

# The Folio

Bulletin of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, a research center of the Claremont School of Theology

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## WHO REALLY WROTE THE BIBLE AND WHY?

*Excerpts from a talk at the  
California Museum of Ancient Art  
March 10, 2014*

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Richard Elliott Friedman's 1987 volume, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, was a landmark book and surprise best seller in the popular reading market. Friedman's book was an attempt to explain to a popular audience a theory developed by a late-nineteenth century German biblical scholar named Julius Wellhausen. Traditional scholarship had maintained that the Torah was composed by G-d for Moses and all Israel at Mt. Sinai. Wellhausen, on the other hand, wrote a book in German in 1889, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der Historischen Büchern des Alten Testaments*, in which he argued that the Torah was actually a combination of four different literary sources that were written by anonymous writers during the biblical period. According to Wellhausen, the names used for G-d differ in each source, i.e., the holy personal name of G-d, YHWH (which is pronounced as Adonai or haShem in Judaism because the Holy Name of G-d must not be spoken), and the term, Eloqim, G-d, which is simply a generic word for G-d.

The earliest source was J. The J source was so named because in German, J is the first letter in the German spelling of the divine name, JHWH. Wellhausen argued that J could be recognized by its use of the Holy Name of G-d right from the beginning and by several

other characteristics, i.e., it is very primitive, in that animals and human beings frequently talk to each other (e.g., the snake in the Garden of Eden); G-d speaks face to face with human beings in the narrative; it is Judean, i.e., it frequently places its characters in the southern kingdom of Judah and Judean cities (e.g., Abraham settled in Hebron and the ancestors were all buried there except for Rachel); and it is very much concerned with the Royal House of David, which was also Judean (e.g., Abraham needed a son to succeed him just as David need a son to rule after him). According to Wellhausen, J was composed during the early years of the house of David in the mid-ninth century BCE, although later scholars, such as Gerhard von Rad, pushed the date back to the founding of the Davidic monarchy in the tenth century BCE.

The second source was E. Wellhausen named the source E because of its use of the term Eloqim, G-d, up until the Burning Bush episode in Exodus 3 when G-d revealed the divine name to Moses. Afterwards, it uses YHWH. E is not quite as primitive as J. G-d does not speak to humans face to face and animals do not speak at all in E. Instead, G-d speaks to human beings through angels, such as the angel who stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac in the Binding of Isaac in Genesis 22, or through symbols such as the Burning Bush of Exodus 3. E was a northern source that placed its characters in the territory and cities of the northern kingdom of Israel (e.g., Jacob's dream at Beth El, later one of northern Israel's major Temples). It was more moralistic than J (e.g., it explained that Sarah really was Abraham's sister in Genesis 20), and it was especially concerned with Jacob as the ancestor of Israel (e.g., G-d changed Jacob's name to Israel, and Jacob's sons formed the twelve tribes of Israel). Overall, E explained the origins of northern Israel and was written in northern Israel in the mid-eighth century BCE.

D was the third source. Wellhausen labeled it D because it comprises the Book of Deuteronomy, the concluding book of the Torah. Deuteronomy presents Moses' last speeches to Israel as they are encamped in Moab east of the Jordan River on the day before they march into the land of Canaan. Deuteronomy focuses especially on the word of G-d and observance of the Torah or instruction of G-d, and it appears as Moses' repeti-

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# *The Folio*

The Newsletter of  
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tion of the laws of G-d given to Israel by the hand of Moses at Mt. Sinai. Because it is identified with the book of Torah found in the Jerusalem Temple during the religious reforms of King Josiah in the late-seventh century BCE, Wellhausen argued that it was written in the mid-seventh century BCE.

The fourth and final source was P, so named by Wellhausen because it was the Priestly source of the Torah. Wellhausen argued that ritual, priestly, and legal matters, such as those found in the book of Leviticus, were a very late development in Israel. He argued that, like E, P identified G-d as Eloqim until G-d revealed the divine name to Moses in Exodus 6. P maintained that G-d related to Israel through the priesthood, its rituals, and its laws. Thus, priestly and ritual matters were an important concern of P (e.g., the Shabbat in Genesis 2:1-3 and the circumcision of Abraham in Genesis 17). P wrote in a very formal style, such as that found in the creation text of Genesis 1:1-2:3 (e.g., it was evening and it was morning, a first day, a second day, a third day, etc., for all of the days of creation). Because the priesthood had come to power following the Babylonian exile, Wellhausen dated the P source to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century BCE when the Temple and Torah (Law) became the paramount institutions of Israel.

Overall, Wellhausen's source theory expressed his view of the evolution or devolution of Israelite religion. Israel started as a people who had a pure and direct experience of G-d in J. But the later sources showed increasing distance between G-d and Israel. G-d communicated through angels and symbols in E; through Torah as the word of G-d in D; and through the priesthood, rituals, and Temple in P. For Wellhausen, the evolution of Israelite religion into Judaism was a history of decline.

But during the late-twentieth century, a number of problems began to emerge with Wellhausen's theory that have prompted scholars to reconsider his thesis. There are four major problems.

First, Wellhausen's theory is religiously biased. Wellhausen was a Protestant Christian, a Lutheran to be more specific. Protestant Christianity emerged as an attempt to purify Christianity from the perceived corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, Protestant Christianity upholds prophets as examples of ideal religious figures, but it views priests, temples, rituals, and religious law with suspicion. Wellhausen's source theory is based on a Protestant theological model that identifies the J source as the first and most important source in which G-d speaks with human beings (like prophets). The last and least valued source is P, in which G-d relates

to humans through the priesthood and the rituals and laws of the Jerusalem Temple, conceived much like the Roman Catholic Church in Wellhausen's view.

Second, Wellhausen simply assumed that use of mythology with its talking animals, G-d speaking with humans face to face, etc., must be a sign of early and even primitive composition. He therefore identified it as a characteristic of the early J source. But a survey of the Prophets, the Psalms, Job, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Daniel, and other works demonstrates that mythology appears throughout the Hebrew Bible in all time periods. Indeed, anyone familiar with Superman, Batman, Star Trek, and other current superheroes and science fiction stories knows that mythology is alive and well in our modern world as well. Mythology does not identify a work as early.

Third, Wellhausen actually had great difficulty distinguishing J and E in his work on the Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses narratives. His primary criterion was the use of the divine name, but this criterion does not hold up well on closer examination, especially in the Moses narratives after the Burning Bush episode. Wellhausen constantly states his difficulties and as a result, identifies J as a primary source, but E is more frequently just an appendix to J with little in the way of its own story line or character as a major source. In Wellhausen's analysis, E does not stand as an identifiable independent source, and even J frequently needs E to fill in gaps in its plot line.

Fourth and finally, many of the features of Wellhausen's J source actually date to much later periods in Israel's history. For example, the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11 is based on the image of the city of Babylon, but Israel and Judah did not have contact with Babylon during the time of King David. It was only in the late-eighth century BCE that King Hezekiah of Judah established an alliance with Babylon to revolt against the Assyrian empire, and that alliance was continued in the late-seventh century BCE by King Josiah of Judah. Other features of J presuppose the Assyrian empire and its practices, but Israel only established relations with Assyria beginning in the late-ninth century BCE when King Jehu of Israel and his successors submitted to Assyrian control. The formulation of the Ten Commandments, for example, follows the pattern of Assyrian treaty texts; Abraham's journey throughout the entire land of Israel in Genesis 12 reflects the practice of Assyrian kings who journeyed with their armies throughout their lands in Palu campaigns designed to secure their hold over their empires. Even camels, which show up in some J narratives, were not domesticated until the seventh century BCE.

*(Continued on page 8)*

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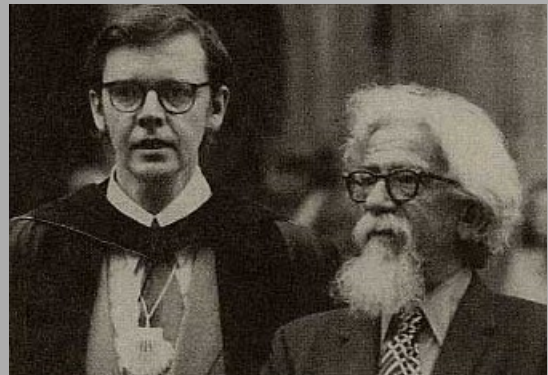
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From the Archives



James A. Sanders and Abraham Joshua Heschel at the '71 Union Theological Seminary graduation. This picture was printed in the Summer 1999 edition of *The Folio* (vol. 16 no. 1) for a tribute article to Dr. Sanders in honor of his 70th birthday.

## *AU REVOIR ANCIENT BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPT CENTER!*

The last page of my story with the ABMC is turning. It is both bitter and sweet. It was an honor to help scholars from around the world with biblical manuscripts, and I will miss culling through images of Dead Sea scrolls. But I am also teeming with enthusiasm for my future work at Azusa Pacific University's High Sierra campus as their new Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies. The campus is located in Bass Lake, which resides within the Sierra National Forest about 30 minutes south of Yosemite National Park. Here, I will live amongst the beauty of creation while studying the Great Works with young, inquisitive minds. The unique program creates an ideal space for interdisciplinary work between philosophy, art, and literature, and I will be able to share my own expertise in religion and theology. There is also an outdoor component, which will require me to go on backpacking trips with the students twice a semester. I am looking forward to the intellectual and physical challenge!

When I am not trekking through the wilderness or teaching classes, I will be preparing my dissertation—"The Last King(s) of Judah: Zedekiah and Sedekias in the Hebrew and Greek Versions of Jeremiah 37(44):1-40 (47):6"—for publication. In it, I employ a hermeneutic of dialogic intertextuality to reveal the multivalent nature of the last king of Judah—Zedekiah as he is known in the Hebrew and Sedekias in the Greek. The two depictions of the individual king are distinctly divergent. One of the most obvious differences can be found in the 10

additional verses in MT Jeremiah 39. Zedekiah unsuccessfully flees from Nebuchadnezzar, watches the slaughter of his children, and then has his eyes gouged out. This gory vignette is not present in the Greek version. Moreover, the characters' interactions in the Hebrew text present Zedekiah as a pitiable tragic hero whereas Sedekias's interactions suggest he is an egocentric villain. I argue that these complex portrayals resulted from layers of early redaction and the later re-writing of the king's actions, discourse, and generic context in pre-MT (i.e. an earlier version of the Hebrew text). Consequently, Zedekiah/Sedekias becomes emblematic of the polyphonic book(s) of Jeremiah and the transformation of the Scriptures over time. Moreover, his continual reconstruction illuminates how we can approach the Bible today. Just as the authors, redactors, and translators of Zedekiah/Sedekias molded his character for new times and contexts, so too, we can refashion the text to breathe new life into our present circumstances. We are invited to add our own voices to the ever-present cacophony within the canons and their history of transmission.

Coincidentally, my fascination with the transmission history of Jeremiah required me to frequent the ABMC for my research. I spent many hours with two particular manuscripts. The first is Codex Marchalianus also known as manuscript Q or Vat. gr. 2125. It dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and contains marginal notes with variant readings attributed to Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. The other is Codex Barberinus otherwise known as manuscript 86 or Barb. gr. 549. It is from the 9-10<sup>th</sup> century CE and provides similar marginalia to that of Marchalianus. The variant readings associated with the Jewish revisers (Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion) supported my argument that the shifts in Zedekiah's character were late changes in the Hebrew text rather than earlier changes to the Greek (or its Hebrew *Vorlage*) because they were attempting to bring the Greek texts closer to the revised Hebrew version in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The opinion that the Hebrew, or Masoretic, text of Jeremiah is the product of a revision is common among Jeremiah scholars including Emanuel Tov. However, there are dissenters and the issue is still under discussion. My dissertation acts as another voice confirming the majority opinion with a thorough text- and form-critical analysis of Jeremiah 37:1-40:6. In the future, I hope to continue to be part of the dialogue concerning the book of Jeremiah and its intricate past.



# Publications and Upcoming Events



*Marvin A. Sweeney*

*CEO and Director, ABMC  
Professor of  
Hebrew Bible,  
Claremont School  
of Theology*

## Publications

*Reading Prophetic Books* (FAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck). Forthcoming (in press), publication scheduled, May, 2014.

“Farewell Speech.” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (edited by Dale C. Allison et. al.; Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 875-877.

## Lectures, Courses, and Presentations

“The Prophets and the Reconceptualization of the Pentateuchal Strata: Implications for Reading E, D, J, and P.” Invited paper for the conference, The Pentateuch Within Biblical Literature: Formation and Interaction, Israel Institute for Advanced Studies. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Givat Ram Campus. Jerusalem, Israel. May 27, 2014.

“The Book of Isaiah in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspective: Isaiah and its Evolution.” Invited seminar presentation. Tel Aviv University, Ramat Gan, Israel. May 20, 2014.

“Reading the Bible after the Shoah.” Invited seminar presentation. Tel Aviv University, Ramat Gan, Israel. May 20, 2014.

“The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Hosea and Malachi.” Har El Institute Shabbat Lecture Series. Palm Desert, CA. April 11, 2014,

“The Patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph.” Mini-course. Har El Institute, Palm Desert, CA. March 5, 12, 19, 2014.

“Who Really Wrote the Bible and Why?” Lecture for the California Museum of Ancient Art. Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Los Angeles, CA. March 10, 2014.

“The Joseph Narratives: A Paradigm for the Kingdom of Israel.” Taus Lecture Series. Temple Beth El, San Pedro, CA. February 24, 2014.

Panelist. “Language and History.” Interfaith Conference, Academy for Jewish Religion California and Claremont School of Theology. February 24, 2014.

“Elijah: Prophet of Israel and Herald of the Messiah.” Jewish History Lecture Series. Congregation Ner Tamid, Palos Verdes, CA. February 19, 2014.



*Jon Berquist*

*Professor of  
Hebrew Bible,  
Claremont School of Theology*

*President,  
Disciples Seminary*

## Publications

Jon L. Berquist and Alice Hunt, eds. *Focusing Biblical Studies: The Crucial Nature of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods: Essays in Honor of Douglas A. Knight* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 544; New York and London: T & T Clark, 2012).

## Lectures, Courses, and Presentations

“Theologies of Genesis.” Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA. Spring 2014.



*James A. Sanders*

*Professor Emeritus,  
Claremont School of  
Theology/Claremont  
Graduate University*

### **Publications**

Description of the “Best Book Relating to the New Testament published in 2011-12: *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*,” by Frederick J. Murphy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). *Biblical Archaeology Review* 39.4 (2013): 40.

Co-author with David Marcus, “What’s Critical About a Critical Edition of the Bible?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 39.6 (2013): 60-65.

### **Lectures, Courses, and Presentations**

“Introduction to the First Testament.” Episcopal Theological School at Claremont/Bloy House, Claremont, CA. Fall 2013 – Spring 2014.

“Wisdom and the Prophets.” Episcopal Theological School at Claremont/Bloy House, Claremont, CA. Fall 2014. \*Open to all qualified laypeople in the churches.



*Shelley Long*

*Research Associate for  
Scholarly Services, ABMC*

*Assistant Professor of  
Biblical Studies,  
Azusa Pacific University*

### **Publications**

“Who Determines Conversion? A Response to Gary Gilbert.” Pages 29-34 in *Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion Conference 2011* (Religion in Philosophy and Theology 70; edited by Ingolf U. Dalferth and Michael Ch. Rodgers. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

“Gareb,” “Gebim,” “Gedaliah Son of Pashhur,” Gemariah Son of Hilkiah,” Gemariah Son of Shephan,” and “Geruth-Chimham.” *Encyclopeida of the Bible and Its Reception* (edited by Dale C. Allison et. al.; Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

### **Lectures, Courses, and Presentations**

“Biblical Hebrew.” Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA. Spring 2014.

“Getting to Know You in the Biblical Sense.” Society of Biblical Literature, Pacific Coast Regional Meeting. Fullerton, CA. March 30, 2014.

“Sub-creation and Procreation as the Imago Dei: Tolkien and Genesis in Dialogue.” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting. San Diego, CA. November, 2014.

### **Our New President!**



The Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center would like to extend a warm welcome to Rev. Dr. Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan as Claremont School of Theology’s seventh president! Kuan is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and currently chairs the Commission on Theological Education of the UMC University Senate. He has also served on the faculty at Drew University, the Pacific School of Religion, and Graduate Theological Union. His areas of expertise include Hebrew Bible and Asian and Asian-American hermeneutics. One of Kuan’s latest publications is a co-edited volume entitled, *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian-American Biblical Interpretation* (Chalice, 2006). We are very excited to have a biblical scholar as our new president, and we are looking forward to partnering with him in the coming years.



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These issues have prompted biblical scholars to rethink Wellhausen's source theory. Most are coming to the conclusion that J, once viewed as the earliest of the Torah's sources, actually dates to the later periods of the monarchy during the late-eighth and seventh centuries BCE or perhaps even to the Babylonian exile. But this has implications for E as well. It means that E can emerge as the earliest of the sources, i.e., a source that

was written in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the mid-eighth century BCE (when northern Israel was at the height of its power) as a means to present the origins of Israel through the patriarchs Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. When northern Israel was destroyed by the Assyrian army in 722-721 BCE, the E narrative was brought south to Judah where it was supplemented by D and ultimately edited by J into a more Judean-friendly document before its final edition by P in the Post-Exilic period.

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