

An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible Week 2

ONLINE STUDY GROUP

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

SPRING 2023



Lots of Books, Lots of Authors

Oral transmission

- Created in oral performance and passed on through oral retelling
- E.g. most of the material in Genesis 12-50

Order of Books

- The order of books in the Hebrew Bible is not the order in which they were created

Composite authorship

- Almost no books were composed by a single writer
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Four Sources in the Pentateuch

Yahwist (J)

- 960-930 BCE
- Yahweh = God
- Mt = Sinai
- Creation to Canaan
 - *Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges*
- Preferred tribe: Judah
 - Court circles in Jerusalem
- God is personal and transcendent

Elohist (E)

- 900-845 BCE
- Elohim = God
- Mt = Horeb
- Patriarchs to Conquest
 - *Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges*
- Northern Kingdom
 - Prophetic circles (Elijah)

Priestly (P)

- 550-450 BCE
- Israelite religion
 - Sabbath rituals, circumcision, dietary laws, diseases, priesthood
- Priests
- God concerned with separating order and chaos

Deuteronomistic History (DH)

- Pre-622 BCE
- Northern traditions led to Josiah reform in Judah
 - *Joshua, Judges, Deuteronomy*
- Based in covenant renewal rituals
 - Record of covenant loyalty and disobedience

Two Creation Stories

GENESIS 1:1-2:4A (P)

In the beginning when Elohim created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then Elohim said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. 4 And Elohim saw that the light was good; and Elohim separated the light from the darkness. 5 Elohim called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 6 And Elohim said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.'...

GENESIS 2:4B-3:24 (J)

In the day that Yahweh Elohim made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for Yahweh Elohim had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6 but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— 7 then Yahweh Elohim formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the Yahweh Elohim planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed...

God's Promise to Abraham (Gen. 15)

J

1 After these things the word of Yahweh Adonay came to Abram in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.' **2** But Abram said, 'O Yahweh Adonay, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'

4 But the word of Yahweh came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.'

6 And he believed Yahweh; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. **7** Then he said to him, 'I am Yahweh who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.'

E

3 And Abram said, 'You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.'

5 He brought him outside and said, 'Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'

CHART 3
From the Small Oral/Literary Units to the Large Compositions and Collections

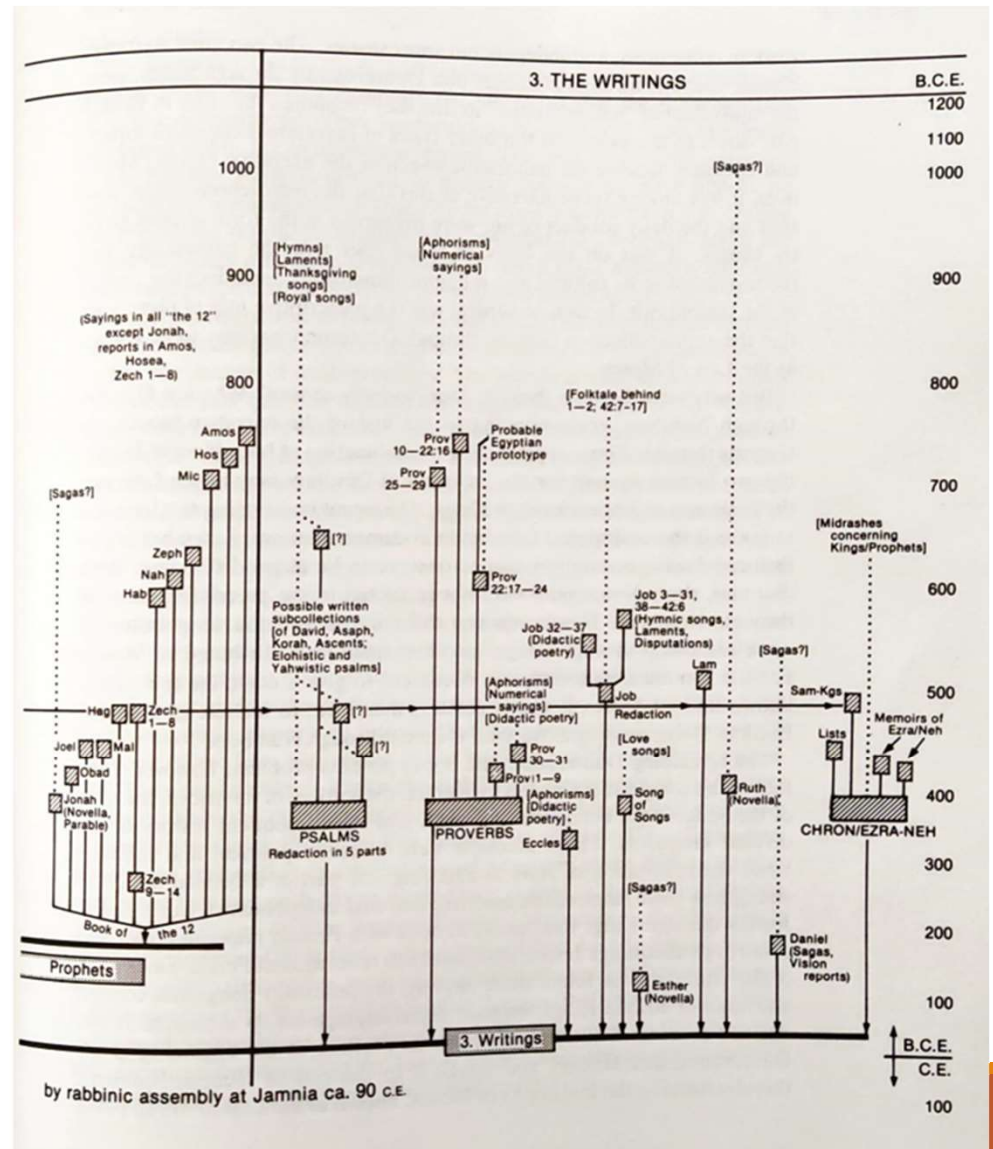
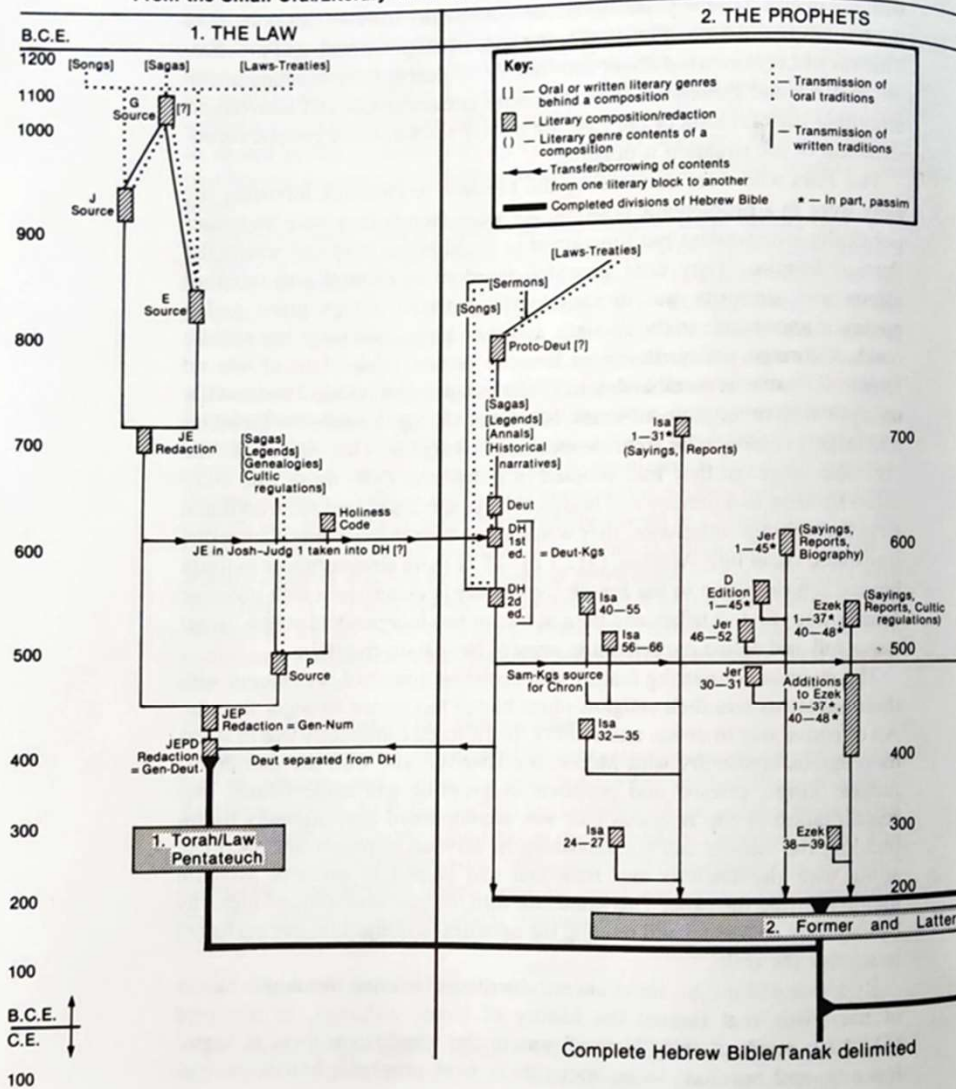
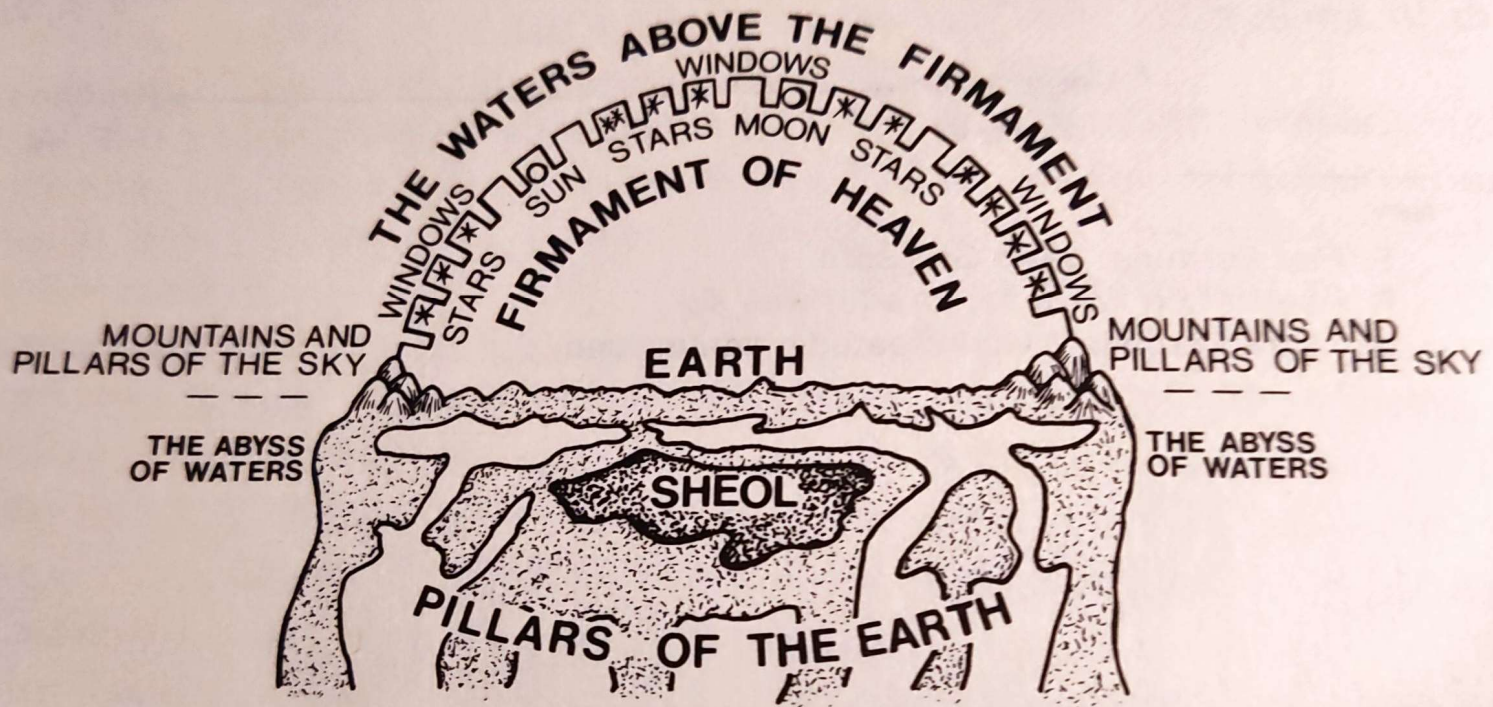


FIGURE 1
The Cosmos of Genesis 1



Questions

There is no record of the Ancestors or Moses outside the Bible. Did they exist?

What do the biblical stories tell us about the early history of Israel?

Next Week

READ

Exodus 1–20, 32

Deuteronomy 34

PREPARE

Relate a story

Ask us questions about its meaning