

God touching Bill Gates

A Review and Rewrite of the Old Testament

November 2024

*For the Human in Each of Us
May all Beings be Free of Suffering*

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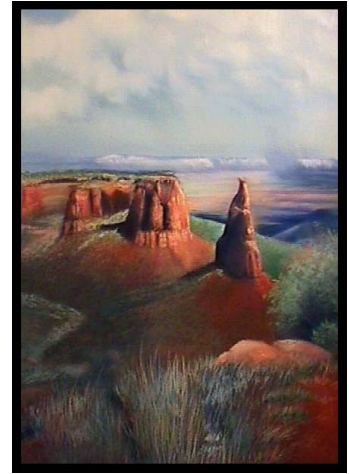
Introduction to the Rewrite of the Old Testament

Don't think for a moment that I carefully read the exact text of the books of the Old Testament. I used YouTube. Unless you take a bible class, no one actually reads the bible anymore, at least with a critical mind. Chat GPT reports only 11% of Americans read the entire Bible. But, with the rise in Christian nationalism today, including putting the bible in our public schools, beware, it could be cruelly mandated. Let this be a study guide.

The Old Testament is the sacred resource for Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Always keep this in mind.

My selected books of the Old Testament will start with a brief synopsis of the events and people in the book, followed by a rewrite relative to the 21st century. It includes archaeological findings.

I wish I could say I had a mystical experience related to this project, but I did not. I am just nagged by some of the historical claims that are verboten to question. Also, The writers forgot to include the feminine and minority view points. They were not so woke. Same as it ever was.



All dates, of course, are approximations; same problem I have with my photo collection.

The Patriarchal period is the biblical time included from the beginning of the world until after the Exodus. This map illustrates the empire powers around the time of the Exodus. There is no archaeological evidence that an Exodus happened, but going by the Bible it occurred 480 years before the construction of the temple of Solomon.

Between 1550 and 1170 BCE much of the Levant power vacillated between Egypt and Hittites. Egyptian rule was strong over the Canaanite city-states in Palestine. The area was valued because of the nexus of trade from all directions.

After the Bronze Age collapse (1170 BCE) Egyptian power was diminished.



There was once a **United kingdom of Israel**, under the Kings Saul, David and Solomon (approximately 1025 - 931 BCE)

After 931 BCE this United Kingdom divided and the Northern kingdom, **Israel**, had it's own lineage of Kings until 724 BCE. It was absorbed by Assyria (approximately 724 BCE). The Israelite tribes became the lost tribes of Israel. **Judah** had it's own lineage of Kings that lasted until the Babylonian conquest (586 BCE).

The kingdom of Judah remained the central focus of the Old Testament. Jerusalem is located in the kingdom of Judah. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah in 596-586 BCE. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The people of Judah were consequently exiled to Babylonia. They were quite homesick and gifted us the song "By the River of Babylon".



Above is a map of the Levant in the 11th and 10th century BCE. It was a time of regional fragmentation, with no major empire dominating. Instead, local powers like the Philistines, Phoenicians, and emerging Israelite tribes shaped the political landscape. I wish my bible school had included this history. Knowing about the early civilization of Phoenicians would have made my bible education so much richer.

Read this Re-write in small doses and take time out to do what I did. Watch YouTube archaeological videos with Israel Finklestein and Neil Asher Silberman. Find old maps of the area and stories of the constant struggle for control of the trades.

Understand that the period in which the Old Testament was likely written down, (7th century BCE), it was likely a spin on oral history. It was probably created for the political advantage of Judah kings during the brief period of a power vacuum in the area. Judah longed for independence. It was a small kingdom surrounded by powerful civilizations just like we all are just individuals in a very large Animalia kingdom, order of primates, family of Hominidae, genus homo, and species - Homo sapiens—existing in an infinite universe in a minute slice of time.



Figure 1: Celtic Brain

"I am neither especially clever nor especially gifted. I am only very, very curious." Albert Einstein

Why the Re-write is necessary

The purpose of the review and rewrite is to expose the Old Testament as a powerful political tool. The Hebrew Old Testament that we have now originated under the reign of the Judah kings, Hezekiah (727-698 BCE) and Josiah (639-609 BCE). The regional power structures at that time stretched between the fading powers of Assyria and Egypt. King

Josiah, in the tiny kingdom of Judah saw a power vacuum and developed ambitions to retake the northern territory of Israel, which had long been absorbed as a vassal territory of Assyria. **Monotheism** was a strategy.

As late as the 4th century AD under decisions by the Council of Nicea, the Bible was altered to advance the concept that Jesus was the son of God. Books of the Bible that offered other perspectives were quietly left out. Altering the Bible for political reasons is not new.

The inspiration for this project is the book "The Bible Unearthed" by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman. The authors use archaeology to sort out the history of the Levant region of the Middle East. This approach is different than the conservative biblical approach. The conservative biblical approach uses primarily Old Testament scripture to confirm their assumptions on how history unfolded in this area. They have one tool, the bible, whereas archaeologists use scientific dating, peer reviews, and surrounding empire histories to put together past history. They work in parallel with the Bible.

This project will cover the first books of the Bible that are included in the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and the Prophets Joshua - Malachi. Chronicles. Ezra and Nehemiah offer historical narratives. The books that feature the feminine, Ruth and Esther have unique perspectives on women of the Old Testament. The poetry of Psalms, Proverbs and Job, the five Scrolls, and the prophecy of Daniel will be left to better poets than myself to review..

King Josiah was executed by the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco before he could fulfill his ambitions but his disinformation campaign has survived. Just like we strive to find meaning in our lives today, early Levant tribes passed down traditions from even earlier religious practices

morphing them to suit their circumstances. King Josiah and his great grandfather, King Hezekiah knew the unifying power of religion. Monotheism in particular became a tool for political control. With one God there is unity and group think. This is why Deuteronomy was necessary. Keeping folks focused on rules is effective crowd control.

Monotheism requires all members of a tribe or region to conform – obedience and adherence to strict protocols is required, you might say, mandated. King Josiah established one place of worship – the temple of Jerusalem, and only a priest could intercept between an individual and Yahweh. A purification process ensued in the countryside. All traces of foreign worship were erased. Thus began the unending cycle of promises to the oppressed, dependent on strict rules of behavior, followed by the people's disobedience, followed by punishment and a return to enslavement. If only our creator had created one gender, one race, one religious system, but our creator is creative.

It is November 2024 post election. We will soon be tested for religious freedom and free speech. We have Christian nationalism in leadership and they rely on the Old Testament more than the New Testament for the same reason King Josiah did.

The Old Testament history contains the names of some real historical figures, however there is no way to prove the existence of Abraham or of Moses. Events often do not hold up to scrutiny by radio carbon dating, archaeological examination and regional historical comparisons. Jerusalem in the 9th and 10th century BCE, during the time of the united kingdom, was no larger than 150 acres comprising of maybe 15,000 people. Compared to the surrounding civilizations of Egypt and Assyria this civilization was very small. There is no evidence for an actual Exodus event. The Exodus story is pivotal to the Israelite identity story, but there would be some earth evidence if 600,000 men on foot, not counting women and children, (Exodus 12:37) set out from Egypt and wandered in the Sinai desert for 40 years.

There is evidence that Canaanites would migrate into the delta area of Egypt during times of famine. It was not unusual for them to gain status and power within the Egyptian government. Their eventual enslavement and their longing for independence is our personal and human story. Maybe that is why the stories within the Old Testament survive. Perhaps from the viewpoint of our universal struggle to find individual meaning, community connection and independence, myth has its own truth.

“Questions you cannot answer are usually far better for you than answers you cannot question.”
— Yuval Noah Harari, **21 Lessons for the 21st Century**

Like repairing an old house, one thing leads to another. More questions arise once there is even one question of biblical reliability. There is a cost for curiosity. Was there ever a distinct Israeli race? Why is the Hebrew writing so similar to Phoenician Canaanite? Why is the history of the House of Omri, the northern territory (originally Israel) so vilified? The Old Testament collected stories and writings span over a thousand years with many different oral and written authors. The Old Testament is more like a library of books than one book.

Finally, The Old Testament is a collection of homilies, poems, prayers, proverbs, and psalms that represent the most memorable and powerful expressions of the devotion of the ordinary souls in this region. In most cases they are hard to link to any specific historical event or author. They are a continuous literary process that stretches over hundreds of years. Many writings are likely composed in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. They are worth pondering but not in this project.

2.

"The war to end all wars has come under scrutiny by historians" Philomena Cunk

Updating a text that guides the religious practices of Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) is in our best interest for human survival. Religious war and oppressive religious influences plague us worldwide. We have not evolved to respect diverse human consciousness or pay close attention to wise messengers. Americans are capitalists. The New Testament wisdom is ignored. Greed has value today. Truth is not a priority and spin is effective for power and money. Yuval Noel Harari states "When you give good people bad information, they make bad decisions". We ignore and deny the reality of climate change and the threat of nuclear war between our competing tyrants. We think we have the right to insist, sometimes violently, that other people should be made to share the same reality we have made up. Religious zealots pop up to cause misery even in secular nations. Paradoxically religion is often all there is to turn to in times of loss and suffering.

There is nothing to replace the inspiration found in the magnificent space of a cathedral, a church, a synagogue, a mosque or Buddhist center. This rewrite is not a repudiation of our search for meaning and answers put forth by religion or spiritual practices. I can't influence dogma, it is here to stay, but we can set it aside and look at it from a distance. Dogma arises from politics. Politics is unavoidable for group dynamics, but perhaps if we better sort truth from misinformation, we can return to universal truths that could unite us. Information itself is not the truth, nor is it wisdom, and we are inundated by information.

"The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of art and science" Albert Einstein

My father, a Methodist minister, a musician, and a carpenter gave me advice I am certain he regretted. "You must sort the seed from the chaff". Critical thinking is worth it. Critical thinking requires asking questions. It is dangerous in times of economic and political compression. Sometimes the individual must succumb to group think or be weeded out. We are all trapped in an algorithm of our own making.

"The World we have created is a process of our thinking, it can not be changed without changing our thinking"
Albert Einstein

3.

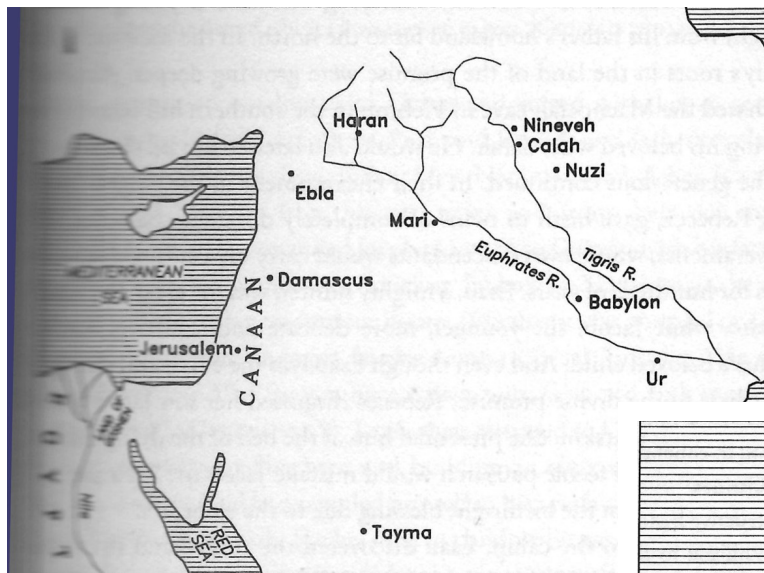
The Old Testament is a story of Yahweh (YHWH) written by mankind. Yahweh is a jealous and punishing male God. When the word, God, is used in the summary of each book, it refers to Yahweh. Yahweh has no place for the feminine, putting us out of balance. Yahweh is the ancient God of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. As long as these three powerful religions enforce the concepts of the Old Testament, long outdated and used for political oppression, we will fall prey to authoritarian menace. Maybe God is Lutheran, maybe she is everything right down to bacteria and ideas, maybe God is just time limited by our imagination, and after we are gone as a species, God in fact disappears.

When God is used in the rewrite, it is my personal and ever evolving God concept just like Yahweh was personal and evolving to the many authors of the Old Testament. I am the feminine, I live in a desert and am strangely called to speak out against the tyranny of the cruelty inherent in the old testament written by mankind. I encourage you to do the same. Just like the confederate flag must be folded and put away, the jealous, punishing Yahweh was put aside by the new covenant, the New Testament. We seem to have forgotten that.

"You are not who you think you are" American Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön

Your Thoughts: Why to you think we continue to resort to the Old Testament for moral guidance or historical truths today? Do you question it from an historical perspective? How is the Old Testament pertinent to 21st century America. What is the feminine to you?

The following Maps were copied from the book "The Bible Unearthed" by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman.



Mesopotamian and other ancient Near Eastern sites connected with the Patriarchal narratives. Abraham journeyed out of the city of Ur and settled in Haran. From there he followed God's direction into Canaan and wandered mainly between Shechem, Bethel (near Jerusalem) and Hebron in the south and into the Negev.

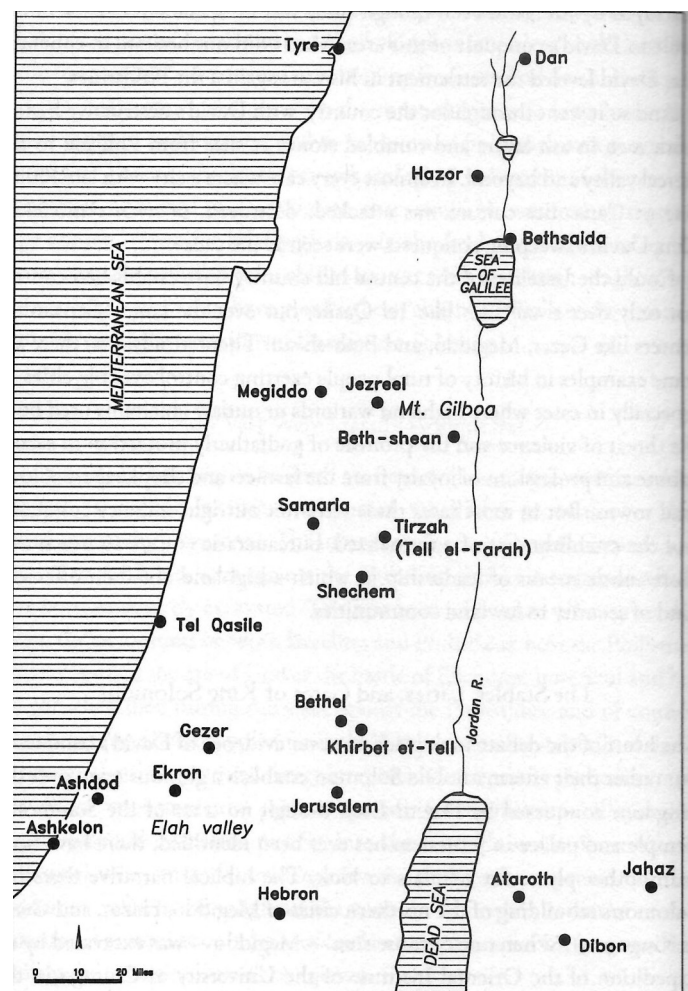
These are also the main sites of the monarchical period. Based on archaeological dating this period was likely the 10th century BCE.

King Saul ca. 1025-1005 BCE

David ca. 1005-970 BCE

Solomon ca. 970-931 BCE

This was the united kingdom. The upper kingdom (Israel) revolted and has its own succession of kings until Assyria conquerors it in 721 BCE. Judah survives until the Babylonian empire defeats it in 586 BCE and hold the Israelites captive for 70 years. Once the Persian Empire defeats Babylonia, the Persian King Cyrus allows the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS *

Early Bronze Age	3500–2200 BCE
Intermediate Bronze Age	2200–2000 BCE
Middle Bronze Age	2000–1550 BCE
Late Bronze Age	1550–1150 BCE
Iron Age I	1150–900 BCE
Iron Age II	900–586 BCE
Babylonian Period	586–538 BCE
Persian Period	538–333 BCE

* The dates follow the system in this book. Dates for the Early Bronze through the Middle Bronze Ages are approximate and depend mainly on cultural considerations. Dates for the Late Bronze Age through the Persian Period depend in the main on historical events.

KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH*

Judah		Israel	
		Saul ca. 1025–1005 BCE	
		David ca. 1005–970	
		Solomon ca. 970–931	
Rehoboam	931–914	Jeroboam I	931–909
Abijam	914–911	Nadab	909–908
Asa	911–870	Baasha	908–885
Jehoshaphat	870–846**	Elah	885–884
Jehoram	851–843**	Zimri	884
Ahaziah	843–842	Tibni	884–880***
Athaliah	842–836	Omri	884–873
Jehoash	836–798	Ahab	873–852
Amaziah	798–769	Ahaziah	852–851
Azariah	785–733**	Joram	851–842
Jotham	743–729**	Jehu	842–814
Ahaz	743–727**	Jehoahaz	817–800**
Hezekiah	727–698	Joash	800–784
Manasseh	698–642	Jeroboam II	788–747**
Amon	641–640	Zechariah	747
Josiah	639–609	Shallum	747
Jehoahaz	609	Menahem	747–737
Jehoiakim	608–598	Pekahiah	737–735
Jehoiachin	597	Pekah	735–732
Zedekiah	596–586	Hoshea	732–724

* According to the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume I, Page 1010 and Galil's *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*.

** Including coregencies.

*** Rival rule

Figure 3: Main archaeological periods and the chronology of Judahite and Israelite kings.



ProLife Patterns

Genesis

Genesis is more than a creation story. It profiles how Adam and Eve are created in God's image, humanity (Adam) and life (Eve). *It is an example of how our Gods are formed in our image.* Although God plants the tree of knowledge in plain sight with delicious forbidden apples, Adam and Eve are told explicitly not to eat this specific fruit. The tree contained verboten God knowledge. After the apple is eaten they have shame and the instinct to cover up their privates. Why? And why did God tempt his creation knowing that they

were like children? It serves as a biblical warning to humans about how loyalty and obedience is a superior ethic than curiosity. Don't ask pesky questions about these Old Testament stories.

Genesis contains the fallout of this disobedience. It includes the tragic story of how jealousy fueled a murder between brothers. It includes a story of a lesser known character, Lamech, (perhaps an early forefather of Donald Trump), just bad to the bone. Don't be like Lamech. Finally in grief and mourning God deeply disappointed in his first experiment with humans wipes out this initial human experiment and gives us the Ark story and the character of Noah. We also get the Tower of Babel story and how humans, while celebrating the invention of the brick, start to build a woke inclusion tower. But, God intervenes and scatters the people in order to prevent the fiasco of unity. Why? Eventually God settles on one head of a family to represent his divine will, Abraham. As you will see though, all family lines are not so perfect. The whole idea of a chosen people continues to cause us misery.

The rewrite;

In the beginning there was a void. No Gods, no light, no dark, no up, no down or sideways. Nothing. Zilch. As we all know Mother Nature abhors a vacuum, (a void). You might ask yourself what Mother Nature is doing in a void. At this point I need to explain that the existence of Mother Nature in a void will depend on a Biblical tradition of attempting to explain a mystery with another mystery. A mystery does not explain another mystery, but that's the way we are going to play it. The creator logic is used over and over to gloss over the reality that we have no idea how we got here. We do know, left to our own devices, that very soon we will not be here.

Even today with quantum mechanics the inexplicable can be spooky. We live in a quantum world, *without a programmer*, and consequently events tend to be random.

Mother Nature made a soup of stars, tamed their fire and molded the goo into balls to hurl around in a space time continuum, whatever that is. Finally, Mother Nature created Alan Turing who created Bill Gates who created the internet, which created Twitter (X) which created Donald Trump who created chaos. Mother Nature abhors a vacuum, but she loves patterns. This is why history repeats itself.

My rewrite of Genesis is captured in the existence of trees. We come from stardust just like trees. We return to dust just like trees. We are stardust. Trees have a quiet intelligence and strong interdependence. The roots interface with mycelium, reaching and exploring underground, communicating with and nurturing other nearby trees. They exist below and above ground level, like our internal consciousness and our outward actions. Above ground they soak up abundant sunlight and transform carbon into the air we breathe. A tree exists in a competitive harmony with the elements and organisms around it. A tree nourishes its own offspring, a symbol of regeneration, and represents an adaptive pattern of life transcendence. Grasses, trees and plants preceded humans on land. Trees rule.



Your Thoughts:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.



Exodus

Exodus takes us up through the story of Abraham and his grandson, Jacob. Jacob is the son of Isaac. These are considered the patriarchs and the forefathers of the Jewish people in Christianity.

Jacob's son Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, but works his way up to land a good position with the Pharaoh of Egypt. There followed some bad times for Abraham's family in

Israel, and luckily through Joseph, the Pharaoh of Egypt welcomes Abraham's family into Egypt. Once in Egypt, the descendants of Abraham prosper for some 400 years, until eventually, they over prosper and become a threat to the kingdom of Egypt. The Pharaoh addresses this threat by enslaving the Israelites and commanding their sons be drowned in the river Nile. Baby Moses is placed in a floating basket to prevent him from drowning. Moses floats downstream and is rescued by a member of the royal Egyptian family. Once Moses is grown, he is the instrument that Yahweh uses to free Israelites from bondage. God pressures the pharaoh to follow Moses's requests to set the Israelis free by punishing the Pharaoh with plagues and misery, but the pharaoh is a true despot. Only when his own bad judgment results in the death of the sons of Egypt instead of the Israelites does he relent. This event is called Passover, because the plague passes over those homes painted with the blood of the lamb. First the pharaoh agrees to free the slaves but then regrets his decision and as the Israelites are crossing the Red Sea, he chases them to recapture. This effort fails due to strange timing in the parting and closing of the sea.

Once the Israelites have safely reached Mt. Sinai, Moses climbs a mountain to communicate with God. God gives Moses the terms of his blessing on the mountaintop while the people wait below. Unfortunately while Moses is on the mountain, the people below grow rebellious and ask Aaron, Moses's brother to build an idol to worship, a golden cow. In disgust, God is set to destroy the people but Moses talks him down. Once God returns to a state of merciful forgiveness, he renews the covenant.

This fulfills a promise in Genesis that the family of Abraham would experience the blessing of God and become the kingdom of priests, God's chosen representatives. The covenant includes the Ten Commandments as well as a few more rules (52) in exchange for God's blessing. So much for unconditional love. In exchange for their obedience, God's blessing is the return of his direct presence. Gods tangible presence was lost in the Garden of Eden once Adam and Eve discovered they were naked.

Exodus describes the blueprint for the Tabernacle. An outer wall protects an inner temple and this temple protects the sacred room that houses the Ark of the Covenant (God's presence). The book of Exodus ends with the building of the Tabernacle, however Moses is denied entrance to the innermost door of the Tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant is kept.

The Rewrite: Exodus is our history of constant human migration, and how we assimilate and segregate over time. Our population growth may force expansion of land and territory from time to time, but livable land is limited. We tell ourselves a story of discovery of open available land, however most of the time our exciting new discovered land is occupied, just like Canaan was occupied. Native Americans had long inhabited America when we came along to discover it.

The promised land was already occupied when the Israelites were promised their gift from God. It is a mystery why Yahweh did not make this prior condition of the promised land clear when he set the Israelites on their 40 year journey wandering around looking for the promised land. It would have saved humanity eons of grief. It also goes to show how lucky we are to have google maps. 40 years!

The Covenant: When God dictated the terms of the covenant, the Ten Commandments to Moses, one has to wonder what written language was used to document the terms? What we do know is that written language gives us some context to understand the blending of cultures during this time.

Egyptian hieroglyphics would suggest the influence of the lower regions of the Levant. Modern day Palestine and Israel have long been dominated by fluctuating regional powers. Ancient northern powers of the Sumerians and Akkadians (cuneiform written forms) once dominated the region. The area has long been the contested prize among early powers, and it continues to this day. Eventually written language morphed into an ancient Paleo-Hebrew/Phoenician.

Populations in the Eastern Levant areas had waves of settlement and the origin of these migrations are determined to be from neighboring regions, originally more from the Northeast. We have examples of the early Phoenician Canaanite alphabet thanks to Samaritans. Unfortunately the early Canaanite people wrote on papyrus which has decayed with time.

Phoenician Canaanite

Phoenician alphabet										
kaph	yōdh	tēth	hēth	zayin	wāw	hē	dāleth	gīmel	bēth	'āleph
palm	hand	good	wall	weapon	hook	window	door	camel	house	ox
k	y	t	h	z	w	h	d	g	b	'
[k]	[j]	[tʰ]	[h]	[z]	[w]	[e]	[d]	[g]	[b]	[ʔ]
tāw	šin	rēš	qōph	šādē	pē	'ayin	sāmekh	nun	mēm	lāmedh
mark	tooth	head	eye of needle	papyrus	mouth	eye	fish	serpent	water	goat
t	sh	r	q	s	p	'	s	n	m	l
[t]	[ʃ]	[r]	[q]	[sʰ]	[p]	[ʕ]	[s]	[n]	[m]	[l]

Paleo Hebrew:

kaf	yod	tet	het	zayin	waw	he	dalet	gimel	beyt	'alef
k	y	t	h	z	w	h	d	g	b	'
taw	šin	reš	qop	šade	pe	'ayin	samek	nun	mem	lamed
t	š	r	q	š	p	'	s	n	m	l

Phoenician:

The Canaanites were essentially the early settlements along the coast of the Levant. They were a loose collection of ethnic groups. One of the ethnic groups, Phoenicians are credited with the invention of written languages. They were seafaring merchants. They were known for their trade in purple garments. Still today, purple is symbolic for royalty. "Phenicia" is a Greek word for purple. Lebanese are modern day descendants of the Phoenicians. Paleo Hebrew and Phoenician written language appear similar.

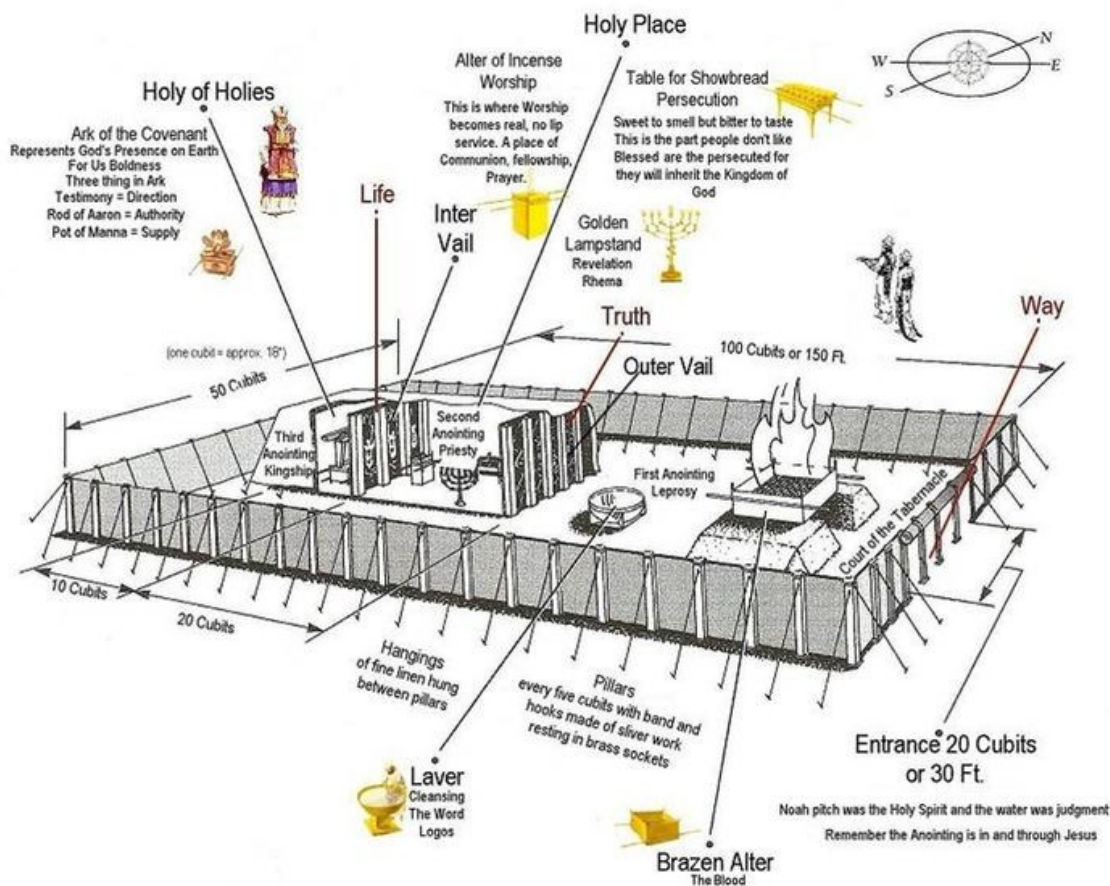
	B		Y		K
	G		L		M
	D		N		S
	H		Ch		O
	W				
	Z				
	Ch				

Aramaic influences with biblical texts appear later, influenced by the Persian Empire and the Babylonia exile. Ezra and Nehemiah wrote in Aramaic. Interestingly, Canaanites although

polytheistic, also worshiped Yahweh, so the cultures blended, despite the attempts to segregate.

Your Thoughts:

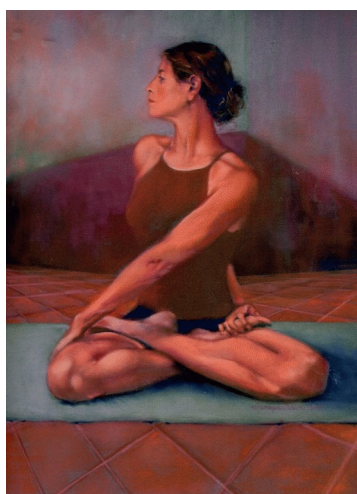
Leviticus



In this book God is laying down conditions for sinful, corrupt people to live in God's presence. The Tabernacle is the portable sanctuary and place of worship. Moses has been denied entry into the inner most chamber of the where God dwells. Because God is holy,

people must be made whole to enter the presence of God. To be made whole, rituals and priestly guidance or intervention is required. Rituals were performed, like offerings; grain from a harvest saying "thank you", or blood animal sacrifices that might express a regret and a request for forgiveness. Group rituals or ceremonies were required to honor history, including Israeli deliverance from slavery, Passover.

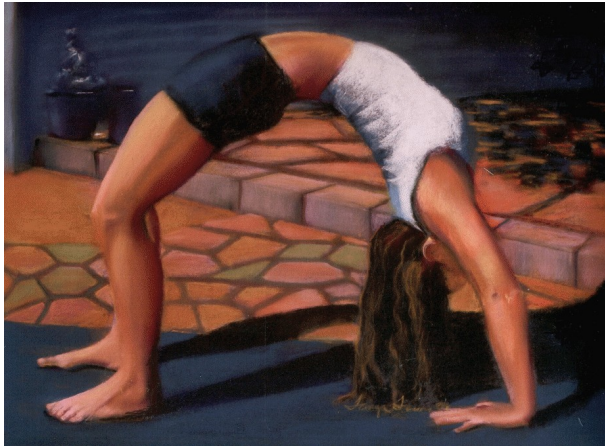
The priestly intercept was necessary, sort of like masks today, as sin was sort of airborne and the inner holy presence of God was kept pristine. Priests interact with individuals and then in a separate space communicate this interaction or confession to God Himself. The line of priests would descend from Aaron, whom Moses ordained. Remember, Aaron built the golden cow and now he is entrusted to be a priest? The sinful state of individuals is considered temporary with the atonement rituals and priestly intercept. Additionally, the entire tribe would be cleansed by an annual ceremony whereby the sins of all of the people were cast onto a goat who is cast off into the wilderness, as a scapegoat.



The Rewrite; The architectural design of the Tabernacle could also be symbolic of meditation practice. It includes an outer wall, an inner tent and within that tent an inner sanctum, a holy place. To grow quiet and build a wall is to filter to our mind's incessant conversation, the first task of meditation. This quieter inner space provides liberation from the dictates of our mind. Not that our mind is sinful, but it does contain a lot of questionable assumptions about ourselves and those around us. Meditation is a ritual that allows us to sit by the shore of our thoughts and observe them, forgive them, and move on from them. It also frees us up from unnecessary negative emotional states. We can let go of grievances that invade our thoughts and build walls that

protect us from destructive words and emotions of others. I feel bad for the goat made to carry all of the negative energy from all humans. Maybe it provided some relief for the adults during this time, but I bet the children were disturbed by this ritual.

Your Thoughts:



Numbers

In Hebrew this book title means "In the Wilderness". It is the story of the meandering migration from the Mount Sinai to the promised land. Although you can walk the distance in two weeks, it took the Israelis forty years. Numbers describes the strict organization of encampments and procedures to follow when moving across the desert lands. The smoke cloud emanating from the tent of the Tabernacle would communicate to the people the timing

and the path for the migration. This sort of signaling from God determined their migration decisions. There are multiple revolts of the people during the forty year trek across desert land. Cranky people. Sometimes the spies sent to explore surrounding lands return with conflicting reports, and people after a while grew suspicious of the whole idea that there was a promised land. They mistrust Moses and God. They misbehave. God honors the choice for the negative lot who wish to return to slavery in Egypt, and this explains the curse of wandering around for 40 years. Rebellions continue throughout the forty years, followed by punishments. One punishment describes a horrid snake attack. However, despite the doubtful behavior, the people are always provided food and water.

Eventually they arrive in Moab. The king of Moab is not that happy with the horde of immigrants. He orders a pox upon them via the evil sorcerer, Balaam. Balaam clearly was a forefather to our modern day Stephen Miller. Balaam attempts a clever strategy; he attempts to use the Hebrew God to curse the immigrants, but his curses are turned into blessings! Magic. Only the second generation of Israelites are allowed to enter the promised land. Even Moses is denied entry. Moses gives his last speech, and this is included in Deuteronomy, the biblical text that was discovered much later.

The Rewrite: Numbers is the story of refugees who often go from the frying pan to the fire. The migration experience is often borne of loss, loss of home, cast out, or loss of a future. I have this illusion that immigrants stand united in their state of homelessness, but imagine the circumstances and toil of never knowing where your next meal would arrive and the future of your children uncertain. We have examples of how suffering and oppression experienced by a group of people can breed discontent more than cooperation. Sometimes the surrender of the oppressed looks peaceful, when it actually is just helplessness. Think of those faces of survivors in concentration camps, so void of anger or hatred for their oppressors, instead, I see naked soulfulness. Sometimes the state of estrangement and sense of despair turns us against each other. It can breed betrayal as much as cooperation. In general, our happiness

Your thoughts on the rules for immigrants

19



Deuteronomy

This book contains the speech that Moses gives to the second generation of Israelis just before they cross over the Jordan river into the promised land. This book was “discovered” by either King Hezekiah or King Josiah around mid 7th century BCE. This would be long after the actual crossing of the river Jordan into the promised land. The promised land was not empty of people. Early Phoenician cities and Canaanites inhabited this area. We do not have archaeological evidence of Exodus or of the

subsequent conquering of the land of Canaan.

Moses encourages the younger generation to be different than their rebellious parents to God's laws and reminds them of the covenant and emphasizes the practice of listening and loving. Obedience is love, Listening is responding with love. Above all, because they are entering a land that worships many Gods, they should remain faithful to the one true Lord God. This book is a second reminder about God's laws as found in the 10 commandments and includes many other laws and details, like the treatment of slaves, who should be let go after 6 years:

“If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and works for you six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free” ([Deut. 15:12](#)). Upon release, former slaves were to receive a share of the wealth their work had created. “When you send a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you” ([Deut. 15:13-14](#)).

Deuteronomy introduces responsibilities as well many rights for common people, for women, children and slaves. It is obsessed with purity rituals.

Deuteronomy 32:16-17 accuses Israelites who worship other gods of worshipping abomination...demons. It leads to the purging of other gods and temples.

Moses understands that his people are flawed and that they are likely to disobey and consequently suffer the curse of God versus the blessings. Moses turns over the leadership of the Israeli people to Joshua and climbs a nearby mountain to look over the promised land and there he dies.

The Rewrite: Generation after generation benefit from the reminders of good behavior, like “do not steal, even if your neighbor is a thief” or “do not commit sedition even if your neighbor commits looting”. The rewards of following the 10 commandments are cast in doubt

when good people suffer or the school bully experiences life's rewards of status, power and wealth. Today we have rewarded a lawless conman to the most powerful position in the world. He escapes all responsibilities for his crimes of cheating, inciting rebellion, slander of innocent people, and most likely treason by sharing documents with our enemies. Justice delayed is justice denied. To be betrayed by your fellow countryman is a deep wound. Does a manking reflect the people's real identity? Is this the problem God tries to explain?

The commandment "resist false witness" is put to the test with social media. The truth has become so elusive. Slander, backbiting, and libel is freely exchanged on our highways and digital cul-de-sacs. We should be minding the words that exit our mouth. Every generation benefits from examples and reminders of the source of blessing and the curse of selfishness (hard hearts). As much as we know that good behavior brings us natural blessings, we invent (enter into new lands) machines and technology that is bigger than our moral ability to manage it properly. We endanger each other with nuclear weapons. We do not listen, and when we do it is often to false gods. There are many more stories of human kindness than murder or mayhem, but negative news gets the headlines. We depend on poets, writers, artists, and filmmakers to bring us stories of human courage and kindnesses. Just like in Deuteronomy we are constantly counting on the next generation to save humankind, the planet and the rich variety of life that we depend on, but we have handicapped them over time.



Your thoughts:



Joshua

Following the death of Moses, Joshua sends spies into the new land across the river Jordan. The spies find some Canaanites willing to accept the God of Abraham. This is promising news.

The river Jordan parts and the Israelites are able to cross over into the promised land, the Ark of the Covenant leading the way. Joshua reminds the new generation about their history

and covenant. They practice circumcision and celebrate Passover. Joshua has an encounter with an angelic warrior who identifies as God's warrior. The battles with Canaanites who resist the God of Abraham include the battle of Jericho, a victory, whereby the walls come tumbling down with the music of the trumpets. There is also the battle of Ai (which is the story of a lost battle). There are many battles. Canaanites, the enemies of Israel are described as sexually immoral and reportedly sacrifice children. This seems like a good enough reason to clean house (kill more children). Even though the battles are described as completely wiping out the Canaanite cities that refused to assimilate into the worship of the Israeli God, the Canaanite inhabitants are later described as still populating these places. Furthermore as a consolation to those of us who would prefer fewer genocides, Israelites only do battle with the people within the land of Canaan, and are commanded to live in peace with neighboring kingdoms. The last part of Joshua describes the granted lands and boundaries for the twelve tribes of Israel. As an old Man, Joshua gives a speech similar to that of Moses, reminding the Israelites to be faithful to the one God.

The Rewrite: This military conquest by Joshua is biblically dated as mid 13th century BCE, This corresponds to the Sea Peoples invasions and the collapse of the Late Bronze Age. Both the Bible and surrounding histories describe widespread destruction in the Levant area. Many inhabitants of the cities at this time migrated to the hill country. It is hard to know exactly who then came to inhabit the land of Canaan following the collapse but it was likely the same race of people that had previously inhabited this area and then survived the collapse. There was an extended drought at this time which likely contributed to civil unrest. Despite the blitzkrieg described in the Bible by Joshua, the demise of Canaanite cities lasted over a century. The Egyptians remained in this region throughout this time. Egyptian clay tablets are diplomatic correspondence, demonstrating these cities were vassals of Egypt.

Joshua is both the promise of a new day, a new opportunity as well as limitations with our attachment to our past. In our longing for a new day we often fail to let intuition and our

environment guide us. Those moments when we review good fortune, we realize we were never really in charge, our good fortune often the result of where and when we were born.

Joshua was only interested in converting the new land into his God's belief system. He had no curiosity about their culture. Instead that culture simply threatened his sense of purpose. We continue to repeat this pattern, despite the known suffering it always causes.

Today we don't necessarily fight over resources. We kill each other over different ideas. We share the same human flaws as those we are trying to eradicate in others. Sometimes we win the battle of influence, some times we are players in some other power game. We are rarely open for psychological change in our version of reality. How do we survive when reality is based on religious beliefs rather than scientific discovery?



Our quest for unity is futile when we recognize the limitations of reaching a shared reality. Currently we live in a time when reality is won by social media likes and the number of podcast subscribers. When I ask myself the question, Do I think everyone should think the way I think? The answer is **yes**. This is what Joshua is about.

Your thoughts:



Judges

Once the territory is divided among the Israelites, the nation is governed by tribal warlords called Judges. These judges start out as being just and faithful to God's laws but over time this system of governance deteriorates and eventually the people of Israel are no different than the Canaanites and are constantly involved in violent conflicts with each other, a kind of bloody "might makes right". "In those days Israel had no King, and everyone did what they pleased." It could have been interpreted that it is very difficult to form a nation without central power, a King. It is not just depressing that the

Israelites can not stay faithful, it is disastrous as the nation falls. It is completely corrupted, violent and immoral. Sound familiar?

The Rewrite: This book tells the story of the ebb and flow of civilization, in that the experience of oppression and chaos is overcome by central benevolent governance, only to fall back into oppression and chaos. We usually foul our own nest. Oppression, chaos, and suffering is thought to be the result of outside influences, but usually it is the fault of idolatry and laziness about maintaining higher principles and staying on the lookout for the abuse of power. As human beings migrate, they eventually come back into contact with one another again, transformed by their migratory experience. Narrow group-think spells disaster. Law and Order is tricky when we are richly diverse. Keep in mind the culture of the Canaanites (the Phoenician seafaring merchants) was blending with that of the Israelites. Each new generation presents shocking behavior to the one before.

Your thoughts:



1st Samuel

Samuel was a prophet born to Hannah who is so full of joy for her son, that she sings a song that shows how God opposes the proud and exalts the humble. It is about how despite tragedy and human evil, God is working out his purpose and how one day God will rise up an anointed king for his people. Samuel grows up to be a wise prophet at the same time the Philistines rise to power as the enemy of the Israelites. The Israelites lose a battle with the Philistines and the Ark of the Covenant is lost to the Philistines. The Philistines place the Ark in their temple to the God Dagon. Then God sends a plague on the people of Philistine and they

give back the Ark.

The kingdom of Israel had fallen into chaos (as described in the book of Judges) due to their inability to abide by the covenants, and so they required a good and faithful leader to bring them back to God's grace. The people of Israel ask for a king and consult with Samuel who consults with God and God seems ambivalent about the idea but gives Israel the King Saul. Yahweh prefers direct worship (although uses the indirect communication methods through priests) as defined in Leviticus. Saul is a promising good looking candidate but has flaws related to self importance. Behind the scenes God is working on bringing up another candidate, David. David is humble and brings down the giant and proud Philistines. Saul is jealous of the successes of David on the battlefield and tries to kill him. David resists killing Saul and Saul eventually is killed on the battlefield. King David has his own arc of promise and then downfall.

Saul was at first humble but caught the old power corrupts virus and eventually is replaced by David. King David, with a bit of shiny rewritten biography becomes the model for a future messiah.

Remember Yahweh was not that keen on HIS people selecting any ManKing because Yahweh wanted exclusive worship.

The Rewrite: Saul is an example of our misery when we don't examine and correct our flaws. In the larger scope of vanity and pridefulness, what is this tendency to give up democracy for demagogues? Why do we capitulate to bullies? We bully our self with negative thoughts and we bully each other out of what? Fear? We have to ask ourselves; Do we really have better angels when we elect tyrants to power? Have we really evolved from our baboon relatives who forage 3 hours a day and spend the rest of their time making each other miserable?

Our own individual monarchy is the chatter of our mind. We all are ignorant of the chasm between what our mind tells us and a deeper reality. Kindness to others is more rewarding than money, but to be kind requires security not a sense of scarcity. How do we connect and act on our higher ethical standards? What derails us? The difference between meditation and prayer is the difference between listening and talking.

Hurricanes, wildfires, floods and drought will be blamed on some poor scientist that tried to tell us the truth about our fossil fuel frenzy. The question for the human race is about how do we first connect to our self and then to each other for the benefit of our survival. It takes a lot of individual courage to admit our failings and make amends, even for those wrongs that are the wrongs of past generations.

Your thoughts:



2nd Samuel

Prophecy and history continue with the reign of King David. King David is committed to following God's commandments. He refuses to murder the first king Saul, however he does murder Saul's son and goes on to smote out many people in the cities of Canaan. He conquers the city of Jerusalem, renames it as Zion, and makes it the capital of his united kingdom of Israel. He murders the husband of a woman, Bathsheba. She

becomes pregnant with his child and he marries her. Of course he commands others to commit the murders. David begs for forgiveness for his sins and God continues to support his reign, except inexplicably when King David requires a census – then God sends pestilence. God promises David that from his bloodline there will come a messiah and a future eternal kingdom. David's children; Tamar, Amnon and Absalom have their own tragic tales. The book of Samuel concludes by bringing us back to the poem by Samuel's mother, Hannah.

The Rewrite: I have to think that the purpose of the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel are just to keep the interest going. But clearly the promise of a future messiah and eternal kingdom has had us all caught up in anticipating this promise. We create fantasies of the return of a savior for every generation. In the book of Samuel, there is incest, murder and mayhem under King David's reign just like every generation so far.

Today we have our own version of “hands off” murders; children separated from their parents and put into cages and people of color persecuted at the hands of the police. The increasing and massive wealth gap leaves a large part of the world hungry, without access to food, clean water, shelter and healthcare. Now that Trump is again in power we will likely rewrite the lies that left over a million American people dead of Covid-19. The lies of the fossil fuel industry now result in our climate crisis. Drought, violent storms, floods, fires, pests and sea rise are increasing exponentially. Native American poverty continues through broken treaties. While we branded ourselves as the land of opportunity and liberty, now we restrict women's right to choose. We have fundamentalist Christians at the head of government. We can brand ourselves anyway we want, but the underlying white supremacy, greed and ignorance under the banner of Christianity is still evident.

"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." — Mahatma Gandhi

Your thoughts:



1st & 2nd Kings

In this book, King David has unified the kingdom that includes both the northern hills and the southern regions. Yahweh promises the succession line of King David will fulfill the promise of a great prosperous nation. Despite covenant laws, King David and his son, Solomon, conspire to murder their enemies to consolidate power. King Solomon builds the temple, but he also marries daughters of other kings (hundreds),

includes the idols into the temple and uses slaves to build the temple. Following the reign of King Solomon, his son, King Rehoboam continues to abuse power.

The northern territory of Israel revolts and starts a succession of their kings, starting with Jeroboam (c.931 BCE). Jeroboam builds his capital in Samaria. The book of Kings documents the succession of kings in both kingdoms and gives a scorecard based on their fidelity to Yahweh and the laws of the covenant. The scorecard is written from the perspective of Jerusalem in Judah, so surprise, all 20 kings in the northern kingdom of Israel are considered evil and that explains their eventual conquest by Assyria in 722 BCE. However, it appears that the northern kingdom is richer in resources and actually prospers during this time, sometimes as a vassal of Assyria. The Scorecard gives 8/20 kings in Judah stars for fidelity,

but in general, most kings fail to live up to covenant rules and this is why prophets are sent to help the people fulfill their side of the bargain and obey the laws of the Torah.

The prophet Elijah was a wild man who traveled to the northern kingdom to rail against Ahab (873-853 BCE), who married Jezebel. Elijah passes on his powers to the prophet Elisha who raises a boy from the dead, purifies stew and floats an ax among 14 miracles. Despite the warnings to the northern kingdom they do not reform. The northern kingdom is rocked by bloody coups following Ahab's rule, none of them very nice. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 BCE and the people were exiled to other places in the Assyrian kingdom. This is why they are referred to by "the lost tribes of Israel". Maybe this is when Levi came to America per the Mormon story.

The book of Kings continues to extol the virtues of some of the kings of Judah, including Hezekiah and Josiah. Josiah in particular plays a pivotal role in finding a lost book that is likely Deuteronomy. This is read to the people and this book emphasizes monotheism and laws of the Torah, and the temple in Jerusalem as the only place of true worship. King Manasseh who reigned prior to Josiah had introduced idols. Despite the reforms Josiah introduced, Judah continued to fail in following the laws of the Torah and was eventually conquered by Babylon (586 BCE). The story ends with the king of Babylon inviting the imprisoned Jehoiakim, the would-be successor to the throne of Judah, to dine with him.

The Rewrite: This part of the Old Testament seems like a good time to bring up how ironic it is that Yahweh had warned Israelites that investing in monarchs would lead to enslavement. What does that tell us about today? It begs the question of do we invest in an earthly external power, through a MAN king, or do we continue to have a symbolic King not profiled as human? How do we construct a political order that will support our unique human collective ability to rise above it all, to have exchange of ideas, to debate, and to have the space to change, adapt and accept our planetary inter-dependence as well as our self determination? A democracy should provide that, but it appears easily corrupted by the persistent pattern of mankings.

As pointed out by my children, the Bible is the word of God written by MAN. It seems like the experience of women would breathe some life into understanding more universal truths. Once I asked a Buddhist monk why the Buddha had never re-incarnated as a woman. He instructed me to pay attention to the sand painting and the deity of the Tara. This is how cleverly we avoid the reality that power is deferred when it comes to the feminine.

From history based on archaeology and the surrounding power of Assyria and Egypt during this time a different story emerges that will influence the way we understand the book of Kings. The northern kingdom of Israel during this time had an ebb and flow of settlements. They were nomadic but once the urban areas had either been disrupted or destroyed, they needed to grow their own grain and consequently built their own villages. The area is rich for

growing olives and grapes and this became a commodity that served them well during this time, as they appeared to prosper once in alignment with the greater powers of Assyria. Once Assyria had withdrawn from the area, early 7th century BCE, and Israel had been conquered, Judah attracted former inhabitants of the northern kingdom. This is when Jerusalem began to expand and under Hezekiah built fortifications and sophisticated engineering projects for water access and distribution. King Josiah the great grandson of Hezekiah attempted to re-annex the prior northern territories. He centralized power using the "found book" that required monotheism and central worship at the temple in Jerusalem. Other rural temples appear destroyed during this time. Unfortunately, Egypt was re-emerging as a powerful competitor, and Josiah was summoned to Megiddo to meet with the pharaoh Necho, and there he was slain, (609BCE). Because all is lost with the death of King Josiah, Megiddo is predicted to be the epicenter for Armageddon.

Notes and Thoughts



1st and 2nd Chronicles

Chronicles was written after some 200 years following the Jewish exile to Babylon and back. After the two kingdoms of Israel split, following Solomon's reign, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was scattered and considered a vassal state of Assyria. This area of the Levant was primarily shared between shifting powers of Egypt and Assyria. The Southern Kingdom of Judea had been conquered by Babylon and the Jewish people were

held captive in Babylonia for 70 years. Then Persia conquered Babylon. Cyrus, the King in Persia must have felt like the people of Judah were a nuisance, because he ordered their return to Judea and Jerusalem in 539 BC.

The first chapters in Chronicles are dedicated to genealogy of the father-son line of the messiah (the children of David) and the genealogy of Aaron (the Priesthood). Anyone who has tried to map out their family tree including siblings and step-children realizes the task quickly requires scotch tape and a large table. The simplified father-to one son genealogy makes a lot more sense, especially if limited to clay tablets. Imagine the genealogy in Chronicles if it included the 1000 wives and concubines of Solomon, and all those children

and their offspring. Importantly, Chronicles cleans up the story of David and includes the promise of a temple rebuilt and a messiah to restore the glory of God.

The Rewrite: My children have asked me who the sons of Adam and Eve married. Apparently in the old days, only men had offspring. Old testament women are useful trinkets for power brokerage in royal alliances and useless if they fail to produce a male heir. Living in university housing allowed me to meet women from all over the world. Once when having a rare conversation with the multiple wives of my neighbor, I learned how concerned they were for my status as a single mother. I asked them how they could all live together in such a small apartment and with such strict laws of social interactions with other Americans. They giggled and we all realized how easy it is to normalize our place in the world. I only got a chance to talk to them because they were locked out of their apartment. Family is everything, but when we look at how many people are related to us, it doesn't take too many generations to understand that we are all blood relatives.

Your thoughts: Suggested activity: Count the relatives you have in the last 5 generations.



Ezra-Nehemiah

These books tell the story of three successive attempts to rebuild Jerusalem following the Babylonian exile and Jewish return to Jerusalem. Persian Kings, Cyrus and eventually Artaxerxes send three individuals along with resources to help the Jewish people rebuild, which says a lot about Persian governance and their tolerance for diversity. Zerubbabel,

represents the Israelite generation born in Babylon. He returns to Judah and successfully builds a second temple. Some of the inhabitants do not hold the temple in high regard. Ezra, a Torah scholar, leads another wave of rejuvenation, but finds the people have remarried Canaanites and he tries to enact divorces. Not surprisingly this is conflicting for many families. Nehemiah, an Israelite official serving in the Persian empire returns to build a wall around the temple. He encounters opposition from the inhabitants who believe the temple should be inclusive. Nehemiah had to build the wall with armed guards. Ezra and Nehemiah

throw a party and celebrate the Torah and this is going well, but then when the facts emerge that there is still much corruption it sours the fun. The temple is neglected, the Sabbath is dishonored and markets are being set up around the wall - uh oh, money and capitalism.

The Rewrite: Global peace and prosperity is an idea, set in the middle of human moral resistance to the sacrifices it entails. A hard lesson for democracy has been that our self-determination and struggle for equality is paradoxical to our belief in competition over cooperation. Religious beliefs can be co-opted into political tools. Reality differences are easily concocted to divide us. Once a system of justice is corrupted by greed or avarice we go through another disappointing period of unnecessary suffering. This time in 2024 it entails uncertainty, nuclear arms, climate disasters and chaos amid a world wide distribution of powerful tyrants. We live in a time when the rich have inherited the earth.

The priesthood, post Babylonian exile, had the role of sustaining a group identity. Ezra and Nehemiah are written from the perspective of post Persian conquest and return of the former Israelites to Judah. Post exile writers gave the final touches to what we now have as the Law of Moses. They needed to explain the Babylonian destruction and reunite the community of Yehud around the new temple. Post exile, the people in Jerusalem were now considered Yehud, Jews. The rulings of Ezra and Nehemiah in fifth century BCE are defining the Jewish race as distinct from their neighbors adhering to the Deuteronomic Laws. They lay the foundation for the second temple which in actuality appears to be a project from the Persian kings, appointing governors and financing the operations. This is considered to be the time that the exile, the suffering and soul searching and political review led to the birth of the Hebrew Old Testament and later supplements.

Your thoughts:

The Feminine



Ruth

Ruth is a story about an Israeli family during the times of Judges. As farmers, Naomi and her husband had moved to Moab (Canaanite country) in search of better times. Their sons married Canaanites. Unfortunately all of the males died. Naomi wishes to return to Bethlehem, and encourages her two daughter-in-laws to remain in Moab, as their lives would be very hard in an Israelite community. A Canaanite daughter-in-law, Ruth, declares her loyalty to Naomi. She declares Naomi's god to be her god and she returns to Bethlehem with

Naomi. Ruth finds work in the fields once they return and is noticed by Boaz, the owner of the land, who as it turns out is a family relative of Naomi (a kinsman redeemer). A kinsman redeemer is a male relative required to marry the widow of a brother, (or at least be some distant male relative) to maintain and protect the original property rights of the deceased male. Once Naomi realizes Boaz is her kinsman redeemer she instructs Ruth to "uncover Boaz at night and lay at his feet", meaning to sleep near him, hmmm. This lets Boaz honestly know who she is and she requests a marriage. Boaz is happy about the offer but after some honorable genealogy work, he discovers a closer male relative to Naomi. This other male relative (redeemer) turns down the marriage offer to Ruth as she is a Canaanite. Boaz is then free to marry Ruth. The son of Boaz and Ruth, Obed, is the forefather of King David. This means King David has some Canaanite blood relatives.

The Rewrite: This book describes how power was and continues to be maintained through property ownership and how women in the Old Testament led complicated lives in a patriarchal system. They had very few rights. Perhaps the whole problem starts with property ownership versus the responsibility of stewardship to the land. We build elaborate systems of power based on property rights.

I'm guessing since the original social embarrassment in the garden of Eden, women were not to be trusted with power, money or property or choice. Women are subject to the same temptations to abuse power, but they hardly ever get the chance to use it. We can not elect a woman president in America even if the woman is clearly more qualified and honorable.

With power I would assume women are more likely to consider the conditions their children will face for survival, however people are people and there are all kinds of women who value power for the idolatry of the self. There are certainly men today who value their role with nurturing children. All women are not the same just like all men are not the same. There are good examples of the goodness and generosity of men like Boaz, and plenty of examples of women who abuse power. Nevertheless, we safeguard our economic caste system through racism and misogyny.

Your thoughts:



Figure 2: Vashti

Esther

Esther is a book that never mentions God, but tells a story around political intrigue. 100 years following the Jewish exile into Babylon not all people of Jewish heritage returned to the land of Judah from Babylon. Esther, a Judah, has to be disguised in order to enter a beauty contest for the selection of a new queen. She is chosen by the Persian King (Xerxes

maybe?) as the most beautiful woman in the beauty pageant. Then she decides bravely to advocate for her people.

There is only a beauty contest because of the misbehavior of his prior queen, Vashti. Vashti had refused to appear with just her crown (naked) in front of drunken princes from around the huge kingdom following epic days of party. Following Vashti's defiance, the king decrees all women to obey their husbands, securing the male overlords of today and then orders a beauty contest for a new queen. Vashti is either exiled or punished more severely. This part of her story is not described fully.

Eventually Esther has to confess to the king that she is Jewish. She does this because of a king's decree instigated by a powerful Canaanite, Haman. Haman is involved in a drama with Mordecai, who happens to be a relative of Esther. Mordecai had previously saved the king by informing him of a plot to overthrow him, but the king had sort of forgotten all about this, maybe due to all the alcohol and 180 day parties. When Mordecai does not bow to Haman, this enrages Haman who passes on his recommendation for a genocide of Jewish people. Once Esther hears of this, she does some very brave things. She appears before the king uninvited, she confesses her Jewish race and she begs for the plight of her people. Once the king remembers the brilliant loyalty of Mordecai, he actually issues another decree saying Jewish people can defend themselves and the Haman purge sort of reverses itself with the slaughter of thousands of Haman relatives and followers.

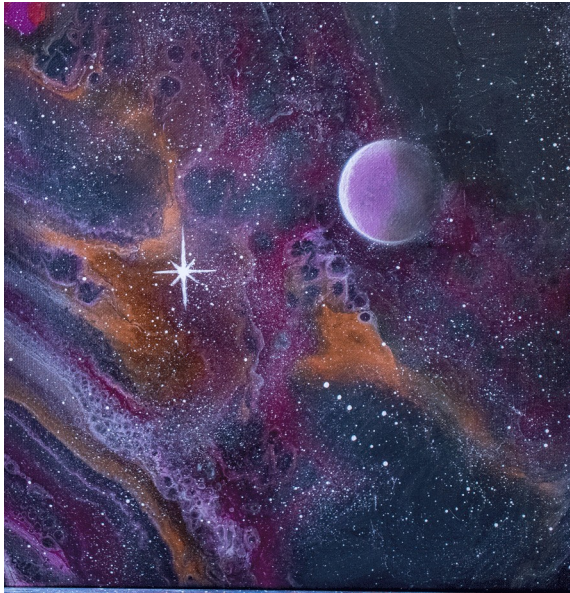
The Rewrite: The point of this book is that context matters. Esther is only able to save the Jewish people because Vashti refused to be an object for the King of Persia's entertainment and was consequently vanquished. Vashti was an early feminist, but remains Biblically uncelebrated or mentioned today. She said "No". Female beauty and obedience is more valued than individuality. That's why women require classes on obedience.

If only we could put compassion before judgment. It would help us put questions before assumptions. It would put a thoughtful pause with understanding before prideful revenge. I know I struggle. Haman's relatives did not deserve genocide nor did the Jews. It is not divine justice that one population was slaughtered over another. One of the difficult limitations to children with autism is their ability to understand an action based on another perspective. It is a limitation we all have on a grading scale. If we could speak of our true identity, like Esther, perhaps we would find more commonality.

What would justify a horde of people storming the US capital, intent on murdering representatives of the government? The the angry horde had their *belief that all voters* preferred their autocratic candidate instead of the one certified by a democratic secure and valid election. The 2020 election shocked their core belief in their right to power based on their birth certificate. Their belief system, their entitlement, trumped reason. This sobering reality is not just about the tensions when power begins to shift, it is about the political

system under which it happens. Our fragile democratic system prevailed in 2021, just barely. But because of the relentless lies over the past four years, twisted fictions prevailed and Trump has returned to power. The white manpower structure of our American history is as old as the Bible and haunts our aspiration for the self-determination of those who are poor or of color or another gender, female. The Republican party players who instigated the insurrection are back in power. Now the spin of propaganda and their masquerade as Christians will erase the many, many truths of their crimes.

Your Thoughts:



The Prophets

Old Testament prophets have a pattern of prediction. The pattern begins with the oppression and suffering of the Israeli people. God (Yahweh) offers the people a deal, covenant or agreement that frees them from oppression. But, over time the population fails to live up to the covenant and the prophets job is to warn them of the consequences. God then punishes his chosen for their sins. Retribution is usually pretty harsh. Their prophecies end with predicting a day the Israelites will be delivered and their descendants blessed as the chosen ones and a future of a messiah. These predictions mirror the history of the kingdom of Israel in the north and Judah in the south.

Keep in mind the history of the united kingdom (both the Northern and Southern territories) to understand the prophecies. Originally in the time Judges (1200 – 1000 BCE) there was chaos and “might over right”. The time of Judges is set by archaeological surveys and excavations in central highlands of Shiloh and Bethel. During this time the Israelites clashed with the Philistines (Canaanites) and often were dominated by them. It is still not clear that the Israelites were a distinct people from Canaanites, just located in the highlands.

To resolve the chaos of the time of Judges, recall that the Israelites ask the prophet Samuel for a recommendation for a king and this is how King Saul became the first king of all Israel. After Saul, King David came to power and conquered Jerusalem. He built the city of David. His son, Solomon, built his temple in Jerusalem.

Then the Northern territory of Israel revolted and started their own line of succession. We have the division of Kings with this schism. In 721 BCE Assyria captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Israelites of the northern kingdom became the lost tribes.

Prophets of Israel (the northern kingdom) Dates are approximations.

Elijah: (873- 852 BCE – during reign of King Omri and Ahab of Israel) The Israelite king Omri allied with Phoenicians and his son Ahab married Jezebel, who worshiped pagan gods, namely Baal. A sanctuary was built to the pagan Gods in Samaria. The Israelites worshiped both Baal as well as Yahweh. Baal is a nature God who represented the elements and biological fertility. Elijah is the defender of Yahweh and wins a contest with the prophets of Baal (Jezebel’s God). Because the book of Kings is considered more of a historical narrative, Elijah is not listed as a “former prophet” and is considered a “pre-prophetic” character.

Jonah (800 – 747 BCE) (2nd Kings 13-14) Ninevah is an Assyrian city that Jonah was sent to warn them of their sin, but he chose defy Yahweh and travel the opposite direction and this is how he ended up in the belly of a whale and was barfed back up on shore to fulfill his orders to warn Ninevah to shape up.

Joel (790-760 BCE) Joel appears very aware of other biblical prophets and scriptures. His poems presume we are aware by this time of the trials and tribulations of Israel. It appears to be related to the time after the return of Israelites to Jerusalem from Babylon and there are no kings. The theme is about the Day of the Lord, in the past and in the future.

Amos (780-760 BCE) Amos is a shepherd and fig tree farmer who lives on the border between Israel and Judah. Amos is disgusted at the wealth of the northern king Jeroboam II who allowed idolatry and injustice. He travels north to a temple in Bethel and delivers his message from God to the people of Israel. He starts with the neighbors of Israel but narrows to Israel for their neglect of the poor and consequent debt enslavement without legal representation. God points out he had delivered the people of Israel from slavery and with great calling comes great responsibility. He predicts that the worship of idols leads the people to hypocrisy and the day of the Lord is coming and a powerful nation will eventually overthrow Israel. He ends with the promise that a new messiah from the line of David will one day redeem the people.

Hosea (785 – 725 BCE) Jeroboam II Reign (788-747 BCE) . Hosea starts with a story of a bad marriage and God says the husband must repair the marriage with a difficult wife. God is like that with his people. The people failed God, and he has a justified reason to punish them, but because of God's love is loyal his will of course punish Israel but reward or restore them at a later time. God warns Israel has formed alliances with surrounding powers, like Assyria. He sees that the inevitable is that Assyria and Egypt will destroy them (As they do).

Isaiah (750 – 695 BCE) The voice in the book of Isaiah is post Babylon exile but Isaiah lived 100 years before this event transpired. This conflict is resolved by explaining Isaiah's warnings were rejected during his lifetime so he sealed them and passed them on to his disciples. He is prophetically transported back during the post exile period to explain the way God works to protect his chosen. There is a trial to explain the events of the exile. He explains God uses Assyria and then Babylon to mature Israel into a new understanding of his love. Exile not divine neglect but designed for Israel's sake, so they could come back to Jerusalem and fulfill their destiny. God predicts a servant will come and be rejected and killed on behalf of his people (atonement). The servant will miraculously come back alive. Justice will come to do away with the people who reject the servant's message. A new purified Jerusalem will include all nations in peace.

Prophets of the Judah (The Southern Kingdom)

Micah (745- 725 BCE) Lived in Judah during the reign of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (743-698 BCE). Micah's accusations appear as fire, smoke and earthquakes regarding 500 years of betrayal of the Israeli people to Yahweh. He names names. It describes the social injustice of wealth and the abuse of power. An example is how King Ahab steals a vineyard from a poor person and describes the bribery and corrupt profits of Kings and leaders of the people with practices in violation of the Torah. God has withdrawn protections but promises he will regather his flock to good pasture. He will one day make Israel the meeting of heaven and earth.

Nahum (660 – 630 BCE) Collection of poems describing the fall of Assyria and the powerful Assyrian city of Nineveh. Remember Assyria's early expansion had scattered the northern tribes of Israel in 721 BCE. Nahum also described the downfall of Assyria by Babylon in 612 BCE. Nahum is basically a tirade against Israel's enemies. He describes how powerful is the God of Israel who will one day

confront evil and violent nations. He repeats the character of God following the golden calf incident after the 10 commandments were issued; "God is slow to anger but will not leave evil unpunished." He will bring down arrogant nations and is present in all ages.

Habakkuk (620 -610 BCE) During the reign of Josiah, and Jehoahaz of Judah. Habakkuk addresses God complaining about his personal struggle in a corrupt nation. How can you accept that God is good when there is so much suffering and corruption in the nations? He is disgusted that God would summon Babylon as a tool to correct the sins of Israel knowing Babylon is even worse! God commands him to write in tablets a vision of the future describing how a righteous person lives by hope. He also describes the woes of unjust economic practices that keep the poor poor, slave labor, the use of alcohol and the idolatry of money and power.

Zephaniah (630 – 620 BCE) lived during final decades of Judah. Zephaniah claims Israel is too far gone to be saved from the wrath of God. Josiah who had attempted monotheism by claiming Jerusalem temple was the only holy place of worship and had outlawed all of the pagan Gods in rural area, had been executed by Egypt. For years Zephaniah had been warning Judah. God's good ordered world will become disordered. Predicts a great army will destroy Jerusalem. He calls people to repent. He predicts all Israel's neighbors would also fall to the great army and be destroyed. God's burning indignation was used to purify the nations including Jerusalem.

Haggai (520 – 518 BCE) Babylon had overthrown the city of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. 70 years after this event and the Jewish people have been allowed to return to Jerusalem by the Persians. Joshua and Zerubbabel return with Jewish people to Jerusalem. When Haggai arrives he is disappointed that the people are building their own houses instead of restoring the temple. He considers this a covenant rebellion against Yahweh. So the people started rebuilding the temple, but when Haggai returns he finds their work unimpressive, and the morality is low among the people. He inspires them with Yahweh's promise of the new Jerusalem where all nations peace and prosperity. Then in the third visit he promotes ritual purity. He compares the purity of building the temple are like keeping purity for future generations.

Zechariah (520 – 510 BCE) An explanation for why some of the promises of a new kingdom are not fulfilled. Zechariah urges people to repent and not be like the prior generations of Jerusalem. Zechariah has visions including: 4 horsemen that acts as God's attempted watch. Horn that attack and then are scattered – and then a woman in a basket carried off to Babylon, then a man is measuring the city of Jerusalem, and then a scroll that flies around Jerusalem purifying the people. One vision is about Joshua leading the people back to Israel. Joshua is given a crown as a priest of God's kingdom. Everything prophesied is conditional upon the people's behavior.

Malachi (420 – 397 BCE) Lived about 100 years following the return of the people to Jerusalem. Things are not going well. The people that repopulated Jerusalem are just as corrupt as prior generations. God is in dispute with Israel and the people do not think God fulfills his promises. God exposes men wedding non-Israelite, men are getting divorces and people are fine with this. People claimed God is not the God of justice. God promises to come like fire. God gives us a scroll to remind us of his covenant, (the faithful remnant). The scriptures promises a new Jerusalem and a new messenger.

[illegible]



Colorado Monument, Pastel

Our Earth Holds Our History

Archaeology's findings in Palestine, Canaan and the old territories of Israel and Judah offer alternative timelines to Old Testament Bible stories. With a wider lens a broader understanding ancient history emerges, one that the Kingdom of Judah does play a role, but a minor one. This minor role however, began to dominate the prevailing religious beliefs of today, and it is in our best interests to discover why.

In the late 19th century we were able to decode cuneiform tablets. This would transform our understanding of ancient Middle East history.

Understanding the political environment and powers of Assyria, Egypt, the Amorites, Babylon and the Persian empires allows us to see Israel from the perspective of the entire region. The influences and control these surrounding empires had on the area are captured in their records.

The Bible Unearthed by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman is used as my primary reference. Most archaeologists agree much of the Old Testament appears to be based on legends and myths written and re-written after the Persian release of Israelites back to Jerusalem following their capture by the Babylonians.

How lucky we are to have great libraries and museums. There were also great libraries in the past, but they were systematically destroyed during war. We should understand what a threat our history holds for those who wish to sell us a version that empowers the weaver of another tale. YouTube has a rich source of videos to explore ancient history once you start asking questions. I have enjoyed the videos on the history of the Levant, many of them unable to shift out of the biblical narrative. We will never know the truth about ancient history, but we do have more tools to discover it today. I am grateful that instead of using the blood of a lamb over my front door, I can get vaccinated against a plague.

Judaism, Islam and Christianity depend on the **history** told through Abraham's family and the Old Testament but it has divided us. A lot has changed in 3000 years and much remains the same. Most of my Bible book reviews came from the Bible Project, a series of YouTube videos that help me remember Bible stories and inspired me to look beyond the Kingdom of Israel for other civilizations, and ancient history.

Timelines

4000 BCE – The Phoenicians

Phoenicia was an ancient civilization composed of independent city-states located along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea stretching through what is now Syria, Lebanon and northern Israel. The Phoenicians were a great maritime people, known for their mighty ships adorned with horses' heads in honor of their god of the sea, Yamm, the brother of Mot, the god of death

3500- 2000 BCE – Sumerian Empire

Considered the first empire, located in the fertile river area of Iran between the Tigris and Euphrates.

2334 -2279 BCE – Akkadian Empire

A Semitic people on the Arabic peninsula during the period of Sumerian City states. They built their empire extending as far away as Lebanon.

2000- 1600 BCE – Amorite period

Amorites were Canaanites who lived in the highlands of the Levant and were described as “people tall as cedar trees” and giants. Amorite migration ends the Sumerian civilization

1894 BCE Babylonia Empire founded by King Sumu-abum

The Babylonian Empire was one of the most influential and prosperous empires in ancient Mesopotamia. It emerged in the 18th century BCE under the leadership of Hammurabi, who established a centralized government and implemented a code of laws known as the Code of Hammurabi. This code, one of the earliest known legal systems, provided regulations for various aspects of life and contributed to the empire's stability and economic growth.

Over the centuries, the Babylonian Empire witnessed periods of expansion and decline, with notable rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar II, who transformed Babylon into a magnificent city and constructed the iconic Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The empire's cultural and intellectual achievements were also significant, as it was home to renowned scholars and mathematicians who made significant contributions to astronomy and mathematics.

However, the Babylonian Empire faced numerous challenges, including invasions by neighboring empires such as the Assyrians and Persians. In 539 BCE, Babylon fell to Cyrus the Great of Persia, marking the end of the empire. Despite its eventual decline, the Babylonian Empire left a lasting legacy in the fields of law, literature, and science, influencing subsequent civilizations and shaping the course of history.

539 BCE Fall of Babylon conquered by Cyrus of Persia (Return of the Jews to Jerusalem)

485 BCE Babylon destroyed by Xerxes King of Persia.



1750 BCE - Elamite invasion

The rulers of Elam were actually feudal lords who were considered to be representatives of Inshushinak, god of Susa.

1500 BCE - Egyptian empire extends to the Euphrates

Egypt had control over the Levant during different times. Through stable periods they controlled the trade routes through the Levant area. We know more about Egypt because of their hieroglyphic histories. They

were the most polytheistic (1400 gods) of all of the civilizations at this time.

1350 -1250 - BCE Hittite Empire at its peak

1600 -1180 BCE. The Hittites were ancient Anatolia (Turkey) people who had a powerful empire. They manufactured advanced iron tools. They worshiped storm gods.

1025 BCE - The United Kingdom of Israel

931 BCE -the Northern kingdom of Israel revolts and starts a line of kings, and later absorbed and conquered by Assyria. Judah survives until capture by Babylon in 586 BCE.

7th century BCE -Assyrian Empire: - at its height.

1900 BCE - Ashur capital of Assyria founded -

Included parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Turkey.

Began in the Bronze age in Iraq (city of Ashur) 3300-1200 BC

"Assyria soon discovered a painful truth: empires are like Ponzi schemes... They must continue to expand if they are not to collapse" - Pau Kriwaczek, Babylon

The Assyrian Empire combined politics and religion. Their God was Ashur. Assyria became a territorial state in 1300 BC starting in the territory of Iran. As they expanded they oversaw over many different cultures. In the 12th century BC they lost territory but then began to expand again. They were considered military innovators and used cruel tactics. They deported and relocated local populations breaking bonds of loyalty to neighboring groups of people. They built royal roads and new capitols. The kings carved their stories on their palace walls. They absorbed cultural values of Babylonia. They supported libraries, scholars, parks and gardens. Ashurbanipal copied the texts of Babylonia but his clay tablet library was sacked during the fall of Nineveh. Between 612 -609 BC the empire fell to Babylonia.

Great Libraries of the Ancient World

Info from

<https://www.history.com/news/8-impressive-ancient-libraries>

The library of Ashurbanipal. The world's oldest known library was founded sometime in the 7th century B.C. for the "royal contemplation" of the Assyrian ruler Ashurbanipal. Located in Nineveh in modern-day Iraq, the site included a trove of some 30,000 cuneiform tablets organized according to subject matter. Most of its titles were archival documents, religious incantations and scholarly texts, but it also housed several works of literature including the 4,000-year-old "Epic of Gilgamesh."

The Library of Alexandria. Following Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C., control of Egypt fell to his former general Ptolemy I Soter, who sought to establish a center of learning in the city of Alexandria. The result was the Library of Alexandria, which eventually became the intellectual jewel of the ancient world. Little is known about the site's physical layout, but at its peak, it may have included over 500,000 papyrus scrolls containing works of literature and texts on history, law, mathematics and science. The library and its associated research institute attracted scholars from around the Mediterranean, many of whom lived on-site and drew government stipends while they conducted research and copied its contents. At different times, the likes of Strabo, Euclid and Archimedes were among the academics on site.

The Library of Pergamum. Constructed in the third century B.C. by members of the Attalid dynasty, the Library of Pergamum, located in what is now Turkey, was once home to a treasure trove of some 200,000 scrolls. It was housed in a temple complex devoted to Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, and is believed to have comprised four rooms—three for the library's contents and another that served as a meeting space for banquets and academic conferences.

The Vila of Papyri. While it wasn't the largest library of antiquity, the so-called "Villa of the Papyri" is the only one whose collection has survived to the present day. Its roughly 1,800 scrolls were located in the Roman city of Herculaneum in a villa that was most likely built by Julius Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus.

Library of Trajan's Forum. Sometime around 112 A.D., Emperor Trajan completed construction on a sprawling, multi-use building complex in the heart of the city of Rome. This Forum boasted plazas, markets and religious temples, but it also included one of the Roman Empire's most famous libraries. The site was technically two separate structures—one for works in Latin, and one for works in Greek.

The Library of Celsus. There were over two-dozen major libraries in the city of Rome during the imperial era, but the capital wasn't the only place that housed dazzling collections of literature. Sometime around 120 A.D., the son of the Roman consul Tiberius Julius Celsus Polemaeanus completed a memorial library to his father in the city of Ephesus (modern-day Turkey).

The Imperial Library of Constantinople. Long after the Western Roman Empire had gone into decline, classical Greek and Roman thought continued to flourish in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. The city's Imperial Library first came into existence in the fourth century A.D. under Constantine the Great, but it remained relatively small until the fifth century when its collection grew to a staggering 120,000 scrolls and codices.

The House of Wisdom. The Iraqi city of Baghdad was once one of the world's centers of learning and culture, and perhaps no institution was more integral to its development than the House of Wisdom. First established in the early ninth century A.D. during the reign of the Abbasids, the site was centered around an enormous library stocked with Persian, Indian and Greek manuscripts on mathematics, astronomy, science, medicine and philosophy.



The Bible Unearthed Points of Interests

Authors: Israel Finklestein, an Israeli archaeologist & professor at Tel Aviv University
Neil Asher Silberman, an American archaeologist and historian

YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/O5RfScpEcZ8?si=ShDmgPx6vr5AuDuZ>

In regard to the Patriarchs, Abraham through Jacob, there is no way to prove the existence of Abraham or his path of migration into Canaan. The story is at least symbolic for the birth of a nation and the significance of a father figure for this nation. It is more likely that the eventual citizens of Israel and Judah emerged out of local populations (Canaanites). Canaanites were related indigenous tribes who spoke a Semitic language. Egypt controlled the Levant from 3000 – 1200 BCE. They competed for control with Hittite and Assyrian forces from the north.

Using the chronological Bible calculations you arrive at the date of 2100 BCE for Abraham's departure from Mesopotamia for Canaan. The patriarchs lived very long lives (over 100 years) and Jacobs descendants are confusing. Moses and Aaron were fourth generation descendants of Jacob's son Levi, while Joshua a contemporary of Moses and Aaron, was a twelfth generation descendant of Joseph, another of Jacob's sons, not a minor discrepancy. The inclusion of camels, Arabian goods, and Philistines in the story of the patriarchs all point to the composition of this story as written much later (likely 8th century).

There is no historical or archaeological evidence for Moses. Moses is a very common name in Egypt. The stories told in Exodus and Numbers is dated close to the time when Egyptian power was at it height and controlled territory all the way to the Euphrates river in Mesopotamia. If there had been an exodus of the estimated 2 million Israeli people out of Egypt it would have created an economic collapse. There were Egyptian garrisons all along the Levant area that would have recorded this migration. At the biblical time of Moses, Canaan was strongly ruled by Egyptian governors, with scribes, soldiers and administrators.

The story of the conquest of Canaan (1230-1220 BCE) by Joshua is questionable from archaeology data. Jericho had been destroyed many centuries before likely by an earthquake. It was not inhabited, nor were any of the other cities mentioned in the Canaan conquest by Joshua, except for Hazor. Lets give Joshua this one credit of conquest. And just to be on the safe side, maybe it is worth it to arm our military with trumpets.

A group named Israel was present in Canaan by 1207 BCE. City states at this time were vassals of Egypt. They were not fortified by city walls. Israel is mentioned on the victory stele of Merneptah. The pharaoh Merneptah ruled from 1213-1203 BCE. It states that people living in Canaan (Israelites) had suffered a crushing defeat.

There was disorder in the middle east with the collapse of the Bronze age (1250-1150 BCE). The invasion of the Sea People was at this time. Many cities were destroyed. The collapse could also be due to famine, disrupted economies, social unrest and anarchy. This ushered in the declining power of Egypt. Some of the local population after the fall of the Bronze age likely migrated to the hill country. Eventually farmers along the perimeter of nomads began to farm and these pastoral nomads began to settle in small primitive settlements along the west bank of the Jordan River. They had animal pens, and simple farming. The tenth century is a confusing time for archaeologist to track. There is a campaign at this time by the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak recorded on the walls of the temple in Karnak in upper Egypt. It lists 150 towns that were devastated in the south of Judah through central hill country and across the Jezreel Valley and coastal plane. Cities like Rehov, Beth-shean, Toanach and Megiddo were targets. This indicates a powerful kingdom that must have threatened Egypt in the area of the southern Levant.

Jerusalem is a very small and sparsely populated settlement in the tenth century. There are no armies and no scribes to help us substantiate the city of David. It is more likely that the “golden age” of David and Solomon should be dated to the 9th century BCE. In Tel Dan a 9th century stele mentions the house of David, which validates King David. Although King David’s son, King Solomon, is reported to have built an empire and surrounding cities, we know there is conflicting evidence that the surrounding cities were actually built by King Omri, Ahab and Assyrian influences.

Judah in the 10th century under the golden age of the united kingdom, is biblically described an opulent powerful kingdom. This does not hold up to scrutiny. It is very small and economically isolated. At Jerusalem, The city of David or a magnificent Solomon temple are yet to be found. Both Israel and Judah populated the hill country and were still polytheistic. Both Israel and Judah venerated the stars and planets, worshiped Baal and mountain Gods. What differentiated the hill population from the coastal Canaanites, specifically the Philistines, was the absence of pork in the Israelis diet. During the 9th century The Northern highlands of Israel were making olive oil and from this technology came trade and increasing prosperity. Israel

TABLE TWO
THE KINGS OF THE UNITED MONARCHY

KING	DATES*	BIBLICAL TESTIMONY	ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS
Saul	ca. 1025–1005	First king, appointed by the prophet Samuel	In the highlands continuation of Iron I settlement system
David	ca. 1005–970	Conquers Jerusalem and makes it his capital; establishes a vast empire covering most territories of the Land of Israel	No evidence for David’s conquests or for his empire. In the valleys Canaanite culture continues uninterrupted. In the highlands continuation of Iron I settlement system
Solomon	ca. 970–931	Builds the Temple and the palace in Jerusalem. Also active at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer	No sign of monumental architecture, or important city in Jerusalem. No sign of grand-scale building activity at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer; in the north, Canaanite material culture continues

* According to Galil’s *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*

became a powerful regional power and controlled Samaria, Galilee, the upper Jordan Valley, the Sharon and large parts of Transjordan. This specialization led to statehood. Because Israel was later absorbed by Assyria, Judah was left to write the history of Israel, and it was not a positive review. The Judadite authors depicted the Israelite line of Kings as defiant of Yahweh's laws.

In 732 BCE when Assyria had completely absorbed Israel a mass migration occurred from the Israeli area to the territory of Judah. Jerusalem, under King Hezekiah was fortified and had established literacy. Jerusalem was a thriving city with a dependable water source. Old Testament texts began to be created, copied and organized according to the monotheistic principles that made Yahweh the only Deity. Yahweh = Jehovah = God. Yahweh had a consort Asherah, the Canaanite fertility Goddess. Obviously, this detail was left on the editing floor.

Under King Hezekiah Jerusalem sued for peace from Assyria. There followed peace and prosperity in Judah. Around this time, Deuteronomy was discovered. Deuteronomy is cited as a religious revolution because of the emphasis on the individual for moral responsibility. It also provided legal protections for women, children and slaves. This appealed to the poor and those disenfranchised. Deuteronomy has many rules for purity. For example, it forbids wearing cloth spun from two different fabrics. This is impure. It made one God, Yahweh, the only God, so rural areas began to feel the purge of their pagan gods and this continued under King Josiah.

The archaeological history is much more reliable after the 8th century because of the radio-carbon dating and the surrounding texts from greater civilizations. Babylon sacked Jerusalem in 587 BCE. The population was held captive in Babylon for 70 years and eventually returned, *not as Israelites, but as Judah, Jews*. Once again the Old Testament texts were updated and organized, likely by Ezra, who was able to link the prior texts to the events following the return of the Jewish people to Judah.