה בְּלֵב אֲשֶׁר
וְאַבְּלֵב נִלְמָד אֲסְמָן
בְּשָׂא הַמְּלָא אֲזָבְרָה בְּנֵבָב לְהַלְבָב מִלְבָבָה תְּאַזְבָּה
מִלְבָב אֲזָבְרָה אֲזָבְרָה לְהַלְבָב מִלְבָב וְאֲזָבְרָה אֲזָבְרָה
עַלְבָב אֲזָבְרָה אֲזָבְרָה אֲזָבְרָה אֲזָבְרָה אֲזָבְרָה
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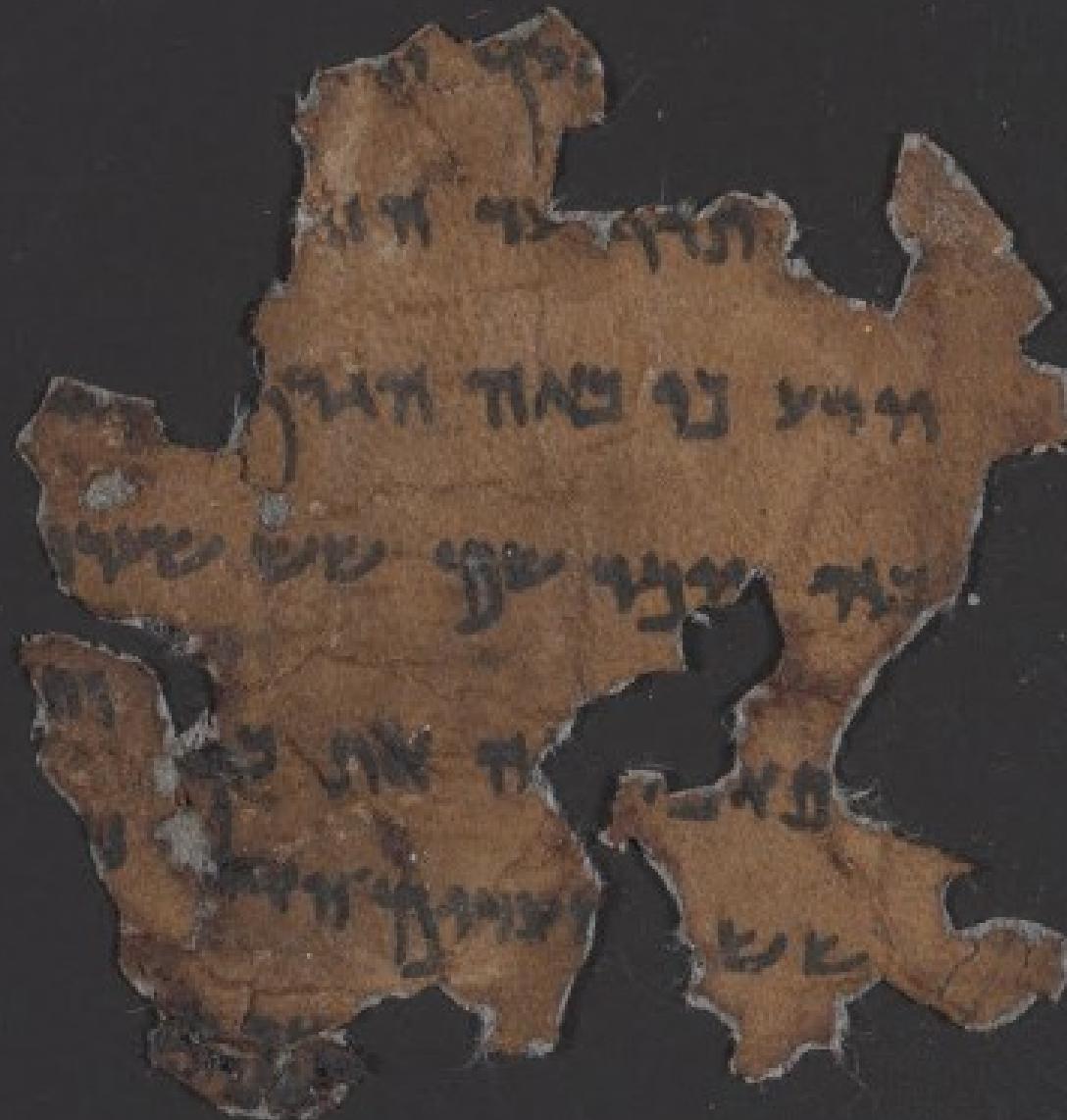
אברהם
בְּנֵי אַדָּם
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּנֵי אַפְרִים
אֲשֶׁר
בְּנֵי
הַתְּהִזְזִיא
מוֹאָד
טָלֵם
אַז
בְּנֵי אַזְוֹן

Fragment of an otherwise unknown novella from the Dead Sea



אות אשׂור בְּנֵי אֶרְזָא וְלֹא זָהָר שְׁנָתָה
לֹא עֲשָׂר פְּלִצּוֹד בְּקַרְבָּתְאַרְצָה אֲשֶׁר צָבָו וְהַזָּה קְבָא מִגְּדוֹלָה
כְּרִיעַ עַלְיָהָן וְפְּרִישָׁה וְבָהָא אֲשֶׁר וְמַלְאָה וְמַלְאָל
בְּשָׂתָן כִּי תְּחִרְבָּה אֲלֹהִים הַמְּתָמָן אֲשֶׁר וְהַלְּאָה
בְּאַלְפָה וְלִזְבָּבָה בְּמַעַן אַזְדָּה אַבְנָה וְהַזָּה שְׁבִעָה אַתְּ אֲלִירָץ
לְאַגְּרָץ וְמַהְתָּה מַעַל צְוֹנוֹן וְרַעֲנוֹן וְזָהָרָץ מִעַל לְגָלָגָל וְבָעָשָׂה
זְהַלְעָזָעָז וְהַאֲבָב וְוְאַבְלָה וְהַזָּה אֲשֶׁר אַתְּ עַפְתָּה וְשָׁעָה
עַזְיָה וְהַאֲבָב שְׁלָשׁ שְׁנָתָה אֶתְתָּה וְבָתָה לְפָנָיו וְלִזְוָזָה זְהַלְעָזָעָז
בְּלִבְנָה אֲזָעָבָה וְצְרִיעַ וְאַתְּ גָּלוֹת יְזָעָה וְעַזְבָּעָז וְזָקָנָעָז עַזְבָּעָז
וְזָבָעָז וְזָהָרָתָה וְצְרִיעַ וְזָהָר וְבָטָשׁוּ מְזִישָׁתְבָתָה
וְצְבָעָזָעָז וְגָנוֹנָה וְאַתְּ לְאַתְּ הַזָּה צְבָעָז אֲדָדָה אֲדָד
בְּאַתְּבָטָן אֲשֶׁר נְלִפְנֵז שְׁבָבָה לְעֹזָה לְאַרְעָלָלָלָלָבָנָה לְבָבָה אֲשֶׁר
וְאַבָּעָז נְלִימָם אֲסְזָע
בְּשָׂא הַבָּזָע זְלִבְנָה בְּנָבָב לְהַלְבָב מְלִבְנָה תָּאָזָבָב
זְהַלְבָב שָׂדָה הַלְבָב לְזְבָבָב בְּנָבָב וְאַשְׁוָבָב שְׁוָבָב זְבָב
עַלְבָב אַבָּזָב זְבָב אַפְּתָה הַשְּׁבָבָב עַלְבָב זְבָב מְלָבָב הַלְבָב
בְּלִבְבָב אַחֲרָבָב זְעָמָב אַלְבָב רַעֲמָב זְעָמָב רַבְבָב
בְּרַבְבָב גְּזָעָב: לְכָבָב מְעַטָּב בְּאַתְּבָב אַתְּ גְּזָב אַדְבָב שְׁבָב
לְאַרְבָּב אַעֲזָב אַשְׁלָבָב צְבָבָב הַצְּבָבָב אַזְבָּב שְׁמָבָב כְּלָבָב אַעֲרָבָב

A fragment of a scroll
of Ruth from the
Dead Sea Scrolls



Medieval Hebrew Bibles

Damascus Pentateuch Codex

ca. 1000 CE

ca. 1,000 years after Dead Sea Scrolls



Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

Samuel

Kings

Chronicles

Ezra-Nehemiah

Daniel

Ruth

Jonah*

Esther

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

The Twelve*

Psalms

Song of Songs

Lamentations

Proverbs

Qohelet

Job

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

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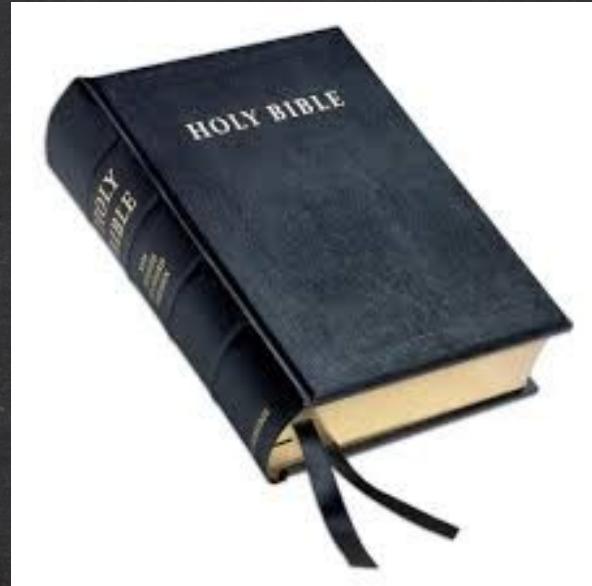
Daniel

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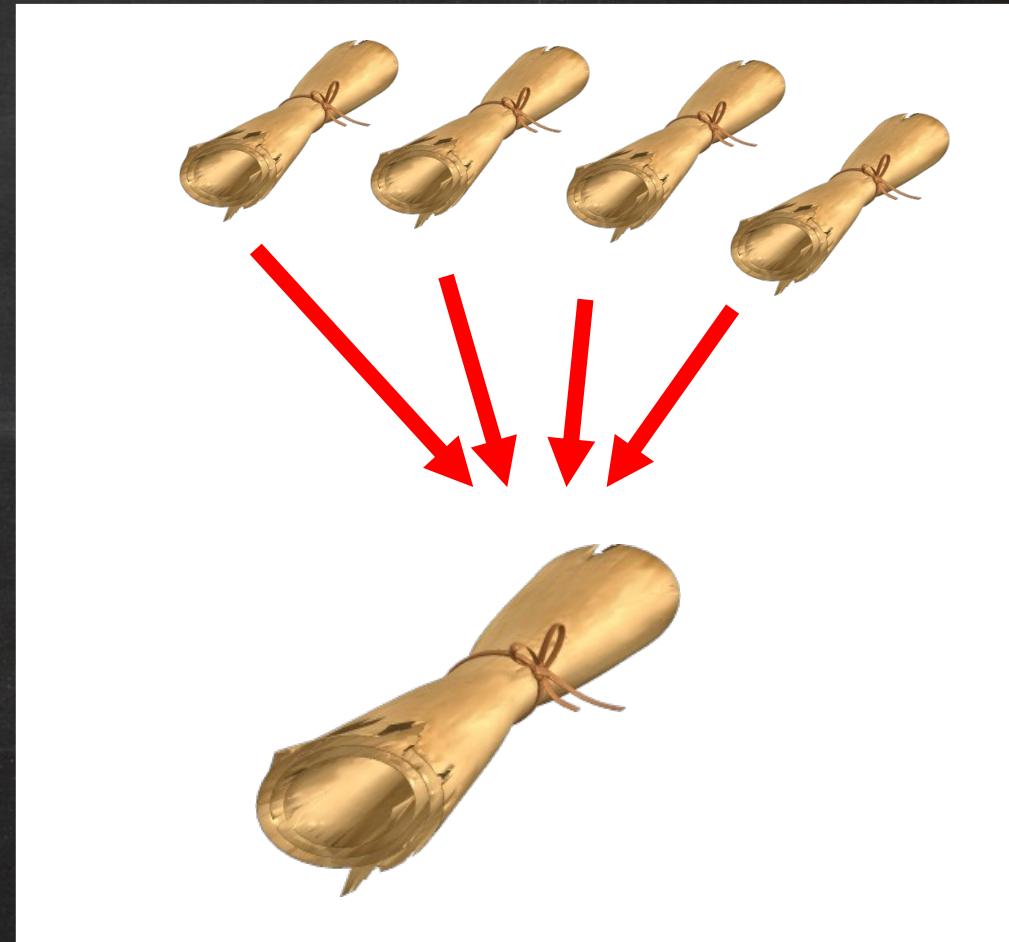
Ruth
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- Three categories:
 1. **Compilations**
 2. Edited works
 3. Compositions



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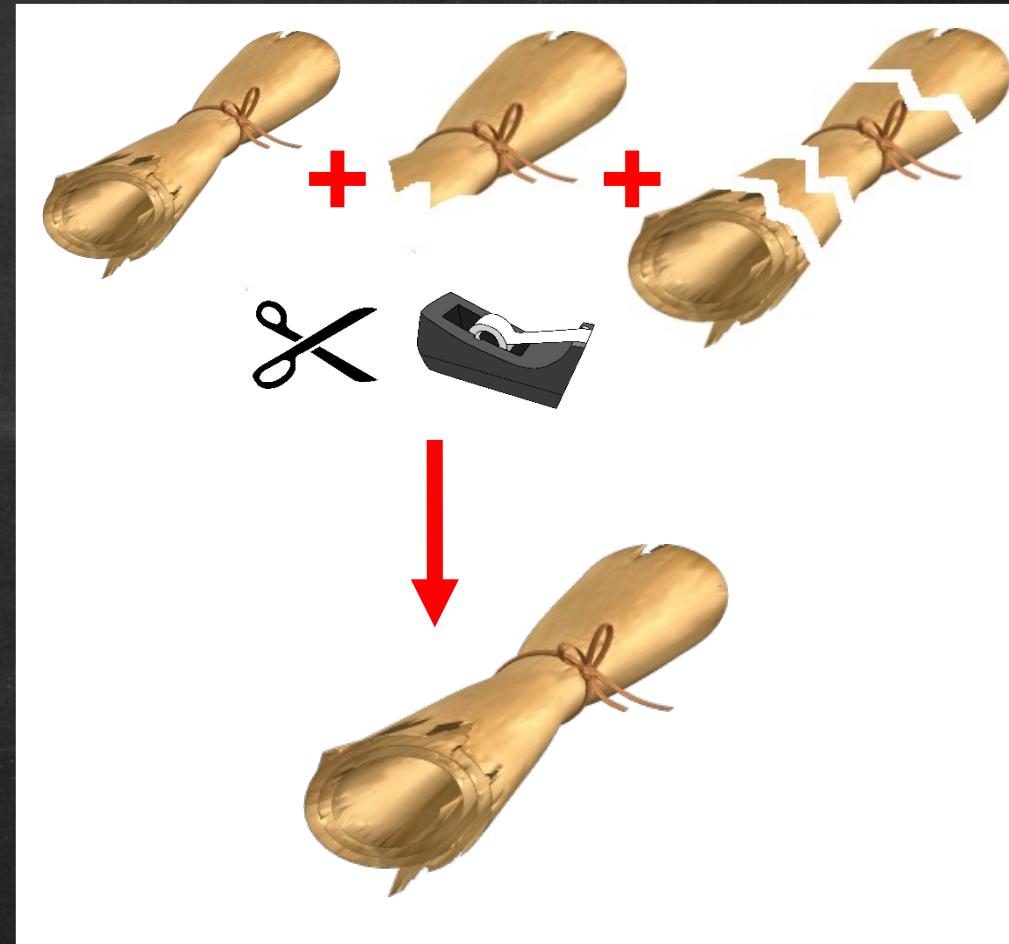
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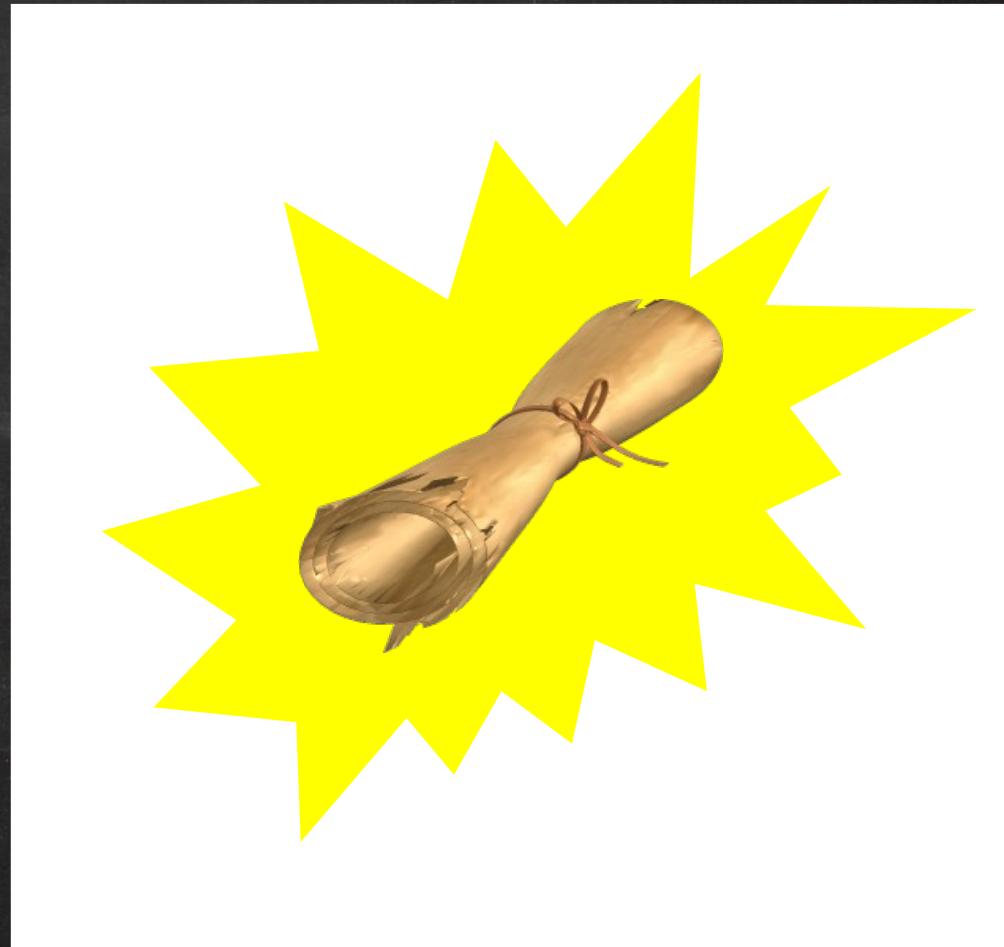
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The novellas are all
authored compositions.



Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

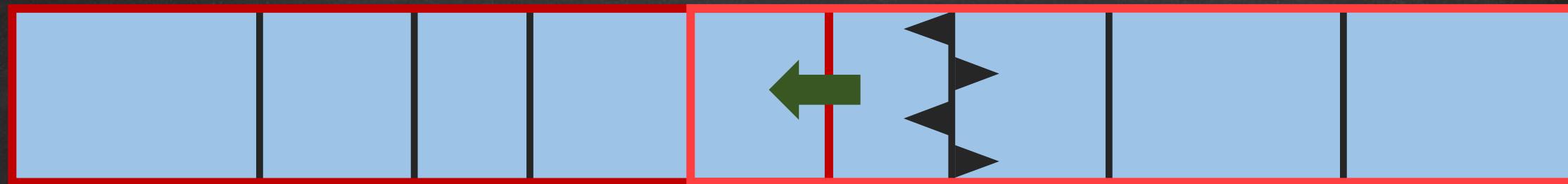
Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

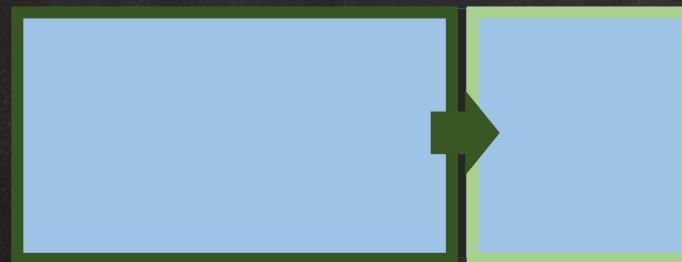
Samuel

Kings

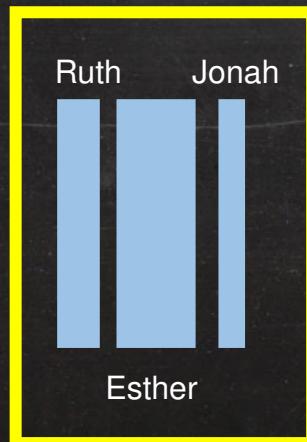


Chronicles

Ezra-Nehemiah



Daniel



The novellas are unique:

- Short
- 1 composition per scroll
- No overlap with other scrolls

The Jewish Bible

Torah

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Neviim (Prophets)

Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
The Twelve
(incl. Jonah)

Ketuvim (Writings)

Ruth
Psalms
Job
Proverbs
Song of Songs
Lamentations

Qohelet
Esther
Daniel
Chronicles
Ezra-Nehemiah

The Jewish Bible

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Ketuvim (Writings)

Ruth Qohelet
Psalms Esther
Job Daniel
Proverbs Chronicles
Song of Songs Ezra-Nehemiah
Lamentations

Narrative record of the Golden Age
of Judean history & era of prophets

Other literature which stems from
the Golden Age

The canonical placement of the novellas

A clue to their original purpose:

- Associated with the Golden Age
- Supplementing a particular era
- Not authoritative history but **historical fiction**

Ruth An idyllic short story about a distant ancestor of King David.

Setting: the era of Israel's ancestors
(Early Iron Age)

The canonical placement of the novellas

A clue to their original purpose:

- Associated with an era during the Golden Age
- Supplementing a particular era
- Not authoritative history but **historical fiction**

Jonah A humorous story of a prophet mentioned at 2 Kings 14:25 who struggles with his religious vocation.

Setting: the Kingdom of Israel (Iron Age)

The canonical placement of the novellas

A clue to their original purpose:

- Associated with an era during the Golden Age
- Supplementing a particular era
- Not authoritative history but **historical fiction**

Esther A story of a Judean woman who becomes the favorite queen of the Persian emperor and who saves her people from destruction.

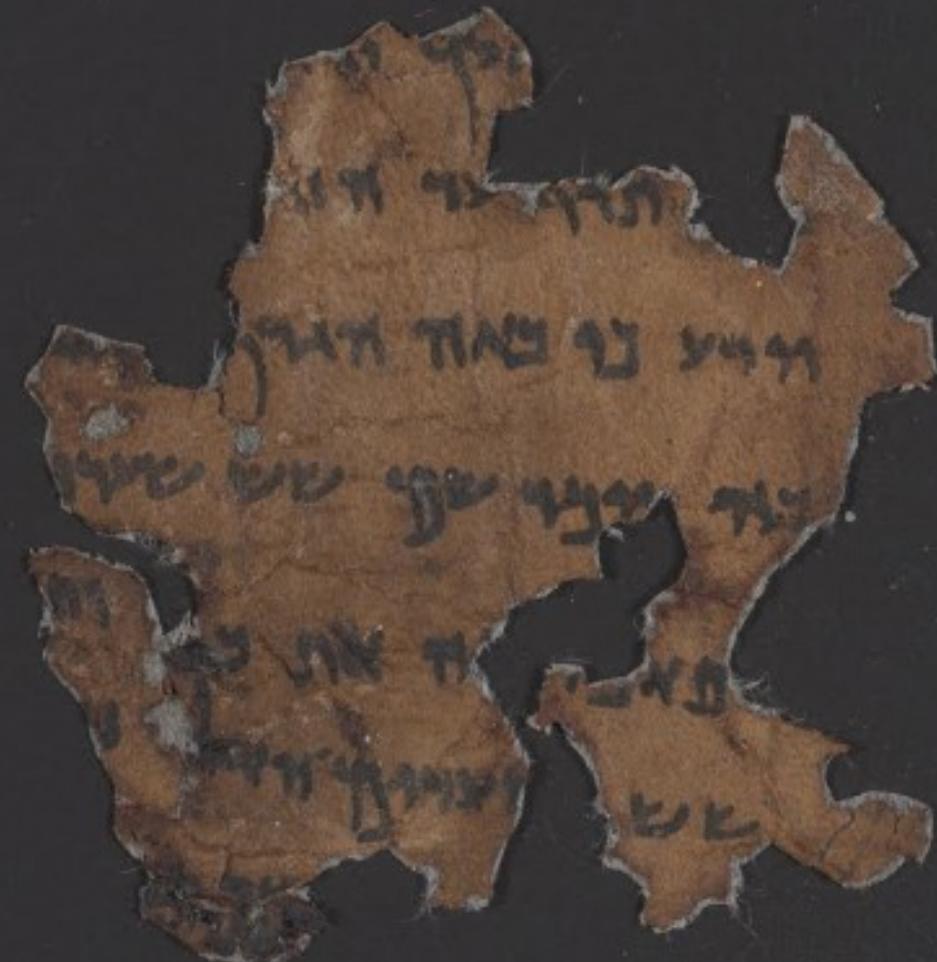
Setting: the Persian Empire

Other Judean novellas: Judith, Tobit

- Written in Greek or more popular in Greek-speaking circles.
- Do not find immediate relevance to the record of the Golden Age as Ruth, Jonah, and Esther.

Reading Ruth as a Judean, ca. 100 BCE-70 CE

A fragment of a scroll of Ruth
from the Dead Sea Scrolls,
Hasmonean Period

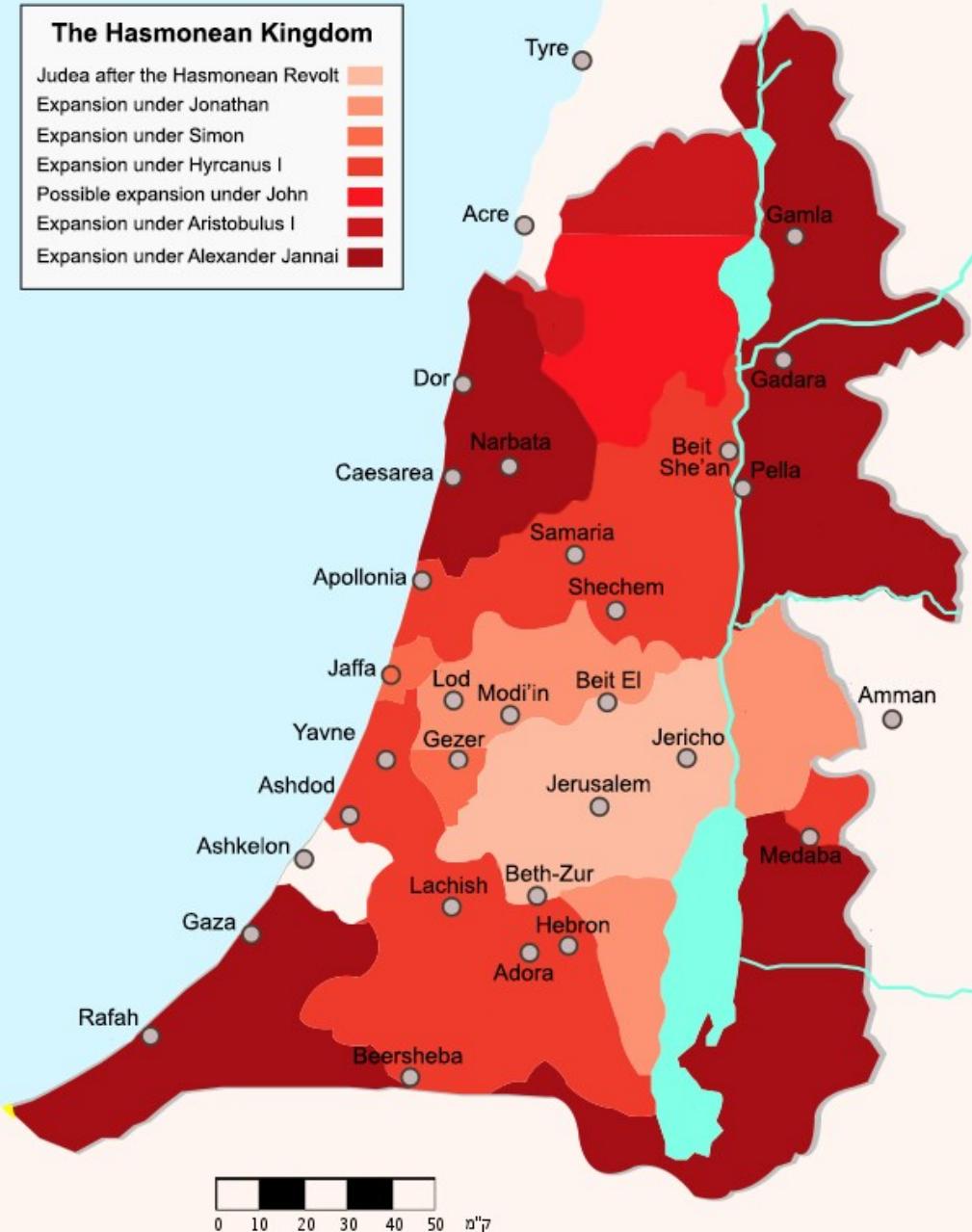




Antiochus IV – Hellenistic emperor
175-164 BCE



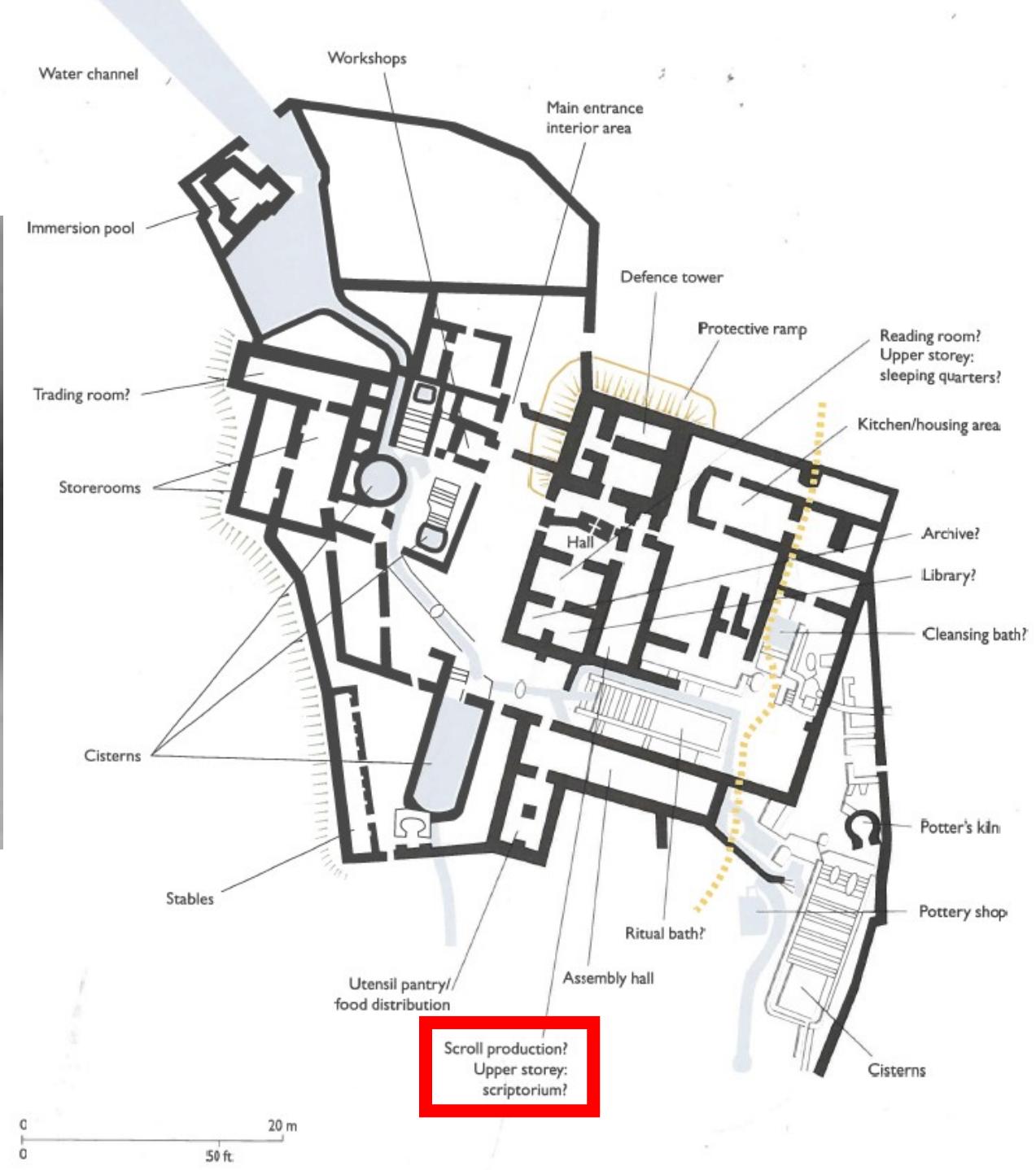
John Hyrcanus – Hasmonean king
135-104 BCE



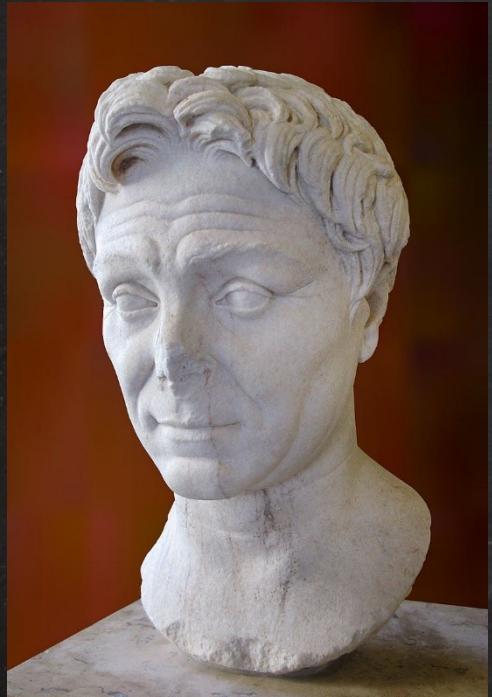
By Effib

https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/החסמונאים#/media/File:Map_Hasmonean_Kingdom-he.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63408877>





Pompey invading Jerusalem and entering the Holy of Holies of the Temple (63 BCE)



Painting by Jean Fouquet
(1470-1475)





Arch of Titus detail:
Commemoration of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by Titus

Reading Ruth as a Judean, ca. 100 BCE-70 CE

Ruth and Naomi by William Blake



Reading Ruth as a Judean, ca. 100 BCE-70 CE

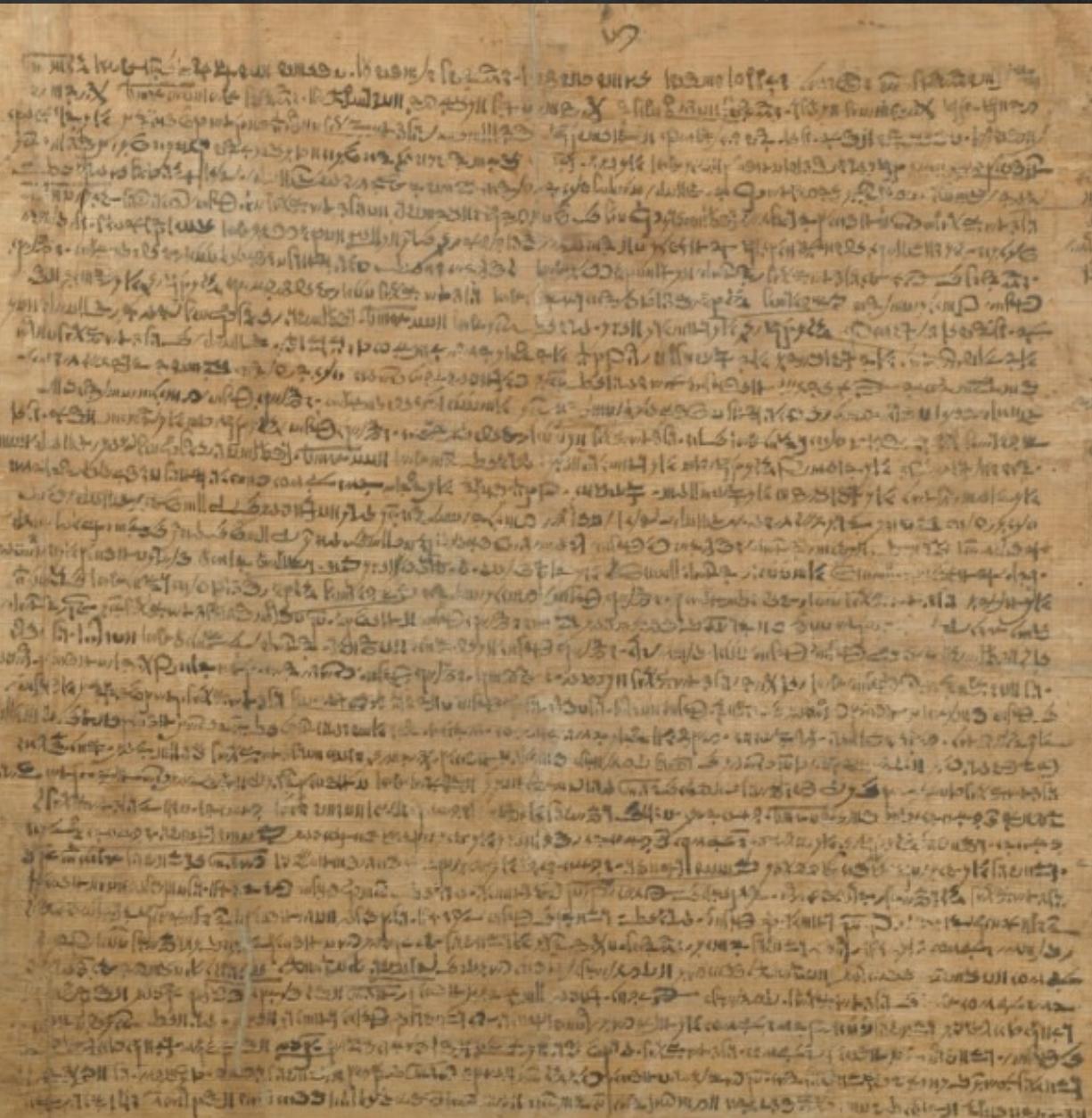
“So Boaz married Ruth. She became his wife, and he lived with her. Yahweh let her conceive, and she bore a son. The women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be Yahweh, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel!’ ...

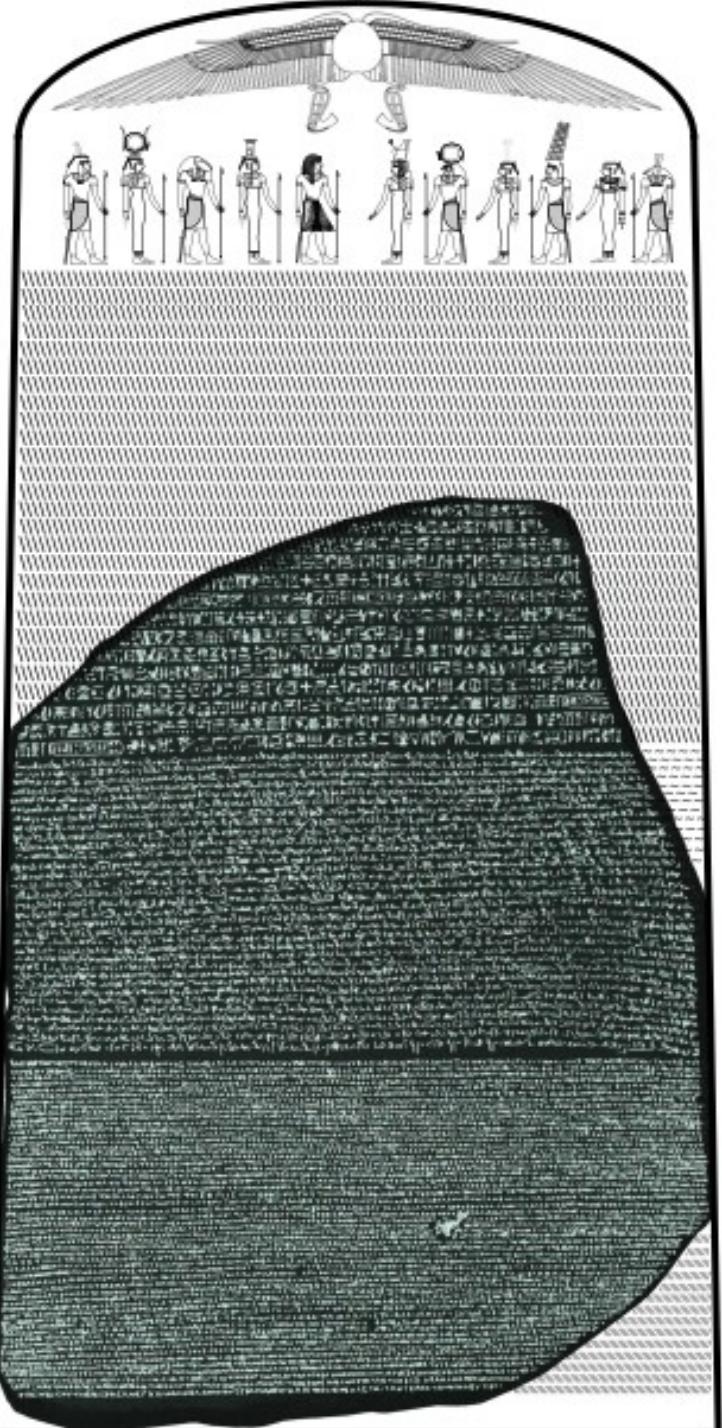
Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became its foster mother, and the women neighbors gave him a name: ‘A son is born to Naomi!’ They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.”

(Ruth 4:13-14, 16-17)

Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

“Page” 4 from the only surviving
copy of 1 Setna





Reconstruction of the Rosetta Stone

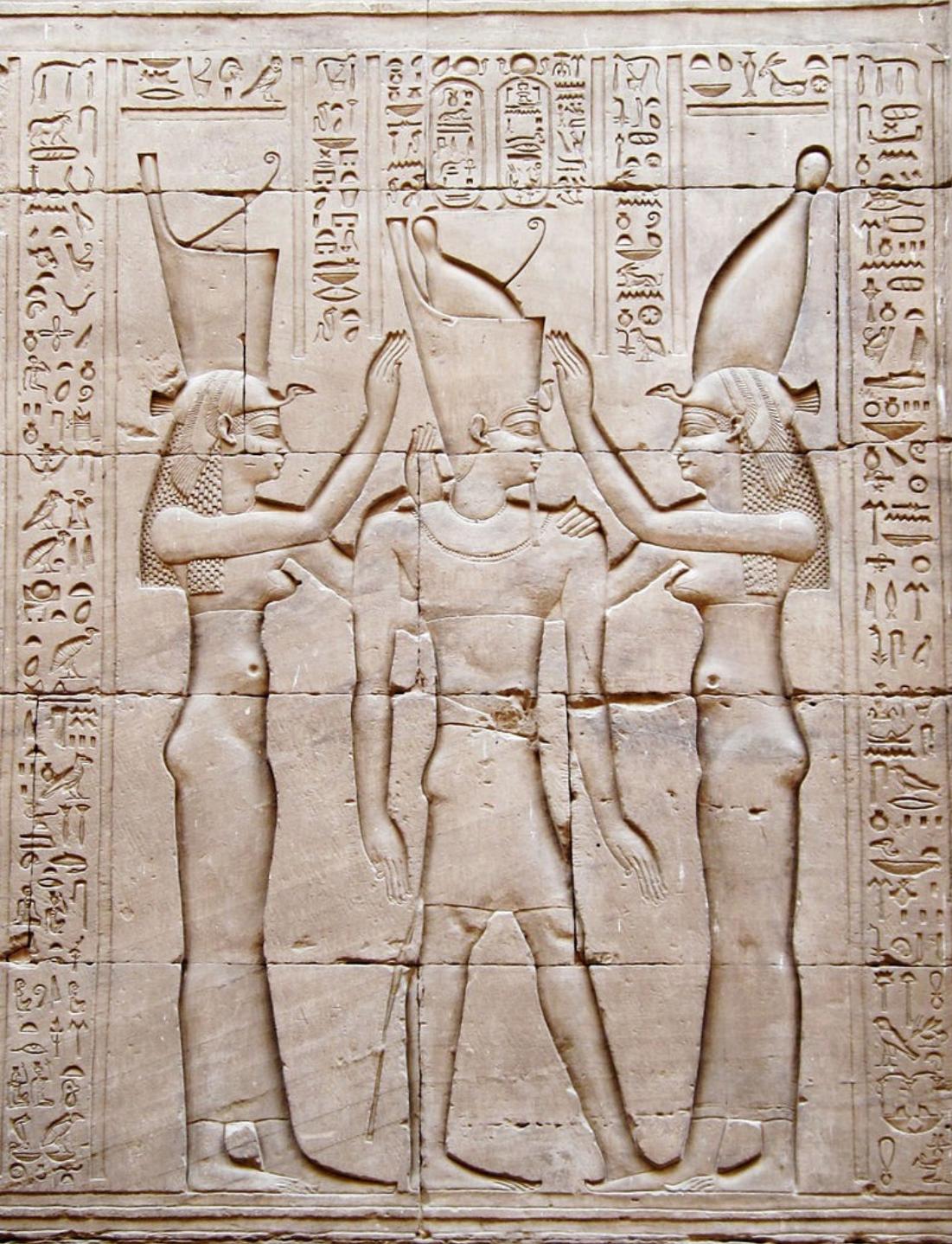
By Captmondo (Own work), CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10799505>

Ptolemy V Epiphanes
204-181 BCE

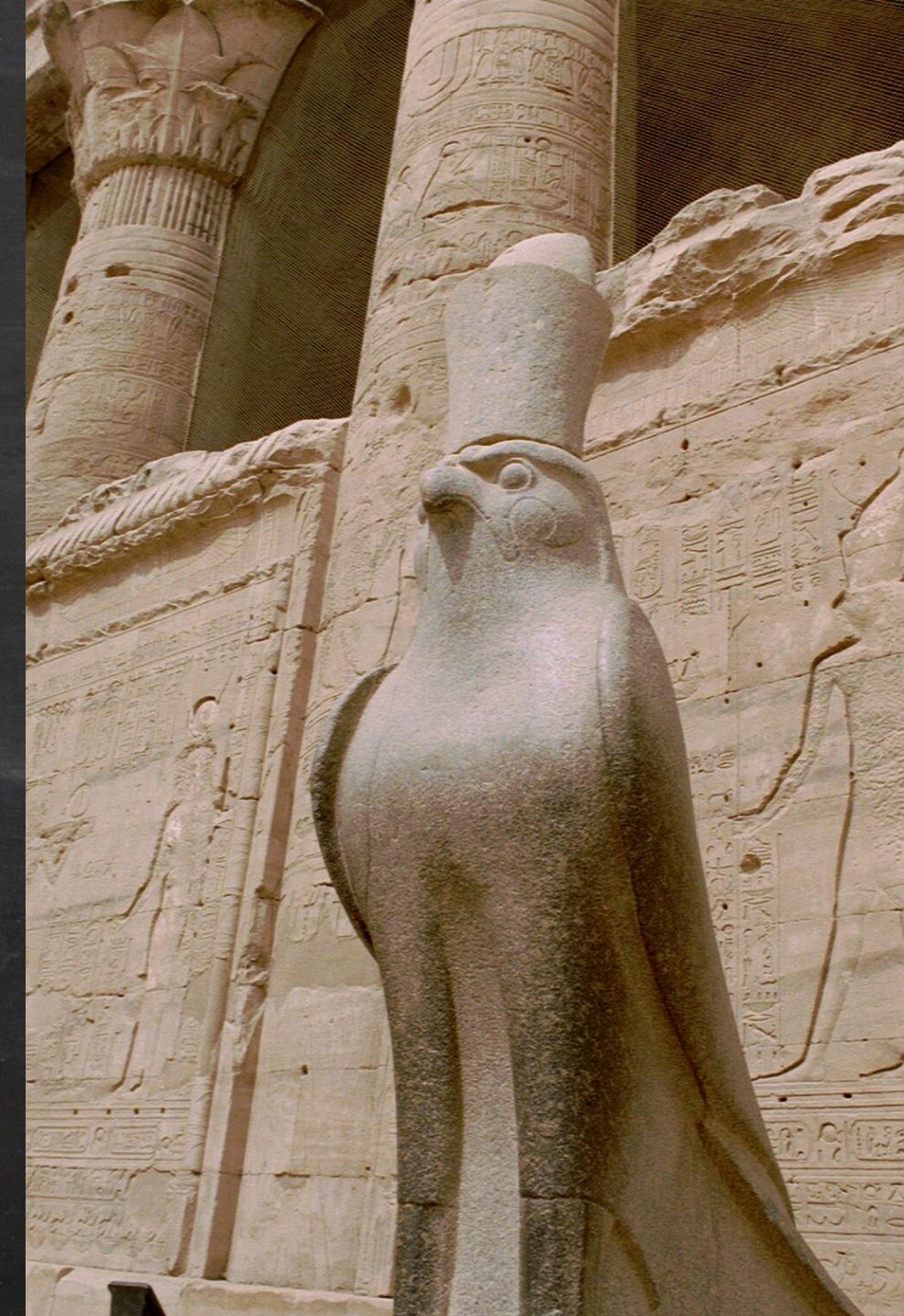




Temple of Edfu

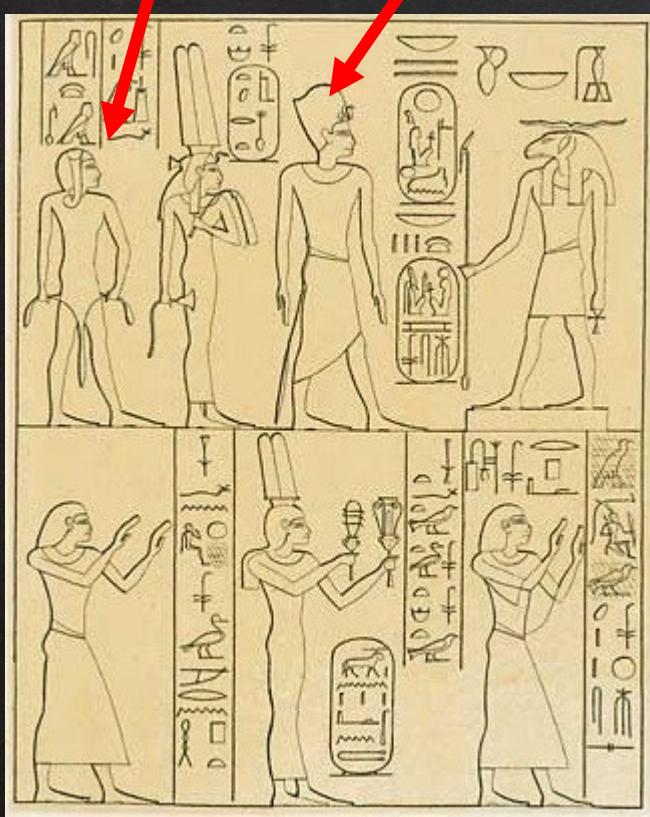


Holy of Holies of the Temple of Edfu



Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

Ramesses II
Khaemwaset



Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian,
ca. 195 BCE

Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

Setna said, “Ihweret, let me be given this scroll, or I shall take it by force!” Naneferkaptah raised himself up from the coffin, and said, “Are you Setna? To whom this woman is speaking these woeful matters, and you not taking them into consideration? As for this scroll: can you take it by means of the strength of a skilled scribe, or by contest...by playing a game against me?” Setna said, “I am ready!”





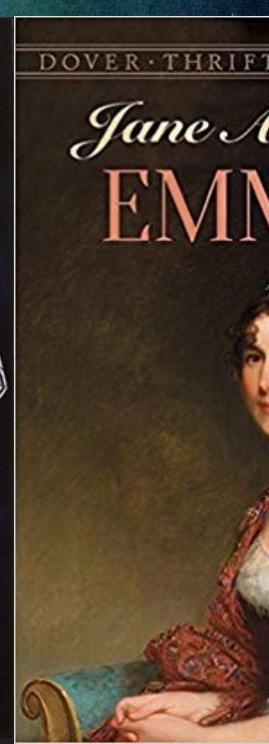
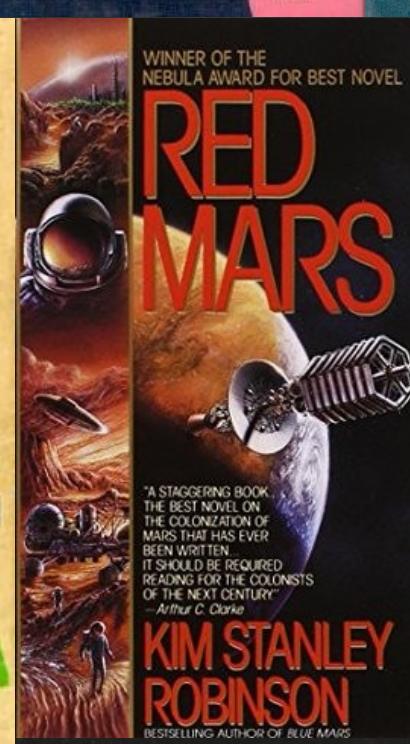
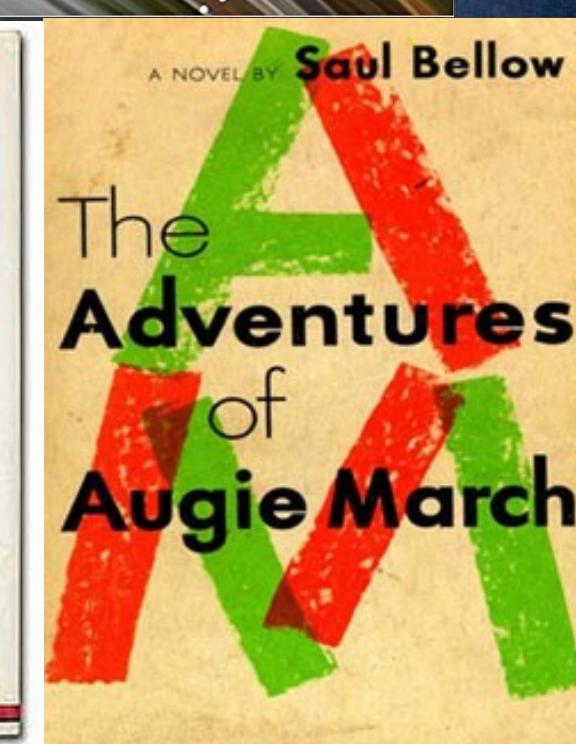
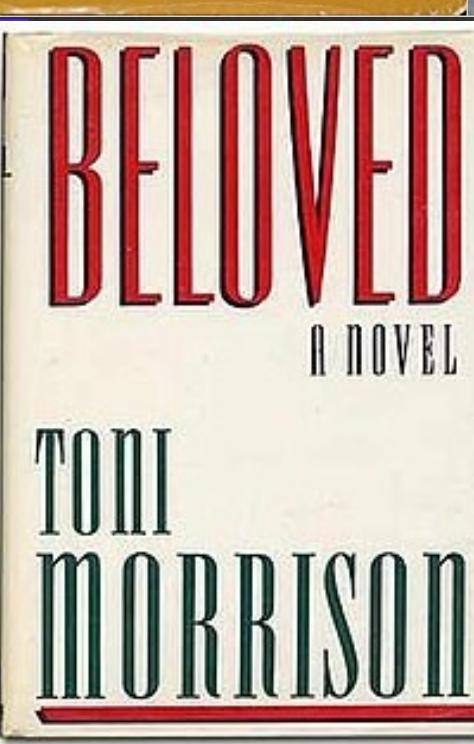
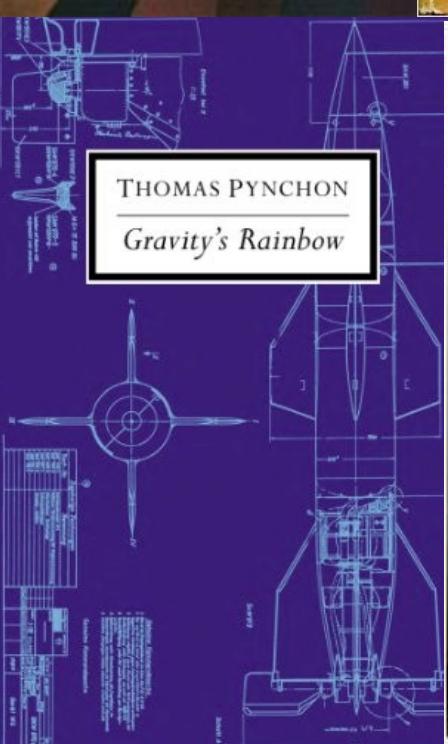
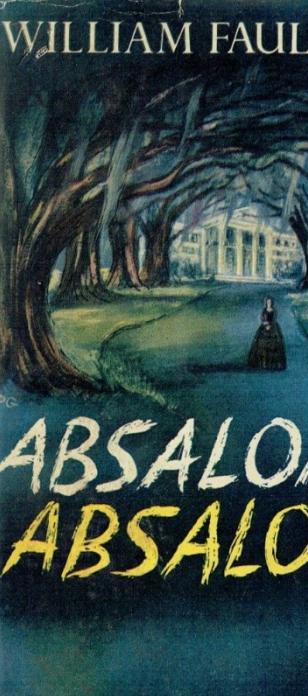
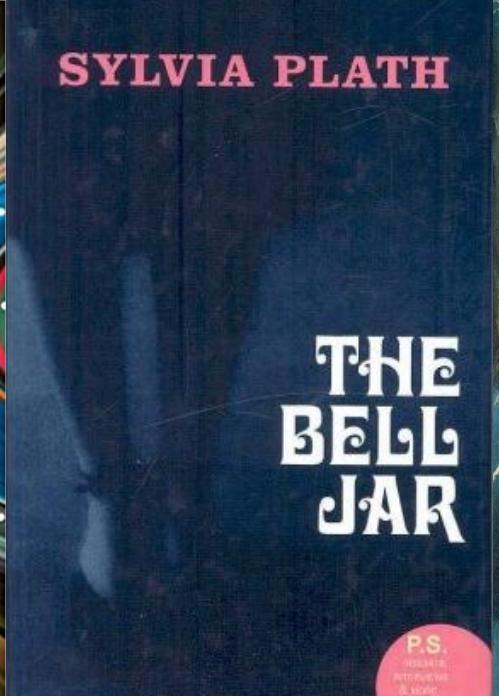
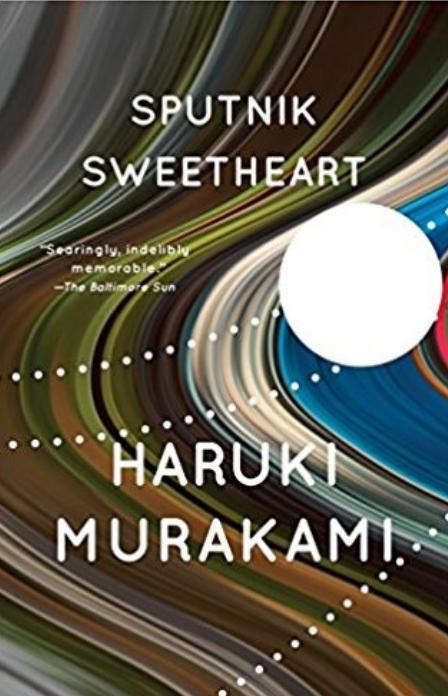
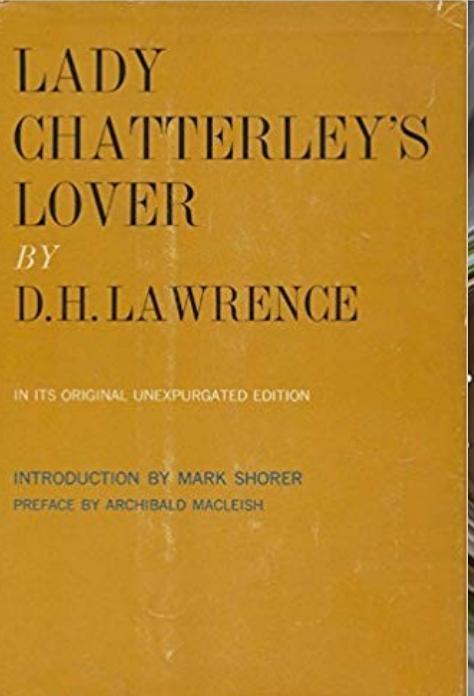
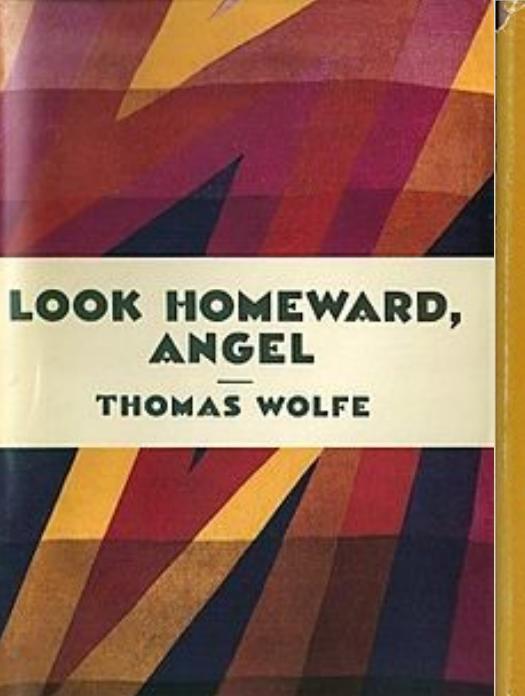
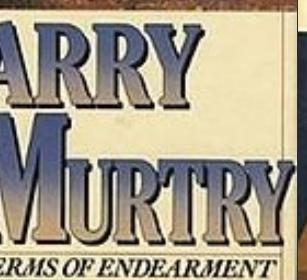
Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

The game board and its pieces were brought before them. Naneferkaptah took the first game from Setna. He chanted a spell, struck his head with the board, and sent him into the ground up to his feet. He did the same for the second game, and sent him into the ground up to his penis. He did the same for the third game, and sent him into the ground up to his ears.

Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

After that, Setna was in great difficulty at the hands of Naneferkaptah. He called out to his brother Inaros: “Hurry to the surface and tell everything that has happened to me to the Pharaoh! Bring me the amulets of Ptah together with my magical scroll!” He did not delay...Inaros returned and put the amulets on the body of Setna, and he flew upwards at that very instant, reached out for the scroll, and took it.

Books Without Authors...



French roman
German Roman
Italian romanzo
(English romance)

Derived from Latin *romanice*
(linguistic: “what people ruled
by the Roman Empire speak”)

Spanish novela
English novel

Derived from Italian *novella*
(literary: “a work of literature
that is a short, new thing”)

Books Without Authors...