

As God's self-revelation, the objective
of the Old Testament is that the
reader comes to know God better.

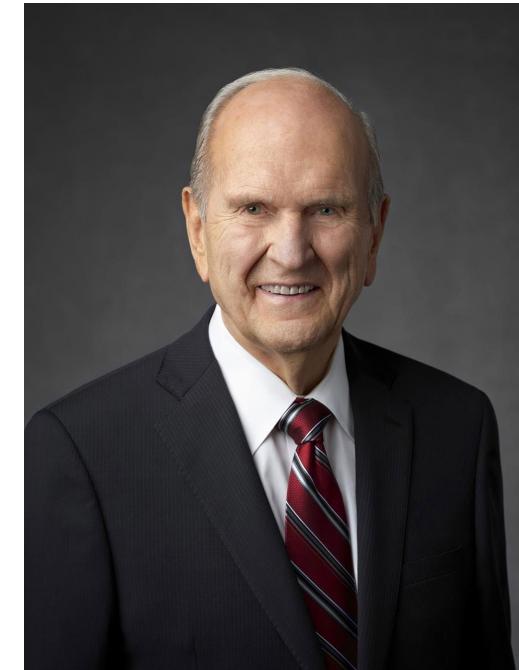
The Covenant

- “At the core of this self-revelation, delineating the plan of god, is the covenant. Even the English designation “Old Testament” indicates that the covenant is the core concept of this collection of books (testament=covenant). Through the covenant God both reveals what he is like and obliges himself to a particular course of action. His loyalty (Heb. *hesed*) to the covenant frequently leads him to acts of grace and mercy, but justice is also built into the covenant to ensure accountability for his people. **Since the covenant is the instrument used by God to effect self-revelation, the Old Testament often appears to be the history of the covenant, or of aspects of it, more than a history of Israel**” (Andrew E. Hill & John H. Walton, A Survey of the Old Testament).

President Nelson's words on the Covenant & on Gathering Israel

In a press conference in January 2018 immediately following his ordination as President of the Church, President Nelson said, “Now, to each member of the Church I say: Keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women and children everywhere.”

One of the Hebraic meanings of the word “Israel” is “let God prevail,” President Nelson said. Following an invitation for Latter-day Saints to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice, he asked, “Are you willing to let God prevail in your life? Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life?”



President Nelson encouraged all to make a list of all that the Lord has promised He will do for covenant Israel. “Ponder these promises. Talk about them with your family and friends. Then live and watch for these promises to be fulfilled in your own life.”

The gathering is “the most important thing taking place on earth today,” President Nelson told youth during a worldwide devotional in June 2018, inviting them to enlist in the Lord’s youth battalion to gather Israel. “This gathering should mean everything to you. This is the mission for which you were sent to earth.”

Positionality & Assumptions

BYU Religious Education Statement on Diversity and Inclusion: The Lord invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33, emphasis added). Expressions of bigotry and discrimination—whether intended or not—on any basis, including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability assume superiority and are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. We affirm our commitment to stand against all such expressions, and we affirm our commitment, in all of our endeavors, to follow the example of the Savior in being loving and inclusive, especially to the marginalized. When students, staff, and faculty extend common courtesy, empathy, and understanding, we manifest our love for Christ and for all God’s children.

Listening to, Learning from, & Caring about Marginalized Voices within Scriptures.

What is God teaching you through the Old Testament about how to interact with Him and everyone you come into contact with?

In his October 2019 general conference address, President Russell M. Nelson spoke about poverty and other humanitarian concerns, declaring, “As members of the Church, we feel a kinship to those who suffer in any way... We heed an Old Testament admonition: ‘Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy’ [Deuteronomy 15:1].” **President Nelson’s linking of Old Testament law with modern social concerns highlights the continued relevancy of the Old Testament for confronting modern challenges, including poverty, ethnocentrism, and the world’s growing refugee crisis. In this class we will explore how the Old Testament calls us to develop an ethic of compassion and care.**

Luke 4:18-19 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

“This class really showed me that I have a place in the gospel, and in SCRIPTURE! It's crazy how empowering it is to see yourself in scripture. Is this what dudes feel like... like all the time?

Appropriate Mask Wearing Required: masks must cover nose & mouth at all times.



- “We want to do all we can to limit the spread of these viruses. We know that protection from the diseases they cause can only be achieved by immunizing a very high percentage of the population.”
- “To limit exposure to these viruses, we urge the use of face masks in public meetings whenever social distancing is not possible. To provide personal protection from such severe infections, we urge individuals to be vaccinated. Available vaccines have proven to be both safe and effective.”
- The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

COMPONENTS OF STUDENT GRADES

- Attendance & Participation: 6%+
- Completion of Assigned Reading before Coming to Class: Daily reading from the Old Testament & outside source material: 27%
- Lived Religion Assignment: 7.5%
- Midterm 1: 17%
- Midterm 2: 17%
- Final: 22%
- Reflection Paper: 3%
- Course Evaluation 1%

Inappropriate Use of Course Materials: All course materials (e.g., outlines, handouts, syllabi, exams, PowerPoint presentations, lectures, lecture audio, video recordings, etc.) are proprietary. **Students are prohibited from recording, posting, sharing, or selling any such course materials without the express written permission of the professor teaching this course. To do so is a violation of the Brigham Young University Honor Cod.**

The Hebrew Bible

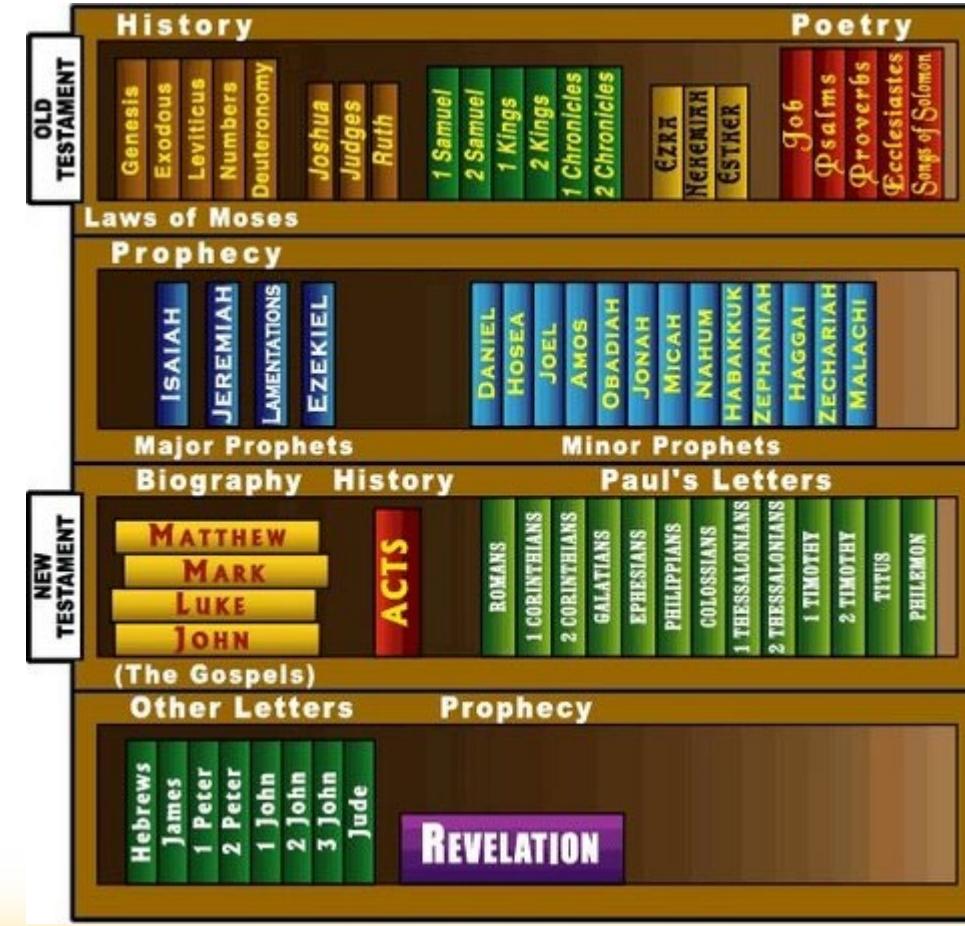
- What we call the Old Testament is more properly **the Hebrew Bible**
 - The word “*testament*” also means “covenant”
 - Christian view: Old Covenant as a name is only to distinguish from the New Covenant in Christ, our New Testament. New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant. Jewish view: God’s covenant with ethnic Israel & the Law of Moses are still in effect
 - *In LDS theology we know it was not the first Covenant – Adam had the full and everlasting covenant*
 - *The Hebrew Bible is the biblical writers’ account of how God interacted with the world and particularly with his people Israel.*
- Also called the Tanakh
 - *Torah* – The Law
 - *Nevi'im* – The Prophets
 - *Ketuvim* – The Writings

Introduction to the Old Testament

- The Old Testament is a spiritual record & a religious document. It is not a systematic *history*
 - It was meant to be a spiritual record of the Israelites and later the Jews, so it focuses largely on only the Jews and their immediate ancestors.
 - Over the centuries, various scholars have tried to “prove” the Old Testament using archaeology, to pin down events, locations, dates, etc.
 - The results are ambiguous, however. Sometimes archeology provides strong support for biblical places, events, and even people, but sometimes it raises more questions
 - This leads some modern scholars to dismiss the OT as little more than legend, and discount everything in it as untrue.
 - Like the Book of Mormon, the OT, and all scripture, is meant to be taken on faith
- ***The text is better understood by putting it in its historical and cultural context***

From Come Follow Me: Don’t expect the Old Testament to present a thorough and precise history of humankind. That’s not what the original authors and compilers were trying to create. Their larger concern was to teach something about God—about His plan for His children, about what it means to be His covenant people, and about how to find redemption when we don’t live up to our covenants. Sometimes they did it by relating historical events as they understood them.

Why is it useful to think of the Old Testament as an anthology?



Why is it useful to think of the Old Testament as an anthology?

- It is a collection of writings produced and assembled in stages over more than a thousand years.
- Like every anthology, the Old Testament is a selection. The ancient Israelites produced many other writings, some of which are mentioned in the Bible but have not survived, such as “the Book of the Wars of the Lord” (Numbers 21:14).
- The books were not written in the order that they appear. They are also not a history but a theological document.

What are the three parts of the Bible in the Jewish tradition?



Tanakh

- **Torah** – The Instruction, also called the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
 - Deuteronomy
 - The “2nd law” Establishes principles which are later demonstrated through recorded history
- **Nevi'im** – The Prophets, though there are prophets in the Ketuvim, these are distinguished
 - Includes the Deuteronomistic history among these – Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings
- **Ketuvim** – The Writings, though this includes prophets, they are distinguished as after Babylon
 - The history of the Chroniclers, much of Deuteronomistic history rehearsed again

When did the Torah, Prophets, and Writings each likely gain canonical status?



Tanakh

- **Torah (fifth century BC or BCE)** – also called the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
 - Deuteronomy
 - The “2nd law” Establishes principles which are later demonstrated through recorded history
- **Nevi'im (second century BC or BCE)** – The Prophets, though there are prophets in the Ketuvim, these are distinguished
 - Includes the Deuteronomistic history among these – Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings
- **Ketuvim (second century AD or CE)** – Though this includes prophets, they are distinguished as after Babylon
 - The history of the Chroniclers, much of Deuteronomistic history rehearsed again

Jewish Division of the Bible

The Law	The Prophets	The Writings
Genesis	<i>Former Prophets</i>	Psalms
Exodus	Joshua	Proverbs
Leviticus	1-2 Samuel	Job
Numbers	1-2 Kings	Song of Songs (Solomon)
Deuteronomy	Judges	Ruth
	<i>Latter Prophets</i>	Lamentations
	Isaiah	Ecclesiastes
	Jeremiah	Esther
	Ezekiel	Daniel
	Hosea	Ezra
	Joel	Nehemiah
	Amos	1-2 Chronicles
	Obadiah	
	Jonah	

Protestant Division of the Bible

The Prologue	Historical Core	The Writings	The Prophets
Genesis	Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy Joshua Judges Ruth 1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings 1-2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah	Esther Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Lamentations	<i>Major Prophets</i> Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel
			<i>Minor Prophets</i> Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, dating from the third century BCE.

The production of the LXX involved Jewish scholars with varying skills in Hebrew and Greek. So, the translation “style” and quality varies from book to book, and even within some books. The translation process also utilized different scrolls of the Hebrew scriptures—there was not one official Hebrew “Bible” at this time.

Apocrypha: From the Greek for “hidden, concealed.” (This is misleading since these texts were never hidden or concealed.) A collection of fifteen texts, mostly dating from the intertestamental period[the time between the Old and New Testaments, c. 450 BC to AD 50], included in the Septuagint version but not the Hebrew Bible. Joseph Smith’s King James Version contained the Apocrypha [collected together between the Old and New Testaments], which led to the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 91.

Pseudepigrapha: Meaning “falsely attributed writings,” this term designates a loosely defined, diverse collection of non-canonical Jewish texts produced from about 300 BC to AD 200. Pseudepigraphic texts often represent the teachings and visionary experiences of prominent Old Testament figures and include 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah. Considered to contain little or no authentic material from the actual Old Testament period, the pseudepigrapha still convey information from the time they were produced.

Where do most of our earliest, most fragmentary copies of the Old Testament come from?



The Dead Sea
Scrolls third
century BC to the
first century AD

There are no original manuscripts of any of the books of the Bible

How did we get the King James version of the Bible?



How did we get the King James version of the Bible?

- It was published in 1611 under the patronage of King James I of England
- Drew on earlier translations but it corrected them against the original languages
- Several dozen scholars worked for seven years to produce it
- Because of its superb style as well as its accuracy, it became the most widely used English translation of the Bible.

Common Question: Why italics in KJV?

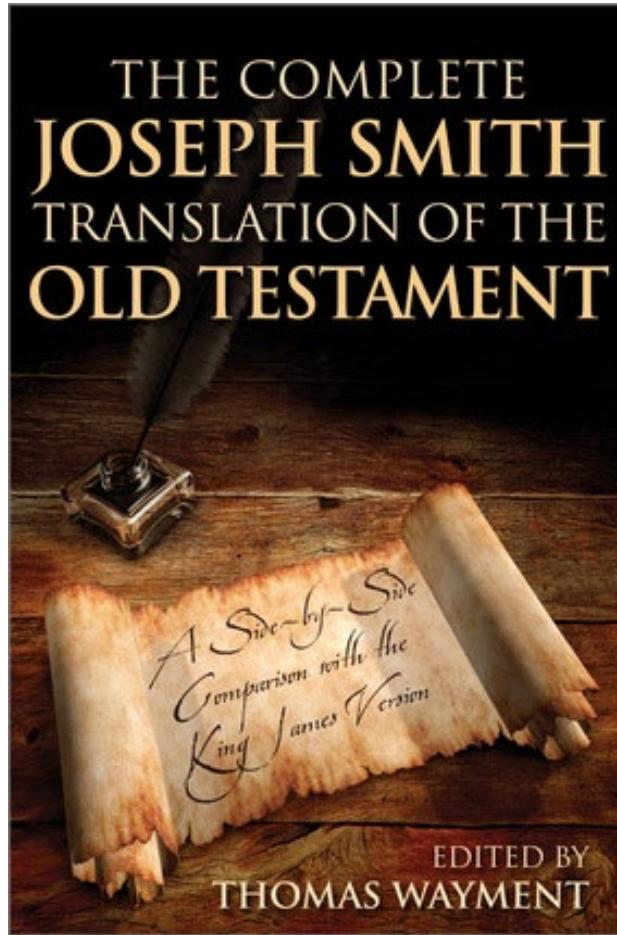
The words in *italics* in the King James Bible are words that were added by the translators to help the reader. This is usually necessary when translating from one language to another because a word in one language may not have a corollary word in English and idiomatic expressions often do not easily move from one language to another. Hence, the words in *italics* are words which do not have any equivalence in the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek text. By adding these words, the translators' goal was to make the meaning of the sentence clearer and produce a more readable translation that read smoothly, yet was true to the original. However, to make sure that the reader understood that these words were not in the manuscripts, they set them in *italics*.

<p><i>the brother</i> of James.</p> <p>These all <u>continued</u>⁴³⁴² with one <u>in prayer</u>⁴³³⁵ and <u>supplication</u>,¹¹⁶² the women, and Mary the mother of us, and with <u>his brethren</u>.⁸⁰</p> <p>And in those days Peter stood up midst of the <u>disciples</u>,³¹⁰¹ and said, <u>number</u> <u>of names</u>³⁶⁸⁶ together were <u>an hundred and twenty,</u>⁵⁶¹³)</p>	<p>69:25 ^aPs. 109:8 22 ^aMark 1:1 ^bActs 1:9 ^cJohn 15:27; Acts 1:8; 4:33 23 ^aActs 15:22 24 ^a1Sam. 16:7; 1Chr. 28:9; 29:17; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; Acts 15:8; Rev. 2:23 25 ^aActs 1:17</p>	<p>hast chosen, 25 ^aThat he may take <u>part</u>²⁸¹⁹ of this <u>ministry</u>¹²⁴⁸ and <u>apostleship</u>,⁶⁵¹ from which Judas <u>by transgression fell</u>,³⁸⁴⁵ that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their <u>lots</u>,²⁸¹⁹ and the lot <u>fell</u>⁴⁰⁹⁸ upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven <u>apostles</u>.⁶⁵²</p>
11 See notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19.		<p>MULTIPLE NUMBERS indicate that an underlined word or phrase is translated from more than one word in the original language.</p> <p>ITALICS are used in the text to indicate words that are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text, but are implied by it.</p>

Prior to 1455 with the printing of the Gutenberg Bible,
all books were written & reproduced by hand.
Why does this matter?



Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible



Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible

- 1. *Restoration of original text.*
- 2. *Restoration of what was once said or done but which was never in the Bible.*
- 3. *Editing to make the Bible more understandable for modern readers.*
- 4. *Editing to bring biblical wording into harmony with truth found in other revelations or elsewhere in the Bible.*
- 5. *Changes to provide modern readers teachings that were not written by original authors.*

Basic Consensus on formation of the Hebrew Bible

- Much of the material found in biblical books circulate in oral form before, and along with, their written form.
- Not all of this material, therefore, was put into writing contemporaneously, or nearly so, with the events described.
- The biblical books that became part of the scriptural canon themselves may have been the end product of successive additions to shorter texts. That is, many biblical books had multiple authors over a relatively long period of time. The authors and editors of the Bible often incorporated earlier material into their compositions
- Overall story line of god's dealings with Israel. This story line emerges, however, out of a variety of complementary and sometimes competing perspectives on Israel's story, and that these diverse perspectives exist side by side. Many different voices are heard from multiple moments in history, some speaking with foresight, others from hindsight.

The Hebrew Bible is filled with references to sources upon which various biblical texts are ostensibly based or which the biblical authors knew of and read

- “the Book of the Wars of YHWH” (Num 21:14)
- “The Book of Yashar” (e.g., Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18);
- “The Book of the Acts of Solomon” (e.g., 1 Kings 11:41);
- “The Books of the Annals of the Kings of Israel” (1 Kings 14:19; cf. also 2 Chron 33:18; 2 Chron 20:34);
- “The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah” (1 Kings 15:7);
- “The Records of Samuel the Seer” (1 Chron 29:29);
- “The History of Nathan the Prophet” (2 Chron 9:29);
- “The Records of Shemaiah the Prophet and Iddo the Seer” (2 Chron 12:15);
- “The Annals of Jehu the son of Hanani” (2 Chron 20:34);
- “The Records of Hozai” [or “the Seers”] (2 Chron 33:19)

Compositional Issues for Genesis—Deuteronomy

- The first of 5 books traditionally ascribed to Moses
 - Known as **Torah** or “The Law” in Hebrew, these books are also called **the Pentateuch** or “Five Scrolls” in Greek
 - The Torah is an anonymous literary work. The OT nowhere directly names the person(s) responsible for the Torah, or recounts how any of the Torah’s five books came to be or tell the story of their collection. The revered scribe Ezra probably completed the Torah under Persian auspices in connection with his return from exile to Jerusalem in the mid-5th century BC (Ezra 7:6, 10-26)
 - *Traditionally, Jews and Christians have regarded Moses as its authors, but nowhere in the surviving Torah is there a claim of Mosaic authorship.* Moses is referred to about six hundred times in the third person. However, the idea of Mosaic authorship appears very early in extra canonical books (first in Jubilees), and it was a strong tradition in early Judaism and Christianity
 - This position remains important for conservative communities today
 - *The LDS book of Moses makes it clear that at least a creation account together with an early primordial history was given to Moses as a revelation*
- Different sections of the Pentateuch evidence particular styles and themes, as well as distinctive diction (word choice)
 - The issue of distinctive diction is best illustrated by the different names for God (such as *Elohim* and *YHWH*) used in different parts of the text
 - As is so often the case, scholarship has made important observations about the text. It then proceeds to produce theories to explain them—we are not bound to accept these theories but understanding them helps us understand the text better.

Mosaic Authorship: Traditional View

- The books of Joshua (8:31-32, 23:6) and Kings (1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6, 23:25) refer to the torah of Moses, or the scroll of the torah of Moses—though these are likely references to (some form of) Deuteronomy, not the entire Torah in its current form.[13]
- The much later books of Ezra (3:2, 6:18, 7:6) Nehemiah (1:7-9, 8:1, 14, 9:14, 10:30, 13:1), Daniel (9:1, 13), and Chronicles (2 Chron 23:18, 30:16, 34:14) also refer to “the torah of Moses” or paraphrase laws from the Pentateuch as laws of Moses.[14]
- In the New Testament, Luke (2:22) refers to “the law of Moses” and Mark (12:19) states “Moses wrote” followed by a citation of Deut 25:5-6.
- In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Baba Bathra (14b-15a), Moses is listed as the Pentateuch’s author.

Presentation of Moses in the Torah

- The Pentateuch does not present itself as being written by Moses, but as an anonymous account about the history of the world and the Israelites up to and including the life of Moses.
- Nothing in the biblical book of Genesis is presented as having been “revealed” to Moses; it is simply a series of stories told by an anonymous author.
 - *This idea is complicated though by LDS scripture. The LDS book of Moses makes it clear that at least a creation account together with an early primordial history was given to Moses as a revelation*
- Third Person: Moses is referred to about six hundred times in the third person in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (“Moses said this,” “the Lord said to Moses,” “Moses did that”)
- Moreover, the book of Numbers writes: “Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth.”

Reconciling Scholarship with Revelation

- Mosaic Core: “the Pentateuch probably began with Moses’s writing and speeches (i.e. a “Mosaic Core”), which could have become a living, growing documents used by Israel in worship and instruction over centuries. Because of its critical role in shaping the self-understanding of succeeding generations, writers and editors expanded and updated the Mosaic core to adapt it to new issues facing its audiences. Their devout mission, which Ezra completed, was to extend Moses’s work, not replace it, and thus the popular title “Torah of Moses” is appropriate. It honors Moses as the founder of the Instruction in Israel and affirms that it all conveys his authoritative ‘voice.’” (Robert L Hubbard Jr. and J. Andrew Dearman, *Introducing the Old Testament*)

From Come Follow Me: These books, which are attributed to Moses, probably passed through the hands of numerous scribes and compilers over time.

Details on the Names of God

- **Elohim:** Plural of the Hebrew *El*, which means “God,” it could be translated “gods”
 - Although a plural noun, it almost always appears with a singular verb, leading to the grammatical explanation that it is a “plural of plentitude” or “plural of majesty” → *Elohim* = “the” God
 - Cf. this with the Book of Abraham in the Kirtland Era and then Navuoo-era ritual developments
 - *Elohim* seemed to be the preferred name for Deity used by **writers from the northern kingdom as well as priestly writers**
- **YHWH:** Four consonants written without vowels so that original pronunciation is uncertain
 - Related to the Hebrew verb meaning “**to be**” and “**to cause to be**”
 - **YHWH** seems to have been preferred by **writers in Judah and Jerusalem**
 - Jewish tradition forbade its pronunciation, so when aloud, it was always replaced with **adonai** or “Lord”
 - English translations usually follow this tradition by translating YHWH with **LORD** (in small caps)
 - Combining the consonants of YHWH with the vowels of *adonai* gives **YaHoWah** → **Jehovah**
- **LORD God:** To weave different accounts or strands together, later editors seems to have combined the titles ***YHWH Elohim***

Names used for God

- The original basis for separating strands or document in the Pentateuch was the different names used for God. In one source, J (or the Yahwist), the beginning of the worship of the god of Israel as Yahweh is placed back in the primeval age: “it was then that the name Yahweh was first invoked” (Gen 4:26). In this source in Genesis, the deity is known as Yahweh by Noah (8:2), Abraham (12:8, 15:7, 24:6), Isaac (25:21), Jacob (27:20, 28:13), and others. But according to other sources this was not the case. In P, throughout Genesis, God is known as God (elohim) or by titles such as God Almighty (el shadday), but it was not until the time of Moses that the divine name Yahweh was revealed: “God [Elohim] spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the Lord [Yahweh]. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty [el shadday], but by my name “The Lord [yahweh]” I did not make myself known to them” (Exodus 6:2-3). . . . This inconsistency about whether God was known as Yahweh before the time of Moses made it possible to isolate different sources in Genesis” (Michael Coogan 52).

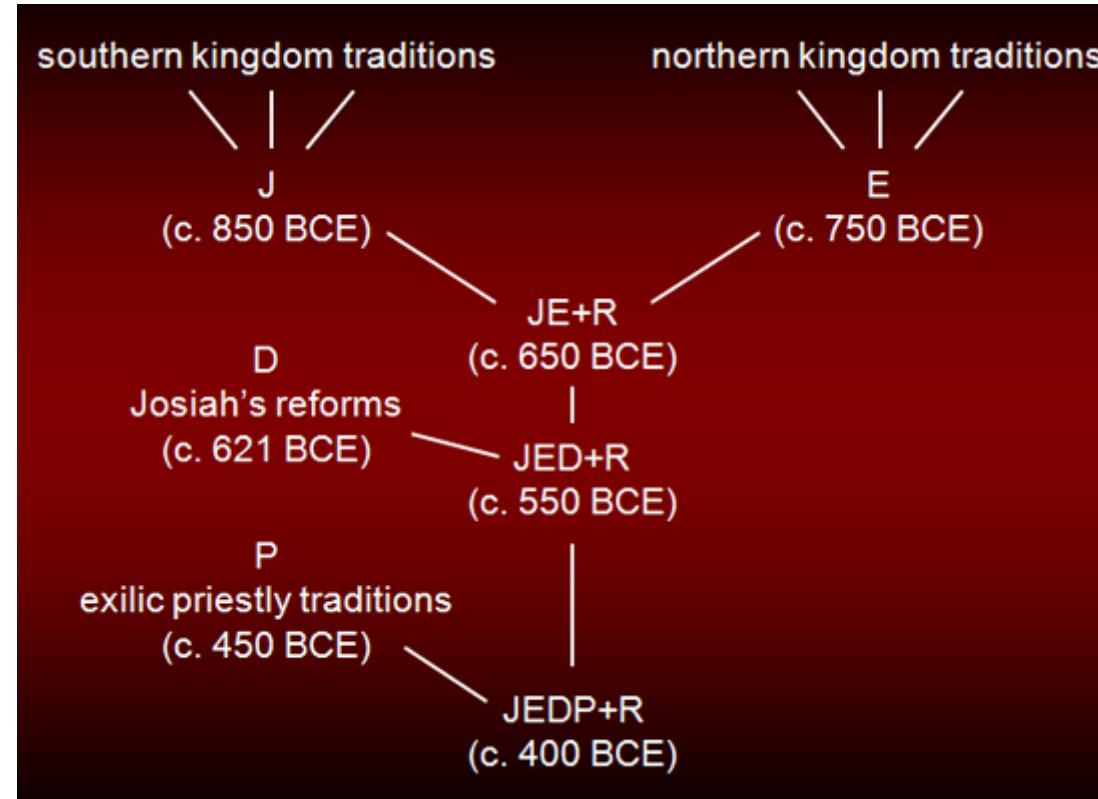
Documentary Hypothesis

- The *Documentary Hypothesis*, formulated in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century by a scholar named Julius Wellhausen, claims that **the Pentateuch is a redaction of different accounts of the Books of Moses**, compiled centuries after Moses
- Proposed sources (or, better, stylistic or editorial strands)
 - **E**: texts that use the name *Elohim* for Deity
 - **J**: texts that use the name *YHWH* for Deity
 - **P**: texts that reveal a priestly focus on order, separation, numbers, ritual, and covenants
 - **D**: texts that focus on a particular form of the law (*Deuteronomy*) and the results of its acceptance or rejection
 - **R**: connecting or harmonizing passages introduced by a final redactor or editor about the time of Ezra c. 459 B.C. after the return from exile
- *Latter-day saints can accept that there were different editions or versions that were later re-woven together without rejecting that there were original texts that were produced by Moses*

Suggestions on where the Proposed Sources came from

- “J” represents source documents —or— and edition of Moses’ original writings produced in Judah, c. 950 BC
- “E” represents a version from the Northern Kingdom, brought to Judah with those fleeing the Assyrian destruction of Israel, c. 850 BC
 - The Book of Mormon notes a version of the Hebrew scriptures, the Brass Plates, associated with individuals from the northern tribe of Manasseh (e.g., Laban and Lehi)
- “P” represents portions of the text particularly associated with the ritual and legal concerns of the priesthood; may have originated as early as the reign of Hezekiah (c. 715–687 B.C.) or as late as the Babylonian exile, after 586 B.C.
- “D” seems to be the foundation of a court history that began about the time of the reforms of Josiah c. 622 B.C. but continued to develop in the exile after the fall of Judah
 - Some scholars think that the reforms of Josiah eviscerated ancient Israelite religion and betray a change in an understanding of God, while others think it was a necessary simplification in the face of continued idolatry
 - Some basic features of the Deuteronomistic Code (blessings and cursings of the land dependant upon the people’s faithfulness) have parallels in God’s covenants with Lehi, who was a younger contemporary of Josiah; Jesus also frequently quoted Deuteronomy

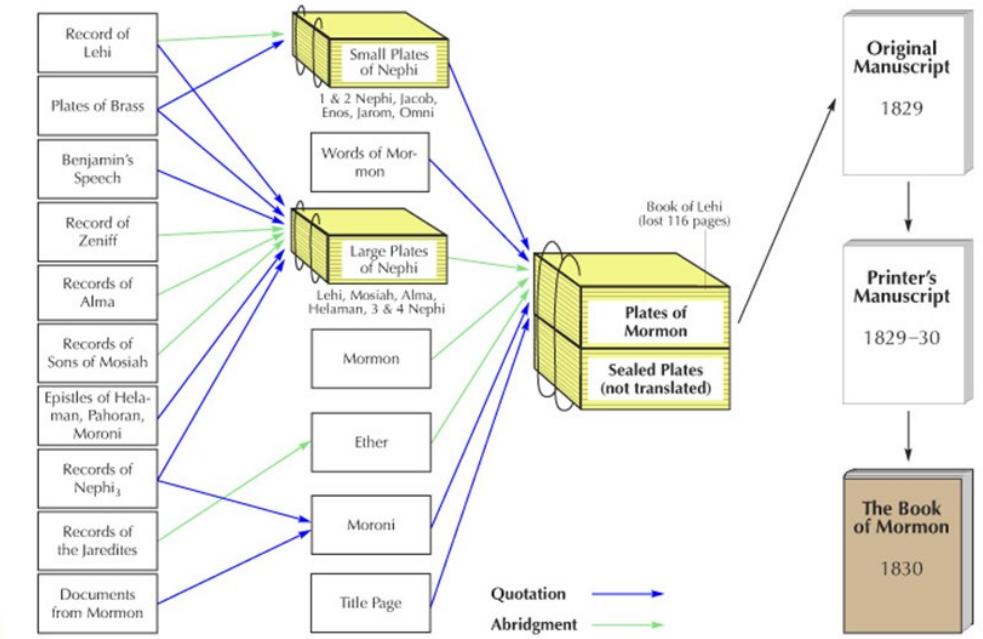
How may knowing about these different sources coming together to form the Bible help us?



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Book of Mormon Plates and Records



A Surprising Event

In antiquity, conquest and exile usually spelled the end of an ethnic national group. Conquered peoples traded their defeated god for the victorious god of their conquerors. Through cultural and religious assimilation, the conquered nation disappeared as a distinctive entity. Indeed that is what happened to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel after 722 B.C.E. They were lost to history. But it did not happen to those members of the Israelite nation who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah (the Judeans). Despite the demise of their national political base in 586 B.C.E., the Judeans, alone among the many peoples who have figured in ancient Near Eastern history—Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Hurrians, Canaanites—emerged after the death of their state, and produced a community and a culture that can be traced, through various twists and turns, transformations and vicissitudes, down to the modern period. And these Judeans carried with them a radical new idea, a sacred scripture, and a set of traditions that would lay the foundation for the major religions of the western world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (Dr. Christine Hayes, Introduction to the Bible, 2)



So what is this radical new idea that shaped a culture and enabled its survival not only into later antiquity but even into the present day in some form?

The Israelite Idea

Scholars have postulated that the conception of the universe widespread among ancient peoples was one in which the various natural forces were understood to be imbued with divine power, to be in some sense divinities themselves. The earth was a divinity, the sky was a divinity, the water was a divinity, or possessed divine powers. In other words, the gods were *identical with or immanent in* the forces of nature. There were thus many gods, and no one single god was all powerful. . . .

The Israelite Idea: **there was one divine power, one god. More important than this god's singularity was the fact that this god was outside of and above nature. This god was not identified with nature; he transcended nature. This god was not known through nature or natural phenomena; he was known through history and a particular relationship with humankind.** This ideas—which seems simple at first and not so very revolutionary—affected every aspect of Israelite culture and in ways that will become clear ensured the survival of the ancient Israelites as an ethnic – religious entity.



Overview of Genesis

- First book of the *Torah* or Pentateuch
 - *Bərē'šît* (first Hebrew word, meaning “beginning, starting point”)
 - *Genēsis* (title in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, meaning “birth, origin”)
- Sources
 - Pre-literary traditions – oral histories concerning the creation of the world and mankind
 - Problems with other neighboring cultures’ oral traditions mixing with the Israelite histories...
 - Jewish Tradition – Moses wrote the Pentateuch; Pearl of Great Price confirms that God gave him a vision of the account of creation and the primordial history. Whether or not he wrote this down himself or shared it orally and others wrote it down is unknown.
 - Genealogies (*tôlēdot*) – Family lists were very important in the Jewish culture, possible family lists available as a source?
 - Later Editors/Redactors – Wove a new, literary work but sometimes obscured the material by combining accounts without proper understanding
- Genres
 - Narrative – majority of the text is told in the 3rd person
 - Genealogy lists – important to tie the Jews/Israelites to the Narrative
 - Poetry – e.g. Jacob’s blessing in Gen 29:2-47

Structure of Genesis

- Origins of the Cosmos and Humanity (1:1–11:26)
 - Creation of the World (1:1–2:25)
 - The First Sin and Its Punishment (3:1–24)
 - Beginnings of Civilization (4:1–5:32)
 - History of Noah (6:1–9:29)
 - Descendents of Noah and the Tower of Babel (10:1–11:26)
- The formation of ancient Israel (11:27–50:26)
- Major Themes
 - God created and creation was good
 - Disobedience separated people from God
 - God instituted a program of revelation called the covenant
 - Covenant and elections
 - Origins
 - Monotheism

How were these Books used?

- How did our ancestors get from Babylon to the doorstep of Canaan?
- Who is our God? What is our God like?
- What is our place among the nations? What's our God's stance toward them?
- What kind of people are we? What makes us different from nations around us?
- This land we've been given—can we keep it?
- Now that we're free, can we do as we like?