“Kipling's Six” for the Books of the Bible

The phrase “Kipling's Six” refers to a poem by Rudyard Kipling which refers to “six little words” which can be used to find out information; who, what, when, where, why and how. Each of the entries in this article will assist the student of the Bible in finding out this important information for each of the books of the Bible.

Genesis

Part of the Torah – for a discussion of when and by whom this book was written, see the article on Mosaic Authorship and the Documentary Hypothesis.

Exodus

Part of the Torah – for a discussion of when and by whom this book was written, see the article on Mosaic Authorship and the Documentary Hypothesis.

Leviticus

Part of the Torah – for a discussion of when and by whom this book was written, see the article on Mosaic Authorship and the Documentary Hypothesis.

Numbers

Part of the Torah – for a discussion of when and by whom this book was written, see the article on Mosaic Authorship and the Documentary Hypothesis.

Deuteronomy

Part of the Torah – for a discussion of when and by whom this book was written, see the article on Mosaic Authorship and the Documentary Hypothesis.

Joshua

Jewish tradition ascribes authorship of the book to Joshua, and consequently places its origin at the time of the supposed Israelite invasion (which biblical chronology places in either the 15th or 13th century BC). Some opinions presented in the Talmud state that the book was written by Joshua except for the last verses (24:29-33) which were added by Phinehas the priest; other Classical Rabbinical writers took a different stance.

Certainly, the author presents himself as an eyewitness to the accounts described, occasionally using first person pronouns (for instance, in Joshua 5:1), although Joshua is usually described in the third person. Some sections (eg. 5:9, 7:26, 24:29-33), even according to Jewish tradition, could however only have been added after Joshua's death; tradition normally ascribes these sections to Eleazar or Phinehas (Eleazar's son). Also problematic is the frequently used phrase to this day, suggesting a substantial amount of time between the events and the account being written.

Despite there being a Jewish tradition of authorship, in Christian circles, both Catholic and Protestant, the authorship has been considered dubious since ancient times. Theodoret proposed that it was written by a later author who had access to documents from Joshua's time, while Athanasius argued that the ascription to Joshua was merely indicative of the main hero of the text. Alphonsus Tostat (1613) argued that Solomon was the real author, and Maes (1574) claimed that it might have been Ezra, particularly since he had access to Hebrew archives.

In modern times, religiously conservative Jewish scholars continue to generally adhere to the traditional view, arguing that the book was written by a contemporary of Joshua, and their view has also been adopted by some evangelical Protestants. However, with the advent of source criticism, some scholars now reject claims of authorship by Joshua or his contemporaries.

Instead of the traditional Jewish view, most modern scholars have suggested several alternative and related possibilities, arguing that the Book of Joshua must be regarded as a compilation. An analysis of its contents makes it certain, in the eyes of scholars, that its sources are of the same character as those of the Pentateuch. Despite the Jewish tradition of authorship, the view of modern scholars was also the impression of classical Rabbis, to a certain degree; according to Mak. 11a, the chapter concerning the cities of refuge (Joshua 20) was taken from the Pentateuch. Classical Rabbinical writings refer to Joshua as having been written in the light of the Deuteronomic legislation (Genesis Rashi 6:14).

Scholars now believe that Joshua is a continuation of the JE version of the torah, and thus two of the main spliced-together narrative sources within it - Jahwist (J), and Elohist (E) - or at least deriving from sources from the same schools of thought as these. The Deuteronomist is considered to have detached the Joshua section of this at some later point and embedded it within the Deuteronomic history, making a number of minor edits and framing additions (mainly Joshua 1, 21:43, 22:6, and 23). Thus the work would be mainly the work of writers from the 8th and 7th century, but with retouchings from the exilic period.

The form of this modern theory that argues for the sources being J and E, rather than from similar schools, is known as the

hexateuch theory, since the first six books would have been the original narrative unit). Although, given their narrative, it is probable that J, E, and P (the Priestly source), continued their narrative as far as the conquest of the land, the books of Ezra and of Nehemiah give no intimation of the existence of a hexateuch. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have argued that Hosea, Amos, and Micah, were aware of a hexateuch-like JE source, due to passages such as Micah 6:5, Hosea 9:10, 12:4, and Amos 2:10, 5:25, 7:4.

Judges

While the authorship of Judges has traditionally been ascribed to Samuel, the great majority of modern scholars have come to a much more complex conclusion, regarding the work as having hardly any literary unity at all. Many suspect the brief Book of Ruth to have originally been part of the Appendices of Judges, owing to its style, linguistic features and the time period in which its contents are set, it somehow becoming disconnected and misplaced at a later date.

According to some (but not all) experts in textual analysis known as textual criticism, the majority of Judges was originally part of a continuous work known as the Deuteronomic History stretching from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings, which was later broken up, in accordance with the documentary hypothesis, when the Torah was constructed by its redactor from the early parts of the Deuteronomic History and other writings such as JE and the Priestly source. It is for this reason that many textual critics also treat 1 Samuel 1:1-7:2, which discuss Eli and Samuel, as having originally been part of the Judges section of the Deuteronomic History narrative.

The introduction

Some passages (1:12-15, 2:6-9 and 3:7-11) of the introduction are almost identical to ones in the Book of Joshua. On the other hand, part of the text which surrounds them (1:1-11, 1:16-2:5) instead presents a summarised overview of the events in Joshua, recording differing traditions, such as that concerning Adonibezek (c.f. Joshua 10), or those concerning the continuing presence of Jebusites in Jerusalem to this day (1:21) or not (1:8). For those who support Hexateuch-like theories, where the sources that the documentary hypothesis ascribes to the Torah extend through the Book of Joshua, these passages are often seen as deriving from such sources parallel to the corresponding ones of Joshua.

The majority of critical scholars believe that that first part of the introduction (1:1-2:5) was a late addition to the text, added after the Deuteronomist version of Judges was constructed. Hence 2:6-3:7 is viewed as the original introduction by the Deuteronomist to the Judges period, spinning the later stories to imply that the history of the period involved the Israelites repeatedly turning to worship of other gods, suffering for it, and being alleviated of their suffering by five great leaders, and Abimelech; whereas the original source texts were independent and without the Deuteronomist's alterations, some could be regarded as parallel local events rather than sequential national ones.

The main text

The text is believed under textual criticism to contain further compositional structure. The Deuteronomist here is believed to have combined together six earlier separate texts, one for each of the five Great Judges and one for Abimelech - Ehud (3:11, and 3:13-29), Deborah (4:1b-5:31), Gideon (6-8), Abimelech (9:1-57), Jephthah (11:1-12:7), and Samson (13:2-16), adding passages to join them together (4:1a, 8:29-31, 10:17-18, and 13:1), sometimes interrupting the narrative to do so.

The text is believed to have been further altered by the (possibly later) addition of passages concerning Minor Judges (10:1-5 and 12:8-15) in order to make the total number of Judges a more religiously significant number, harmonizing them chronologically so that the total number of years of their reign (71) is close to the number of years of oppression under the Great Judges (70). The presence of 3:31, placing Shamgar in the list of Judges, is believed to be a later recension, created in order to remove Abimelech from being counted amongst the Judges without disturbing the total number, in order that someone so apparently wicked not taint the role, the name coming from 5:6.

Three of these six earlier texts each contain partly duplicate accounts:

Judges 4 is believed to be based on two separate stories, one based on the ancient Canticle of Deborah (Judges 5) concerning Sisera, the other a story concerning Jabin, which had merged together when Barak of Issachar (identified at 5:15 as the one who defeats Sisera) was confused with Barak of Naphtali (identified at 4:6 as the one who defeats Jabin), and consequently Sisera is reinterpreted in Judges 4 as Jabin's general rather than as the chief of a confederation (as in Judges 5)

Although difficult, to a degree, to separate, there are considered to be two distinct interwoven narratives about Gideon; the first narrative (which includes at least 6:2-6, 6:11-24, 6:33-35, 7:1, and 7:9-25) describing a surprise assault on the Midianites on Mount Gilboa with the fugitive Kings Oreb and Zeeb being killed, and the second narrative (which includes at least 6:7-10, 6:25-32, and 6:36-40, and 8:4-27) discussing Gideon capturing the fugitive Kings Zebah and Zalmunna.

The narrative of Judges 9, concerning Abimelech, is thought not to have originally contained the parable of Jotham (9:7b-20), it being inserted into the story at a later date. However, the parable itself is believed to be earlier than the rest of the narrative, which is thought to be at least partly based upon it.

In addition, the Samson narrative (13-16) contains two distinct cycles; the first a series of tableaux concerning his romance

of a Philistine woman and subsequent problems arising from it; the second is the tale of his relationship with Delilah, which begins with him standing between two gateposts at dawn, and ends with him standing between two temple pillars in the evening. Though these two cycles may have been collected separately from each other, textual criticism favors the view that the whole Samson narrative originates from one author. That the narrative of Samson is easily broken into 12 episodes is considered to be a deliberate literary conceit, owing to the significance of the number 12 to the Israelites.

In addition to such parallel narratives, the story of Jephthah (11:1-12:7) is often suspected to have been subject to later editing in three locations, though the reasons for the first two are not at all clear

According to 11:1-2, it is Jephthah's own brothers which expelled him, whereas according to 11:7 it is the elders of Gilead

The message to the Ammonites at 11:12-27 is written as if directed at Moabites.

11:35-40 has the appearance of abridging a more extensive original text, glossing over the existence in the text of human sacrifice to Yahweh, which is mentioned fairly obviously at 11:31

The appendices

The Appendices cover two stories from the time of the Judges, rather than Judges themselves, and so only have contextual relationship in passing with the remainder of the work. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the Appendices is that they cover events occurring at the start of the period of Judges not at its end, and so, chronologically, belong before the remainder of the book, not after it. Even more noticeable is that the narrative preceding the Appendices continues in 1 Samuel, as if the interruption due to the narrative of the Appendices were simply not present. Hence scholars view the Appendices as texts that were not originally present but later added due to the shared time frame, though the reason they were inserted at the end rather than the beginning is unclear.

The story of Micah and his Idols (17-18) is thought by some scholars (e.g. Ernst Bertheau, Karl Budde, Rudolf Kittel, and Carl Heinrich Cornill) to be composed from two distinct accounts, one recording Micah making an Ephod and Teraphim and hiring a Levite to be "father and priest", the other recording Micah making a graven image and a molten image and hiring a Levite as a priest who he treated as a son. Were this to be the case, it may indicate that at least part of the Appendices could be considered further continuations of the Jahwist, Elohist, or Priestly sources, hence explaining their origin. However, other critical scholars have proposed that such discrepancies may simply be due to later scribal interpolations. The story is significantly notable as it describes a cult and priesthood at Dan which is mentioned nowhere else in the entire Hebrew Bible, and hence is considered to be based on a particularly early source, prior to later recensions glossing over cult centres of Yahweh outside Jerusalem and Shiloh.

The other story of the appendices (19-21), concerning the Levite and his concubine, is thought to date from a similarly early era based on linguistic similarities to the first appendix. However, as everyone in the story is anonymous, except Phinehas, has led many Biblical critics to regard the story as fictional. Nevertheless, Hosea (10:9) says that "...since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel...", evidencing at least the presence of traditions resembling parts of the story, though some scholars, beginning with Noldeke, believe the story is actually based on something from a slightly later time period - the ruining of the tribe of Benjamin by the war between David and the son of Saul.

Ruth

Many of the books of the Old Testament do not identify their authors, and the Book of Ruth is one of these; there is, however, a historical tradition that alludes to a possibility. The Talmud refers to Samuel as the author, but scholars do not accept this tradition. Samuel died before David became king, and the way in which the author writes the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22 supposes that the lineage is well known. Even the reference in Ruth 1:1 to the "days when the judges ruled..." indicates that the era had ended and that the audience was somewhat removed from the time. Furthermore, Ruth 4:7 states that the legal custom of taking off a shoe to seal the agreement is no longer in use. Only a generation exists between Samuel and Boaz; therefore, it is unlikely that the time span would require this explanation. Other scholars have theorized that Ruth was in fact an Israelite who lived in Moab, not a foreigner without Israelite blood. This is based on linguistic and textual evidence. Dueteronomy states that no Moabite should be allowed into the Israelite assembly, so it is quite possible that Ruth was not a Moabite at all.

Some scholars suggest that the author of the text is a woman. Two observations point in the direction of a woman author. First, the story centers on the life journey of two women in desperate straits in a male-dominated society, and appears to be from the viewpoint of a woman. Second, Naomi and Ruth's ingenuity and assertiveness propels the story line. However, female authorship is conjecture, supported by only circumstantial evidence.

The Book of Ruth, according to many scholars, was originally part of the Book of Judges, but it was later separated from that book and made independent. The opening verses explicitly place the Book of Ruth in the time of the Judges and it concludes with the Davidic lineage. Therefore, one could suppose that the author wrote the story after the time of King David. Exactly how long after the reign of David is the question. One possibility is around 900 B.C, shortly after David's reign. Scholars who choose this date link it to the importance of David's lineage recorded at the end of Ruth. In Ruth 4:12

the author states that Ruth and Boaz' child is named Obed and that Obed "…became the father of Jesse, the father of David." The final verses trace the family line.

On the other hand, the message of the book shows acceptance of the Israelites marrying converts to Judaism, and this has been used to suggest that the book was written during the early days of the Persian period, perhaps around 500 B.C, which was during the postexilic period. Ezra (10:2ff) and Nehemiah (13:23ff) record the problem that arose from the Israelites marrying foreign women. Instead of the wives converting to Judaism the Israelites began to follow their wives' gods. As a result, God's people fell out of relationship with YHWH. For this reason, Ezra condemned intermarriages and forced the Israelites to abandon their non-Jewish wives. According to this theory, the book was written in response to Ezra's reform and in defense of a marriage to a foreign wife when the wife converts to Judaism. Acceptance of marriages to foreigners who convert to Judaism is further enforced by making the connection to the Davidic line as David is commonly seen as Israel's greatest king. Scholars who prefer the 500 B.C. date do so in reference to this dilemma, and such writers contend that the Book of Ruth demonstrates the belief that a marriage to a foreigner is acceptable to God when the foreigner follows God.

In addition, the later date of 500 B.C is preferred when explaining the use of language in Ruth; however, scholars also realize that the linguistic style of the book could reflect the work of editors following the 900 B.C. date. Essentially, the dating of Ruth is ambiguous and scholars cannot date the book of Ruth with any degree of certainty, although most scholars agree that the Book of Ruth was composed before the period of Babylonian exile.

I & II Samuel

Traditionally, the authors of the books of Samuel have been held to be Samuel, Gad, and Nathan. Samuel is believed to have penned the first twenty-four chapters of the first book. Gad, the companion of David (1 Sam. 22:5), is believed to have continued the history thus commenced; and Nathan is believed to have completed it, probably arranging the whole in the form in which we now have it (1 Chronicles 29:29).

This theory is not supported by some modern scholars, who consider that the text is clearly not the work of men contemporary with the events chronicled. Even the Book of Chronicles explicitly refers to multiple source texts for the information, naming several. Roughly in the order they are believed to have been created historically, the sources that modern scholarship considers to have been interlaced to construct 1 & 2 Samuel are:

- Jerusalem source: a fairly brief source discussing David conquering Jerusalem from the Jebusites
- republican source: a source with an anti-monarchial bias. This source first describes Samuel as decisively ridding the people of the Philistines, and begrudgingly appointing an individual, chosen by God, to be king, namely Saul. David is described as someone renowned for his skill at playing the harp, and consequently summoned to Saul's court to calm his moods. Saul's son, Jonathon, takes a shine to David, which many commentators view as romantic, and later acts as his protector against Saul's more violent intentions. At a later point, having been deserted by God on the eve of battle, Saul consults the Witch of Endor, only to be condemned for doing so by Samuel's ghost, and told he and his sons will be killed. David is heartbroken on discovering the death of Jonathon, tearing his clothes apart.
- Court History of David a continuous source covering the history of David's kingship, and believed to be the source going by this name in the Book of Chronicles. This source continuously describes Israel and Judah as two separate kingdoms, with David originally being king of Judah only. David conquers Israel, but Israel rebels under Absalom, identified as David's son, and David is forced into exile. Israel's forces attack David while he is in exile, but he wins, and Judah accompanies him back to Jerusalem. Israel makes another rebellion, but David lays siege to a city housing the leader, and wins.
- sanctuaries source: a short source which interrupts the narrative in order to recount an episode concerning the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, and their subsequent voluntary return of it. The source demonstrates a bias toward the viewpoint of the kingdom of Israel.
- monarchial source: a source with a pro-monarchial bias and covering many of the same details as the republican source. This source begins with the divinely appointed birth of Samuel (many scholars think this originally referred to Saul, see below). It then describes Saul as leading a war against the Ammonites, being chosen by the people to be king, and leading them against the Philistines. David is described as a shepherd boy arriving at the battlefield to aid his brothers, and is overheard by Saul, leading to David challenging Goliath and defeating the Philistines. David's warrior credentials lead to women falling in love with him, including Michal, Saul's daughter, who later acts to protect David against Saul. David eventually gains two new wives as a result of threatening to raid a village, and Michal is redistributed to another husband. At a later point, David finds himself seeking sanctuary amongst the Philistine army and facing the Israelites as an enemy. David is incensed that anyone should have killed Saul, even as an act of mercy, since Saul was anointed by Samuel, and has the individual responsible killed.
- redactions: additions by the redactor to harmonize the sources together; many of the uncertain passages may be

part of this editing.

- various: several short sources, none of which have much connection to each other, and are fairly independent of the rest of the text. Many are poems or pure lists.

The relationship between these sources is uncertain, though it is generally agreed that many of the various shorter sources were embedded into the larger ones before these were in turn redacted together. Though some scholars disagree, many academics have proposed that several of the sources are continuations of others, such as the Jerusalem source, and royal source being in some way continuous with one another, and the prophetic source and sanctuaries source being likewise continuous with each other. Some, most recently Richard Elliott Friedman, have proposed that the sources were originally parts of the same texts as the Elohist, Jahwist, and possibly Priestly, sources of the Torah, with the court history of David being considered part of the Yahwist text. What is considered likely is that the Deuteronomist is the one which redacted together these sources into the Books of Samuel.

Currently, the verses attributed to these sources are:

- Jerusalem source: 2 Samuel 5:6-16, 6:9-20
- republican source: 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16, 11:1-11, 11:15, 13:1-14:52, 16:14-23, 18:6-11, 18:20-27, 19:11-21:1, 21:11-16, 25:1b-25:43, 28:3-25, 31:1-13, 2 Samuel 1:1-5, 1:8-12, 2:1-3:1, 3:6-33a, 3:34b-5:2, 5:17-25, 21:15-22
- court history of David: 2 Samuel 9:1-20:26, 1 Kings 1:1-2:46
- sanctuaries source: 1 Samuel 4:1-7:1
- monarchial source: 1 Samuel 1:1-3:21, 8:1-22. 10:17-24, 17:1-18:5, 18:12-19, 18:28-19:10, 21:2-10, 22:1-23, 26:1-28:2, 29:1-30:31, 2 Samuel 1:6-7, 1:13-16
- redactions: 1 Samuel 2:27-36, 7:2b-16, 11:12-14, 12:1-25, 15:1-35, 2 Samuel 7:1-29
- various: 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 3:2-5; 3:33b-34a; 22:1-51; 23:1-7; 23:8-24a; 23:24b-39; 24:1-25
- uncertain: 1 Samuel 7:2a, 7:17, 10:25-27, 16:1-13, 23:1-25:1a, 2 Samuel 6:1-8, 6:21-23, 8:1-18, 21:1-14

Within these, there are sometimes what appear to be very minor redactions. For example, 1 Samuel 1:20 explains that Samuel is so called because his mother had asked Yahweh for him; however Samuel means name of God, while Saul means asked; this has suggested to many biblical critics that the narrative originally concerned Saul at this point, a later editor substituting Samuel's name. There are also several points in the Masoretic Text that appear more obviously corrupted in comparison to the Septuagint version.

I & II Kings

The authorship, or rather compilation, of these books is uncertain. The sources of the narrative are explicitly given as:

1. The "book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41)
2. The "book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (14:29; 15:7, 23, etc.)
3. The "book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (14:19; 15:31; 16:14, 20, 27, etc.).

The date of its composition was perhaps some time between 561 BC, the date of the last chapter (2 Kings 25), when Jehoiachin was released from captivity by Evil-merodach, and 538 BC, the date of the decree of deliverance by Cyrus the Great.

There are some portions that are almost identical to the Book of Jeremiah, for example, 2 Kings 24:18-25 and Jeremiah 52; 39:1-10; 40:7-41:10. There are also many undesigned coincidences between Jeremiah and Kings (2 Kings 21-23 and Jer. 7:15; 15:4; 19:3, etc.), and events recorded in Kings of which Jeremiah had personal knowledge. Because of this, traditionally Jeremiah was credited the author of the books of Kings.

However, the book(s) plainly acknowledge several source texts in several places, and it is hence self evidently a compilation from earlier sources rather than an original work. A superficial examination of the Books of Kings makes clear the fact that they are a compilation and not an original composition, and the compiler (usually referred to as the redactor) constantly cites certain of his sources. In the case of Solomon it is the book of the acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); for the Northern Kingdom it is the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel, which is cited seventeen times, that is, for all the kings except Jehoram and Hoshea (e.g. 1 Kings 15:31); and for the kings of Judah it is the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah, which is cited fifteen times, that is, for all the kings except Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (e.g. 1 Kings 15:7). As well as the text's own admission, the idea of the text being composed from multiple earlier sources is also supported by textual criticism. Whether the editor had access to these chronicles, as they were deposited in the state archives, or simply to a history based upon them, can not with certainty be determined, though it is generally assumed that the latter was the case.

An early supposition was that Ezra, after the Babylonian captivity, compiled them from official court chronicles of David, Solomon, Nathan, Gad, and Iddo, and that he arranged them in the order in which they now exist. However, it is more usually said that Ezra was the compiler of the Books of Chronicles, an alternate history of the period of the kings, which was earlier in history treated as a single book together with the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah.

The majority of textual criticism is of the belief that, with the majority of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, these works were originally compiled into a single text, the Deuteronomic history, by a single redactor, the Deuteronomist. The similarities between the text of Deuteronomy and that of the Book of Jeremiah are so strong that many critical scholars view Jeremiah as the Deuteronomist, hence agreeing, in a round about sort of way, and for different reasons, with the traditional view concerning the authorship of Kings.

Object and method of work

It was not the purpose of the compiler to give a complete history of the period covered by his work; for he constantly refers to these sources for additional details. He mentions as a rule a few important events which are sufficient to illustrate the attitude of the king toward the Deuteronomic law, or some feature of it, such as the central sanctuary and the high places, and then proceeds to pronounce judgment upon him accordingly. Each reign is introduced with a regular formula; then follows a short excerpt from one of his sources; after which an estimate of the character of the monarch is given in stereotyped phraseology; and the whole concludes with a statement of the king's death and burial, according to a regular formula (for example, compare 1 Kings 15:1-9 with 1 Kings 15:25-32).

The standpoint of the judgments passed upon the various kings as well as the vocabulary of the compiler indicates that he lived after the reforms of Josiah (621 B.C.) had brought the Deuteronomic law into prominence. How much later than this the book in its present form was composed, may be inferred from the fact that it concludes with a notice of Jehoiachin's release from prison by Evil-merodach (Amil-Marduk) after the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562. The book must have taken its present form, therefore, during the Exile, and probably in Babylonia. As no mention is made of the hopes of return which are set forth in Isaiah 40-55, the work was probably concluded before 550. Besides the concluding chapters there are allusions in the body of the work which imply an exilic date (e.g. 1 Kings 8:34, 9:39; 2 Kings 17:19-20, 23:26-27).

Time of redaction

On the other hand, there are indications which imply that the first redaction of Kings must have occurred before the downfall of the Judean monarchy. The phrase unto this day occurs in 1 Kings 8:8, 9:21, 12:19; 2 Kings 8:22, 16:6, where it seems to have been added by an editor who was condensing material from older annals, but described conditions still existing when he was writing. Again, in 1 Kings 9:36, 15:4, and 2 Kings 8:19, which come from the hand of a Deuteronomic editor, David has, and is to have, a lamp burning in Jerusalem; that is, the Davidic dynasty is still reigning. Finally, 1 Kings 8:29-31, 8:33, 8:35, 8:38, 8:42, 8:44, 8:48, 9:3, 11:36 imply that the Temple is still standing. There was accordingly a pre-exilic Book of Kings. The work in this earlier form must have been composed between 621 and 586. As the glamour of Josiah's reforms was strong upon the compiler, perhaps he wrote before 600. To this original work 2 Kings 24:10-25:30 was added in the Exile, and, perhaps, 23:31-24:9. In addition to the supplement which the exilic editor appended, a comparison of the Masoretic text with the Septuagint as represented in codices B and L shows that the Hebrew text was retouched by another hand after the exemplars which underlie the Alexandrine text had been made. Thus in B and L, 1 Kings 5:7 follows on 4:19; 6:12-14 is omitted; 9:26 follows on 9:14, so that the account of Solomon's dealings with Hiram is continuous, most of the omitted portion being inserted after 10:22. 1 Kings 21, the history of Naboth, precedes ch. 20, so that 20 and 22, which are excerpts from the same source, come together. Such discrepancies prove sufficient late editorial work to justify the assumption of two recensions.

Sources

In brief outline the sources of the books appear to have been these:

- 1 Kings 1-2 are extracted bodily from the a source now known as the court history of David, which largely also constitutes 2 Samuel 9-20. The redactor has added notes at 1 Kings 2:2-4 and 2:10-12.
- For the reign of Solomon the text names its source as the book of the acts of Solomon (11:41); but other sources were employed, and much was added by the redactor.
- 1 Kings 3 is a prophetic narrative of relatively early origin, worked over by the redactor, who added verses 2-3, and 14-15.
- 1 Kings 4:1-19 is presumably derived from the Chronicle of Solomon.
- 1 Kings 4:20-5:14, "Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom" (1 Ki 4:20-34 ESB), contains a small kernel of prophetic narrative which has been retouched by many hands, some of them later than the Septuagint.
- The basis of 5:15-7:51 was apparently a document from the Temple archives; but this was freely expanded by the redactor, and 6:11-14 also by a later annotator.

- 1 Kings 8:1-13, the account of the dedication of the Temple, is from an old narrative, slightly expanded by later hands under the influence of the Priestly source of the Torah.
- 1 Kings 8:14-66 is in its present form the work of the redactor slightly retouched in the Exile.
- 1 Kings 9:1-9 is the work of the redactor, but whether before the Exile or during it is disputed.
- 1 Kings 9:10-10:29 consists of extracts from an old source, presumably the book of the acts of Solomon, pieced together and expanded by later editors. The order in the Masoretic text differs from that in the Septuagint.
- 1 Kings 11:1-13 is the work of the redactor;
- 1 Kings 11:14-22 is a confused account, perhaps based on two older narratives;
- 1 Kings 11:26-31 and 39-40 probably formed a part of a history of Jeroboam from which 12:1-20 and 14:1-18 were also taken. The extracts in chapter 11 have been set and retouched by later editors.

I & II Chronicles

The time of the composition of the Chronicles is believed to have been subsequent to the Babylonian Captivity, possibly between 450 and 435 B.C., though Martin Noth was of the opinion that it dated from the 3rd century B.C. and Gary Knoppers, while acknowledging that Chronicles theoretically could be written anywhere between 500 - 250 B.C., tends to see it as probably dating between late 4th century to early 3rd century B.C. (i.e. 325 - 275 B.C.). The contents of Chronicles, both as to matter and form, correspond closely with this idea. The close of the book records the proclamation of Cyrus the Great permitting the Jews to return to their own land, and this forms the opening passage of the Book of Ezra, which is viewed as a continuation of the Chronicles, together with the Book of Nehemiah. The peculiar form of the language, being Hebrew in vocabulary but Aramaean in its general character, harmonizes also with that of the other books which were written after the Exile. The author was likely contemporary with Zerubbabel, details of whose family history are given (1 Chronicles 3:19).

Jewish tradition regards Ezra the scribe as the author of Chronicles, and there are many points of resemblance which seem to confirm this opinion: the conclusion of the one and the beginning of the other are almost identical in expression. J. N. Newsome, however, argues that the Chronicler's treatment of prophecy "betrays a difference of theological concern between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah."

In its general scope and design Chronicles is not so much historical as didactic. The principal aim of the writer appears to be to present moral and religious truth. He does not give prominence to political occurrences, as is done in Samuel and Kings, but to religious institutions, such as the details of the temple service. The genealogies, so uninteresting to most modern readers, were really an important part of the public records of the Hebrew state. They were the basis on which not only the land was distributed and held, but the public services of the temple were arranged and conducted; the Levites and their descendants alone, as is well known, being entitled and first fruits set apart for that purpose. The Chronicles are an epitome of the sacred history from the days of Adam down to the return from Babylonian Exile, a period of about 3,500 years. The writer gathers up the threads of the old national life broken by the Captivity. In the Hebrew bible, where the book of Chronicles is usually the last book, it can be said to fulfill a role similar to the end credits of a modern movie: To mention all those also-rans without whom the preceding wouldn't have been possible.

The sources whence the chronicler compiled his work were public records, registers, and genealogical tables belonging to the Jews. These are referred to in the course of the book (1 Chr. 27:24; 29:29; 2 Chr. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 24:27; 26:22; 32:32; 33:18, 19; 27:7; 35:25). There are in Chronicles, and the books of Samuel and Kings, forty parallels, often verbal, proving that the writer of Chronicles both knew and used those other books (1 Chr. 17:18; comp. 2 Samuel 7:18-20; 1 Chr. 19; comp. 2 Samuel 10, etc.).

As compared with Samuel and Kings, the Book of Chronicles omits many particulars there recorded (2 Sam. 6:20-23; 9; 11; 14-19, etc.), and includes many things peculiar to itself (1 Chr. 12; 22; 23-26; 27; 28; 29, etc.). Often the Chronicles paint a somewhat more positive picture of the same events, in comparison to the (compared to other books of their time) unusually critical books of Samuel and Kings. This corresponds to their time of composition: Samuel and Kings were probably completed during the exile, at a time when the history of the newly wiped out Hebrew kingdoms was still fresh in the minds of the writers, a period largely considered a colossal failure. The Chronicles, on the other hand, were written much later, after the restoration of the Jewish community in Palestine, at a time when the kingdoms were beginning to be regarded as the nostalgic, rosy-colored past, something to be at least partially imitated, not something to be avoided. Some scholars consider Samuel and Kings, which were written earlier, to provide a more reliable history than Chronicles.

Twenty whole chapters of the Chronicles, and twenty-four parts of chapters, are occupied with matters not found elsewhere. It also records many people and events in fuller detail, as (e.g.) the list of David's heroes (1 Chr. 12:1-37), the removal of the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion (1 Chr. 13; 15:2-24; 16:4-43; comp. 2 Sam. 6), Uzziah's tzaraas (commonly translated as "leprosy") and its cause (2 Chr. 26:16-21; comp. 2 Kings 15:5), etc.

It has also been observed that another peculiarity of the book is that it substitutes more modern and more common expressions for those that had then become unusual or obsolete. This is seen particularly in the substitution of modern names of places, such as were in use in the writer's day, for the old names; thus Gezer (1 Chr. 20:4) is used instead of Gob (2 Sam. 21:18), etc.

The Book of Chronicles is alluded to, though not directly quoted, in the New Testament (Hebrews 5:4; Matthew 12:42; 23:35; Luke 1:5; 11:31, 51).

Ezra

The canonical Book of Ezra commences where the Chronicles leave off, and indeed with slight variation repeats the last two verses of II Chron. What follows consists of three portions: (1) an account of the return of the exiles, and a brief survey of the fortunes of the Jewish community down to the reign of Xerxes; (2) ch. iv. 7-vi. 22, extracts from a collection of historical documents in Aramaic, illustrating the fortunes of the community in the reigns of Artaxerxes I. and Darius, with a short appendix in Hebrew; (3) ch. vii. to end, a record of the enterprise of the author of the book, including a copy of the decree granted to him by Artaxerxes II., with an account of the author's work at Jerusalem.

The first section includes a document also transcribed in Neh. vii. 6-73a, called by Nehemiah a genealogical table of the first return. A third copy is to be found in the apocryphal I Esdras.

Character of Composition

The documents embodied in the second section are described as "written in Aramaic and 'targumed' in Nehemiah Aramaic" (iv. 7). Since a work can not be translated into the same language as that in which it is composed, the expression "targumed" must mean "described," a sense which corresponds closely to the sense of the Arabic word "tarjamah," which, used of a tradition, signifies the heading in which its contents are described. This phrase, then, implies that the contents of this section were transcribed from a collection of documents and accompanied with a commentary, probably made for the benefit of the Eastern community. In these extracts there is evidently a chronological transposition; for the correspondence with Artaxerxes I. (ch. iv.) is placed before the correspondence with Darius (ch. v., vi.), who is certainly Darius I. This may be due to momentary confusion on the author's part between Darius I. and Darius II.; but it is surprising, since in iv. 5-7 he shows himself well acquainted with the order of the Persian kings. Thus the period covered by the commentary on the documents in ch. v. and vi. is earlier than that covered by the documents in ch. iv.

Alleged Fabrications

The authenticity of the documents is a matter on which there is difference of opinion, critics (E. Meyer excepted) being disposed to regard all of them as inauthentic, whereas before the time of Heinrich Graetz they were generally thought to be genuine. The custom in use among ancient historians of illustrating their histories by speeches and letters of their own composition makes the treatment of such questions difficult.

The edict of Cyrus, said to have been found at Achmetha (vi. 3-5), is the boldest of these fabrications, if they be such; but the mention of that ancient capital implies some very remarkable knowledge on the part of the author here excerpted. Some other reasons for believing these documents genuine are alleged by Levi Herzfeld ("Geschichte des Volkes Israel," i. 125). The character of the Aramaic in which they are couched agrees fairly well, both in vocabulary and in grammar, with that of early inscriptions and papyri; and there would be nothing surprising in successive compilers having assimilated the language somewhat to the dialect with which they were most familiar. It is also possible that these Aramaic texts are translations of documents in Old Persian, and were accommodated to the taste of those whom they were intended to reach.

The third part of the book appears to be a personal memoir; and the decree there given (vii. 11-26), coming from an Artaxerxes whom the author distinguishes by spelling from Artaxerxes I., cannot be regarded as spurious without seriously shaking the writer's credit. The narrative which he proceeds to give of his journey, however, contains little which might have been invented for the purpose of edification, though it might be open to any one to regard viii. 22 as written by one who had Neh. ii. 7 before him. The narrative of Ezra's doings at Jerusalem is also not marked by exaggeration. Ch. ix. records a lengthy prayer offered by him on receipt of the intelligence of the mixed marriages, and ch. x. the measures taken by him to separate the erring couples, with a list of the persons affected. The objection urged by some critics that so severe a measure would not have been obeyed, seems insufficient to justify the condemnation of this part of the narrative as unhistorical; since the author may well have supposed it would be more effective than it turned out to be. Nor indeed does the recurrence to the subject in Neh. x. 31 and xiii. 23 render it improbable that severe measures were taken years before in the same direction.

Nehemiah

It is historically regarded as a continuation of the Book of Ezra, and is sometimes called the second book of Ezra. Traditionally, the author of this book is believed to be Nehemiah himself. Many modern scholars, however, dispute this. There are portions of the book written in the first person (ch. 1-7; 12:27-47, and 13). But there are also portions of it in which Nehemiah is spoken of in the third person (ch. 8; 9; 10). Some, following the traditional attribution to Nehemiah,

suppose that these portions may have been written by Ezra (of this, however, there is no distinct evidence), and had their place assigned them in the book probably by Nehemiah, as the responsible author of the whole book, with the exception of ch. 12:11, 22, 23. Other authors think that the historical order of events in both Ezra and Nehemiah has become jumbled, from which they conclude that at least the final arrangement and revision of their text must have occurred at a later period.

If Nehemiah was the author, the date at which the book was written was probably about 431 - 430 BC, when Nehemiah had returned the second time to Jerusalem after his visit to Persia.

The book consists of four parts:

- An account of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and of the register Nehemiah had found of those who had returned from Babylon (ch. 1-7).
- An account of the state of religion among the Jews during this time (8-10).
- Increase of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the census of the adult male population, and names of the chiefs, together with lists of priests and Levites (11-12:1-26).
- Dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the arrangement of the temple officers, and the reforms carried out by Nehemiah (12:27-ch. 13).

Malachi the prophet was possibly contemporary with Nehemiah (although scholars debate whether Malachi actually existed - many think that the Book of Malachi was accidentally detached from the preceding book, and named from its first words ...messenger...).

A work ascribed to Nehemiah, but bearing in some canons the title Esdras II. or Esdras III., having been attributed to Ezra on the ground that Nehemiah's self-assertion deserved some punishment (Sanh. 93b), or because, having ordinarily been written on the same scroll with the Book of Ezra, it came to be regarded as an appendix to it. The book consists ostensibly (i. 1) of the memoirs of Nehemiah, compiled, or at any rate completed, toward the close of his life, since he alludes to a second visit to Jerusalem "at the end of days" (xiii. 6, A. V. margin), which must mean a long time after the first. In xiii. 28 he speaks of a grandson (comp. xii. 10, 11) of the high priest Eliashib as being of mature years; whence it appears that the latest event mentioned in the book, the high-priesthood of Jaddua, contemporary of Alexander the Great (xii. 11, 22), may have fallen within Nehemiah's time. The redaction of his memoirs occurred probably later than 360 B.C., but how much later can not easily be determined. The first person is employed in ch. i.-vii. 5, xii. 31-42, xiii. 6 et seq. Sometimes, however, Nehemiah prefers to speak in the name of the community (ii. 19, iii. 33-38, x.), and in some places he himself is spoken of in the third person, either with the title "tirshatha" (viii. 9, x. 2) or "peḥah" (xii. 26, claimed by him in v. 14; A. V. "governor"), or without title (xii. 47). The style of these last passages implies somewhat that Nehemiah is not the writer, especially that of the third and fourth: "in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra"; "in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah." The portions of the book in which the first person is used are marked by repeated prayers for recognition of the author's services, and imprecations on his enemies (iii. 36, 67; v. 19; vi. 13; xiii. 14, 22, 29, 31), which may be taken as characteristic of an individual's style; and indeed the identity of the traits of character which are manifested by the writer of the opening and closing chapters can not escape notice. Moreover, the author's enemies, Sanballat and Tobiah, figure in both parts.

Tobit

It is generally believed that the book was written in the second century BC, on the basis of the scrupulous attention to ritual details and the stress laid upon giving alms. However, neither the date nor location of composition is certain. There are some scholars who maintain that this work really was written during the eighth century BC.

The book was probably originally written in Aramaic. It appears that Jerome's version for the Vulgate was made from an Aramaic text available to him. Four fragmentary texts in Aramaic and one in Hebrew were found at Qumran.

The surviving Greek translations are found in two versions. The shorter form, called Greek I by Robert Hanhart in his edition of the Septuagint, is found in Codex Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Venetus, and most cursive manuscripts. The Greek II version, which is 1700 words longer, is found in Codex Sinaiticus and closely aligns with the Hebrew and Aramaic fragments found at Qumran. Apparently the Old Latin manuscripts are also translated from the longer Greek II version. Most English translations since 1966 have relied on the Greek II version.

Judith

The Book of Judith was originally written in Hebrew. Though its oldest versions have been translated into Greek and have not been preserved in the original language, its Hebrew origin is revealed in details of vocabulary and phrasing. The extant Hebrew language versions, whether identical to the Greek, or in the shorter Hebrew version which contradicts the longer version in many specific details of the story, are medieval.

As a historical tale, its scenes are enlivened and given immediacy by their setting in a definitely characterized (though anachronistic) setting and time, and connected, as all historical novels are, with important personages of history — here

"Nebuchadnezzar" as a "King of Assyria" who reigns in Nineveh — features it shares with the Book of Esther, the Book of Daniel and its continuations, and the Book of Tobit. Nowhere are the "historical" details introduced in more profusion than in Judith.

With the very first words of the tale, "In the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned over the Assyrians in Nineveh," it is argued by the compilers of the Jewish Encyclopedia that the narrator sets his story in "Once upon a time".

The city called "Bethulia," (properly "Betylua") and the narrow and strategic pass into Judea that it occupies (Judith IV:7ff VIII:21-24) are believed by many to be fictional settings, but some suggest that a city called Meselieh is Bethulia.

The editors of the Jewish Encyclopedia identified Holofernes' encampment with Shechem. The Assyrians, instead of attempting to force the pass, lay siege to the city and cut off its water supply. Although Nebuchadnezzar conquers Judah in reality, it is foiled in the narrative of the Book of Judith.

Esther

Esther is usually dated to the third or fourth century BC. Jewish tradition regards it as a redaction by the Great Assembly of an original text written by Mordecai.

The Greek additions to Esther (which do not appear in the Hebrew) are dated to the 2nd century BC. An additional six chapters appear interspersed in Esther in the Septuagint, the Greek translation, which then was noted by Jerome in compiling the Latin Vulgate; additionally, the Greek text contains many small changes in the meaning of the main text. The extra chapters include several prayers to God, perhaps because it was felt that the above-mentioned lack of mention of God was inappropriate in a holy book. Jerome recognized them as additions not present in the Hebrew Text and placed them at the end of his Latin translation as chapters 10:4-16:24. However, some modern Catholic English Bibles restore the Septuagint order, such as Esther in the NAB.

By the time Esther was written, the foreign power visible on the horizon as a future threat to Judah was the Macedonians of Alexander the Great, who defeated the Persian empire about 150 years after the time of the story of Esther; the Septuagint version noticeably calls Haman a Macedonian where the Hebrew text describes him as an Agagite.

The canonicity of these Greek additions has been a subject of scholarly disagreement practically since their first appearance in the Septuagint –- Martin Luther, being perhaps the most vocal Reformation era critic of the work, considered even the original Hebrew version to be of very doubtful value. Luther's complaints against the book carried past the point of scholarly critique, and led in part to the complaint of anti-Semitism frequently made against him.

The Council of Trent, the summation of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, declared the entire book, both Hebrew text and Greek additions, to be canonical. While modern Roman Catholic scholars openly recognize the Greek additions as clearly being additions to the text, the Book of Esther is used twice in commonly used sections of the Catholic Lectionary. In both cases, the text used is not only taken from a Greek addition, the readings also are the prayer of Mordecai, and nothing of Esther's own words is ever used. The Eastern Orthodox Church uses the Septuagint version of Esther, as it does for all of the Old Testament. The additions are specifically listed in the Thirty-Nine Articles, Article VI, of the Church of England: "The rest of the Book of Esther".

Some scholars suggest that Additions to Esther is the work of an Egyptian Jew, writing around 170 BC, who sought to give the book a more religious tone, and to suggest that the Jews were saved from destruction because of their piety.

Esther Rabbah includes all of Additions to Esther save the "letter texts". It is these "letter texts" that contain the ahistorical asertions the Haman was a Greek.

The historical accuracy of the Book of Esther is disputed.

As early as the eighteenth century, the lack of clear corroboration of any of the details of the story of the Book of Esther with what was known of Persian history from classical sources led some scholars to doubt that the book was historically accurate. It was argued that the form of the story seems closer to that of a romance than a work of history, and that many of the events depicted therein are implausible and unlikely.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, several scholars explored the theory that the Book of Esther actually was a myth related to the spring festival of Purim which may have had a mixed West-Semitic/Akkadian/Canaanite origin. According to this interpretation the tale celebrates the triumph of the Babylonian deities Marduk and Ishtar over the deities of Elam or more likely the renewal of life in the spring and the casting out of the scapegoat of the old year. Although this view is not widely held by the religious scholars today, it remains well known. It is explored in depth in the works of Theodor Gaster.

Traditionalists have fought back, arguing that Esther can be seen to derive from real history. For example, some historians occasionally give strong credence to the narrative based upon the traditions of a people. Thus, because the feast of Purim (which is a retelling of the book of Esther) is integral to Jewish history, there is strong reason to believe this story is indeed based upon a true, though obscure, historical event.

Also, based on the derivation of "Ahasuerus" from "Xerxes", identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes I is common and parallels between Herodotus' account of Xerxes and the events in Esther have been noted. Others have argued for different identifications, particularly noting traditions referring to Ahasuerus as "Artaxerxes" in Greek. In 1923, Dr. Jacob Hoschander wrote The Book of Esther in the Light of History, in which he posited that the events of the book occurred during the reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, in the context of a struggle between adherents of the still more-or-less monotheistic Zoroastrianism and those who wanted to bring back the Magian worship of Mithra and Anahita.

For the last hundred and fifty years, critical scholars have seen the Book of Esther as a work of fiction, while traditionalists argue in favor of the story being historical.

Some Christian readers have also tried to see the story as a Christian allegory, in the same vein as the Song of Solomon. The various major readings are considered separately in the sections that follow:

Esther and Babylonian mythology

The History of Religions school of thought, popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, argued against the historicity of the Bible by drawing comparisons between Biblical narratives and pagan myths.

The fact that the events of the Book of Esther give rise to the spring festival of Purim was a reason for scholars arguing that the story emerged from seasonal myth. As the 19th/early 20th century scholars did not have the benefit of the Ugaritic texts, they sought an origin in Akkadian tradition rather than the more local West Semitic cultures. In particular, these scholars drew comparisons between individuals in the Book of Esther and various real and alleged Babylonian and Elamite gods and goddesses:

Esther was equated with the similarly sounding Ishtar. Her original Hebrew name Hadassah was compared with Akkadian hadashatu said to be a title of Ishtar meaning "bride".

The custom of preparing homentashn at Purim is reminiscent of a description of Ishtar in Jeremiah 7:18, when it was customary "to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven."

Mordecai was equated with Marduk. Marduk is a cousin of Ishtar in Chaldean mythology, as was Mordecai a cousin of Esther.

Vashti was said to be an Elamite goddess named Mashti.

Haman was said to be an Elamite god named Uman or Human (or other variations) or alternatively a Babylonian demon.

The festival of Purim was equated with various real and conjectural pagan festivals, including an alleged Elamite or Babylonian festival marking the victory of Ishtar and Marduk over Uman and Mashti similar to the triumph of Esther and Mordecai over their rivals Haman and Vashti. Other suggestions were: the Babylonian New Year festival (Sumerian Zagmuk, Akkadian Akitu, called Sacaea by Berosus) honouring Marduk - it was suggested that purim ("lots") originally referred to a belief that the gods chose one's fate for the year by lots; the Persian festival of Farvardigan; or the Greek festival of Pithoigia ("wine flask opening") - it was noted that Hebrew for wine press is purah resembling purim.

These arguments were subsequently shown to be flawed:

- Ishtar was well known to the Jews who officially opposed her worship. Her name in Hebrew scriptures is Ashtoreth which is phonetically unrelated to Esther despite the superficial similarity when transliterated into English. Although the vowelization of the Hebrew name is thought to be a deliberate mispronunciation reflecting the vowels of the word bosheth denoting a shameful thing, the consonants accurately reflect the original name. "Esther" is most commonly understood to be related to the Persian word for star (cognate with English star) and the Median word for myrtle. (See Esther for a discussion of the meaning of the name.)
- Akkadian hadashatu was not a standard title of Ishtar. It occurs once in a description of Ishtar as a "new bride" and its meaning is "new" not "bride". It is a cognate of Hebrew hadash (with a guttural h) and is phonetically unrelated to "Hadassah".
- Homentashn originated amongst Jews of Eastern Europe in relatively recent times.
- The name Mordecai is indeed most commonly connected with that of the god Marduk. It is considered equivalent to Marduka or Marduku, well attested in the Persepolis texts as a genuine name of the period. The Talmud relates that his full name was Mordecai Bilshan (Megillah 15a). This has been understood as the Babylonian Marduk-bel-shunu ("Marduk is their lord"). Similar accounts of Jews in exile being assigned names relating to Babylonian gods is seen in the Book of Daniel. Babylonian gods and goddesses are indeed organized into families making many including Marduk and Ishtar some form of cousins but this is never a point explicitly stated in Babylonian texts.
- An Elamite goddess named Mashti is purely conjectural and unattested in sources, whereas "Vashti" can be understood as a genuine Persian name meaning "beautiful".
- Elamite theophoric elements such as Khuban, Khumban or Khumma are known but are pronounced with an initial

guttural consonant and not as Uman or Human, and are phonetically unrelated to the Persian name Haman meaning "magnificent". The Babylonian demon is named Humbaba or Huwawa also pronounced with an initial guttural consonant kh and unrelated to Haman.

- An Elamite or Babylonian festival marking a victory of Ishtar and Marduk over alleged Uman and Mashti is purely conjectural and unattested in sources. The Babylonian New Year occurs at a very different date to Purim (in the month of Nisan not Adar). A decision of fate by lots by the gods is not attested in any sources. Farvardigan was a five day commemoration of the dead bearing no resemblance to Purim. Pithoigia also occurs at a different time to Purim and although Purim is celebrated with wine drinking this is not its focus; moreover the plural of the Hebrew for wine press is puroth not purim.

Historical reading

Those arguing in favor of an historical reading of Esther, most commonly identify Ahasuerus with Xerxes I (ruled 486 - 465 B.C.E.) or occasionally with Artaxerxes II (ruled 405 - 359 B.C.E.).

The Hebrew Ahasuerus is most likely derived from Persian Khshayarsha, the origin of the Greek Xerxes. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that Xerxes sought his harem after being defeated in the Greco-Persian Wars. He makes no reference to individual members of the harem with the exception of a domineering Queen consort Amestris, a daughter of one of his generals, Otanes. (Ctesias however refers to a father-in-law and general of Xerxes named Onaphas). Amestris has often been identified with Vashti by those arguing the historical reading. The identification is problematic however - Amestris remained a powerful figure well into the reign of her son, Artaxerxes I while Vashti is portrayed as dismissed in the early part of Xerxes's reign. (Alternative attempts have been made to identify her with Esther, although Esther is an orphan whose father was a Jew named Abihail.) The name Marduka or Marduku (considered equivalent to Mordecai) has been found as the name of officials in the Persian court in thirty texts from the period of Xerxes I and his father Darius, and may refer to up to four individuals with the possibility that one of these is the Biblical Mordecai.

The Septuagint version of Esther however translates the name Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes - a Greek name derived from the Persian: Artakhshatra. Josephus too relates that this was the name by which he was known to the Greeks and the Midrashic text, Esther Rabba also makes the identification. Bar-Hebraeus identified Ahasuerus explicitly as Artaxerxes II. (This is not to say that the names are equivalent: Hebrew has a form of the name Artaxerxes distinct from Ahasuerus and a direct Greek rendering of Ahasuerus is used by Josephus as well as in Septuagint occurrences of the name outside the Book of Esther.) Identification as Artaxerxes II has been more popular than with Artaxerxes I (ruled 465 - 424 B.C.E.) however the latter had a Babylonian concubine, Kosmartydene, who was the mother of his son Darius II (ruled 424 - 405 B.C.E.). Jewish tradition relates that Esther was the mother of a King Darius and so some try to identify Ahasuerus with Artaxerxes I and Esther with Kosmartydene.

Based on the view that the Ahasuerus of the Book of Tobit is identical with that of the Book of Esther, some have also identified him as Nebuchadnezzar's ally Cyaxares (ruled 625 - 585 B.C.E.). In certain manuscripts of Tobit the former is called Achiachar which like the Greek: Cyaxares is thought to be derived from Persian: Akhuwakhshatra. Depending on the interpretation of Esther 2:5-6, Mordecai or his great-grandfather Kish was carried away from Jerusalem with Jeconiah by Nebuchadnezzar, in 597 B.C.E. The view that it was Mordecai would be consistent with the identification of Ahasuerus with Cyaxares. Identifications with other Persian monarchs have also been suggested.

Jacob Hoschander (The Book of Esther in the Light of History, Oxford University Press, 1923) has argued that evidence of the historicity of Haman and his father Hamedatha is seen in Omanus and Anadatus mentioned by Strabo as being honoured with Anahita in the city of Zela. Hoschander argues that these were not deities as Strabo supposed but garbled forms of "Haman" and "Hamedatha" who were being worshipped as martyrs. The names are indeed unattested in Persian texts as gods. (Attempts have been made to connect both "Omanus" and "Haman" with the Zoroastrian term Vohu Mana, however this denotes the principle of "Good Thoughts" and is not the name of a deity.)

Allegorical reading

There are many classical Jewish readings of allegories into the book of Esther, mostly from Hasidic sources. They say that the literal meaning is true, however there is hidden behind this historical account many allegories.

Some Christian readers consider this story to contain an allegory, representing the interaction between the church as 'bride' and God. This reading is related to the allegorical reading of the Song of Solomon and to the theme of the Bride of God, which in Jewish tradition manifests as the Shekinah.

I Maccabees

1 Maccabees is a deuterocanonical book written by a Jewish author after the restoration of an independent Jewish kingdom, probably about 100 BC. It is included in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox canons. Protestants and Jews regard it as generally reliable historically, but not a part of Scripture.

The text comes to us in three codices of the Septuagint: the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Venetus, as well as some cursives.

Though the original book was written in Hebrew, as can be deduced by a number of Hebrew idioms in the text, the original has been lost and the version which comes down to us is the Septuagint. Some authors date the original Hebrew text even closer to the events covered, while a few suggest a later date. Because of the accuracy of the historical account, if the later date is taken, the author would have to have had access to first-hand reports of the events or other primary sources.

Origen (cited by Eusebius Eccl Hist vi. 25) gives testimony to the existence of an original Hebrew text. Jerome likewise claims "the first book of Maccabees I have found to be Hebrew, the second is Greek, as can be proved from the very style" (per Prologus Galeatus). Many scholars suggest that they may have actually had access to a Biblical Aramaic paraphrase of the work -- most Christian scholars of the time did not distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic. In either case, only the Greek text has survived, and this only through its inclusion in the Christian canon. Origen claims that the title of the original was Sarbeth Sarbanael, which some translate as "the Book of the Prince of the House of Israel".

The book's author is unknown, but is assumed to have been a devout Jew from the Holy Land who may have even taken part in the events described in the book. He shows intimate and detailed geographical knowledge of the Holy Land, but is inaccurate in his information about foreign countries. The author interprets the events not as a miraculous intervention by God, but rather God's using the instrument of the military genius of the Maccabees to achieve his ends. The words "God" and "Lord" never occur in the text, always being replaced by "Heaven" or "He".

II Maccabees

2 Maccabees is a deuterocanonical book of the Bible which focuses on the Jews' revolt against Antiochus and concludes with the defeat of the Syrian general Nicanor in 161 BC by Judas Maccabeus, the hero of the work.

2 Maccabees was written in Greek, probably in Alexandria, Egypt, c 124 BC. It presents a revised version of the historical events recounted in the first seven chapters of 1 Maccabees, adding material from the Pharisaic tradition, including prayer for the dead and a resurrection on Judgment Day.

Job

A great diversity of opinion exists as to the origin of this book. From internal evidence, such as the similarity of sentiment and language to those in the Psalms and Proverbs (see Psalms 88 and 89), the prevalence of the idea of "wisdom," and the style and character of the composition, it is supposed by some to have been written in the time of King David and King Solomon. Some, however place it in around the time of the Babylonian exile; others have proposed various other theories with a consensus that it is a very early book.

An alternative analysis based on the stated length of Job's life, places him at the time of the patriarchs. At the end of the book in Job 42:16, it states that Job lived another 140 years after his trial. So, possibly Job lived 180 years or more in a total that includes the events of the Book of Job. Genesis 25:7 states that Abraham lived 175 years so Job may have easily been a contemporary of Abraham or lived even earlier. Soon after the flood, the Bible records older ages but by the time of Moses, life expectancy had settled down to 70 or 80 years (Psalm 90:10 - a psalm of Moses) although Moses himself lived to be 120 years old (Deuteronomy 34:7). The Book of Job is also absent of any references to the covenant or the law and this points to an earlier age.

The Talmud (Tractate Bava Basra 15a-b) maintains that the Book of Job was written by Moses, although the Sages dispute whether it was based on historical reality or intended as a parable. Although Moses' authorship is accepted as definitive, other opinions in the Talmud ascribe it to the period of before the First Temple, the time of the patriarch Jacob, or King Ahaserus.

In contrast, comparative literary and historical examinations of the text more generally conclude that, though archaic features such as the "council in heaven" survive, and though the story of Job was familiar to Ezekiel (Chapter 14 verse 14), the present form of Job was fixed in the postexilic period 6th century BC - 5th century BC. Ezekiel places Job in comparison with other righteous figures such as Noah and "Dan-el". The story of Job apparently originated in the land of Edom, which has been retained as the background. Fragments of Job are found among the Dead Sea scrolls, and Job remains prominent in haggadic legends. The later Greek Testament of Job figures among the apocrypha. Scholars agree that the introductory and concluding sections of the book, the framing devices, were composed to set the central poem into a prose "folk-book," as the compilers of the Jewish Encyclopedia expressed it. In the prologue and epilogue, the name of God is the Tetragrammaton, a name that even the Edomites use. The central poem is from another source.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls is the Targum of Job 11Q10. Another example of text from the last chapter or epilogue of Job can be found in the book, The Dead Sea Scrolls a New Translation. Here we are shown examples of how fragments of The Book of Job found among the scrolls differ from the traditional text. If the prologue and epilogue, were added to the central poem, then this would have happened before 100 BC or the time attributed to the Dead Sea Scrolls

The medieval exegete Abraham Ibn Ezra believed that Job was translated from another language and it is therefore unclear "like all translated books". (Ibn Ezra Job 2:11)

Psalms

Jewish tradition maintains that the Psalms are the work of David (seventy-three Psalms are identified with David's name), basing himself on the writings of ten ancient psalmists (including Adam and Moses). Many modern scholars see them as the product of several authors or groups of authors, many unknown. Most Psalms are prefixed with introductory words (which are frequently different in the Masoretic and Septuagint traditions, or missing in one while present in the other) ascribing them to a particular author or saying something, often in fairly cryptic language, about the circumstances of their composition; only 73 of these introductions claim David as author. Since the Psalms were not written down in Hebrew before the 6th century BC, nearly half a millennium after David's reign (about 1000 BC), they doubtless depended on oral or hymnic tradition for transmission of any Davidic material.

Psalms 39, 62, and 77 are linked with Jeduthun, to be sung after his manner or in his choir. Psalms 50 and 73–83 are associated with Asaph, as the master of his choir, to be sung in the worship of God. The ascriptions of Psalms 42, 44–49, 84, 85, 87, and 88 assert that the "sons of Korah" were entrusted with arranging and singing them; 2 Chronicles 20:19 suggests that this group formed a leading part of the Korathite singers. Hebraist Joel M. Hoffman suggests that Psalm 49 may be an anti-corruption Psalm, not "for Korah" but "against Korah."

Psalm 18 is also found, with minor variations, at 2 Samuel 22, for which reason, in accordance with the naming convention used elsewhere in the historic parts of the Bible, it is known as the Song of David.

Sections of the book

In Jewish usage, the Psalter is divided, after the analogy of the Pentateuch, into five books, each closing with a doxology or benediction.

The first book comprises the first 41 Psalms. All of these are ascribed to David except Psalms 1, 2, 10, and 33, which, though untitled in the Hebrew, were also traditionally ascribed to David. While Davidic authorship cannot be confirmed, this probably is the oldest section of the Psalms.

The second book consists of the next 31 Psalms (42–72). Eighteen of these are ascribed to David. Psalm 72 begins "For Solomon", but is traditionally understood as being written by David as a prayer for his son. The rest are anonymous.

The third book contains seventeen Psalms (73–89), of which Psalm 86 is ascribed to David, Psalm 88 to Heman the Ezrahite, and Psalm 89 to Ethan the Ezrahite.

The fourth book also contains seventeen Psalms (90–106), of which Psalm 90 is ascribed to Moses, and Psalms 101 and 103 to David.

The fifth book contains the remaining 44 Psalms. Of these, 15 are ascribed to David, one (Psalm 127) as a charge to Solomon.

Psalm 136 is generally called "the great Hallel," but the Talmud also includes Psalms 120–135. Psalms 113–118 constitute the Hallel, which is recited on the three great feasts, (Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles); at the new moon; and on the eight days of Hanukkah. A version of Psalm 136 with slightly different wording appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Psalms 120–134 are referred to as Songs of Degrees, and are thought to have been used as hymns of approach by pilgrims to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm. It is composed of 176 verses, in sets of eight verses, each set beginning with one of the 22 Hebrew letters. Several other Psalms also have alphabetical arrangements. These psalms are believed to be written (rather than oral) compositions from the first, and thus of a relatively late date.

The organization and numbering of the Psalms differs slightly between the (Masoretic) Hebrew and the (Septuagint) Greek manuscripts:

- Psalms 9 and 10 in the Hebrew are together as Psalm 9 in the Greek
- Psalms 114 and 115 in the Hebrew are Psalm 113 in the Greek
- Psalms 114 and 115 in the Greek appear as Psalm 116 in the Hebrew
- Psalms 146 and 147 in the Greek form Psalm 147 in the Hebrew

Christian traditions vary:

Protestant translations are based on the Hebrew numbering;

Eastern Orthodox translations are based on the Greek numbering;

Roman Catholic official liturgical texts follow the Greek numbering, but modern Catholic translations often use the Hebrew

numbering, sometimes adding, in parenthesis, the Greek numbering as well.

Other psalms

Most manuscripts of the Septuagint also include a Psalm 151, present in Eastern Orthodox translations; a Hebrew version of this poem was found in the Psalms Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Psalms Scroll presents the Psalms in an order different from that found elsewhere, and also contains a number of non-canonical poems and hymns.

Proverbs

The authorship of Proverbs has long been a matter of dispute. Solomon’s name appears in Proverbs 1:1, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel", although this does not necessarily mean that he was the author. There are references to Agur and Lamuel as authors distinct from Solomon that are missing in the Greek Septuagint, which regarded King Solomon as the author of the whole Book of Proverbs. Although medieval scholars had in the Vulgate a more faithful rendering of 30:1 and 31:1, in their eyes the words "Agur" and "Lamuel" were but symbolical names of Solomon. Solomon is often mentioned as someone who has extensive wisdom in the Bible as well as in extra-biblical literature. However, at the time of composition, it was often the custom to place the name of the King or someone of prominence in writings in order to honor them, or to give those writings more prestige. In 1 Kings 4:29-34, 3000 proverbs and over 1000 songs are said to have come from Solomon an it is also said that people came from all over to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The general assumption is that Solomon was a part of the authorship to some extent, but that the book was not solely his work. Not only are the names "Agur" and "Lamuel" linked to other sections of the book, there are elements of disunity within the book that suggest more than one author. Some of the authorship is attributed to "Men of Hezekiah", though it is stated that they simply transcribed the proverbs rather than writing them of their own accord.

In terms of the text itself there are at least eight specific instances where authorship is mentioned:

1:1 Solomon

10:1 Solomon

25:1 Solomon (as copied by Hezekiah’s men)

30:1 Agur son of Jakeh

31:1 Lemuel (or his mother)

31:10-31? unknown author?

As for the eighth section there are many scholars who consider the poem at the end of the book vs. 10-31 as written by an unknown author. The attributions of authorship are as follows in accordance with the scriptures above; Solomon, Solomon, Wise Men, Wise Men, Solomon (as copied by Hezekiah’s men), Agur son of Jakeh, Lemuel (or his mother), and the unknown author. With this possibility it is speculated that the sections written by the Wise Men were studied by Solomon and added in and that they influenced his writing. With this possibility it is likely that there would be similarities in the section written by Solomon as well as the sections by the Wise Men. Studies of word usage have indicated that the highest percentage of commonalities are between the three Solomon sections. The next most common are the Wise Men sections, showing that they could have influenced Solomon’s writing, and the least commonalities were with the Agur, Lemuel, and the unknown author. A majority of scholars, including James L. Crenshaw, Roland E. Murphy and L.G. Perdue, hold to the belief that much of Proverbs was brought together from a time well after Solomon.

Dates for the writing of the book are also unclear. Due to the suggested authorship of Solomon and the collaboration of Hezekiah’s men there are some dates that can be worked with. However there are not enough to give specific timing to the completion of the book though it could have been as late as third century BC.

Ecclesiastes

In the two opening chapters the author describes himself as the son of David, and king over Israel in Jerusalem (1:1, 12, 16; 2:7, 9), presenting himself as a philosopher at the center of a brilliant court. This could apply only to king Solomon, for his successors in Jerusalem were kings over Judah only. Consequently, the traditional Rabbinic and early Christian view attributed Ecclesiastes to king Solomon. This view has been abandoned by many modern critical scholars, who now assume that Qoheleth is a work in the pseudepigraphical mode. Most critical scholars suggest that Ecclesiastes was written around 250 BC by a non-Hellenized intellectual in the milieu of the Temple in Jerusalem, though Seow of the Anchor Bible commentary argues that it dates to the Persian period. The latest possible date for it is set by the fact that Ben Sirach (written ca. 180 BC) repeatedly quotes or paraphrases it, as from a canonic rather than a contemporary writing.

Many modern conservative scholars today also recognize that Solomon is an unlikely author. Since this work is found within the Ketuvim, there must be some room for poetical treatment. There are two voices in the book, the frame-narrator (1.1–11; 12.9–14) and Qoheleth (1.12–12.8). Scholars are less than unanimous about whether this indicates two authors.

R' Nachman Krochmal suggests that the term son of David should be interpreted to mean descendant of David. He posits

that it was written by a powerful lord during the Persian Era (possibly during the missing years of Jewish history). The term King would not be difficult; since the Persian Monarch was known as the King of Kings, a lesser lord may have called himself a king.

Language

The Hebrew of Ecclesiastes was not common in the era of Solomon's reign, and the book contains words borrowed from other languages. For example, the book contains several Aramaic and two Persian words. The influence of Aramaic is characteristic of late Hebrew. Other examples of late Biblical Hebrew include the qetAl pattern form nouns, which would have dated after an Aramaic influence, the frequent use of the relative sh alongside asher, the Ut ending, the frequent use of the participle for the present (which is later developed in Rabbinic Hebrew), using the prefix conjugation in the future (vs. the older preterite use), and terms that appear to specifically fit a Persian/Hellenistic context (e.g. Shallit). During the time of Solomon and through the eighth century, mater's were not used inside words (except maybe in 'ir (city) in the Lachish letters), and there is no evidence for early orthography.

Date of writing

Most current commentators e.g., R. N. Whybray, Ecclesiastes [NCB Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1989] 4–12) argue for a mid-to-late-third-century date. Others, among them N. Lohfink (Kohelet [NEchtB; Wurzburg: Echter Verlag, 1980] 7) and C. E Whitley (Koheleth: His Language and Thought [BZAW 148; Berlin/ New York: de Gruyter, 1979] 132–46), have suggested an early- or mid-second-century background.

Song of Songs

Some people translate the first clause of the title as "which is of Solomon," meaning that the book is authored by Solomon. Rabbi Hiyya the Great said Solomon first wrote Proverbs, then The Song of Songs, and afterward Ecclesiastes. Rabbi Jonathan said Solomon first wrote The Song of Songs, then Proverbs, then Ecclesiastes. The Talmud, however, states the order of the canon, listing Proverbs first, then Ecclesiastes, and then The Song of Songs.

Others translate the first clause as "which is for Solomon," meaning that the book is dedicated to Solomon. It was common practice in ancient times for an anonymous writer seeking recognition for his work to write eponymously in the name of someone more famous. Some read the book as contrasting the nobility of monogamous love with the debased nature of promiscuous love, and suggest that the book is actually a veiled criticism of Solomon, who, according to 1 Kings 11:3, had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

Another approach to the authorship is that offered by Rashi, consistent with allegorical interpretations, rendering the narrator "he to whom peace belongs", i.e: God. The Hebrew name of Solomon, shlomo, can also be inflected to mean the constructed form of the noun shalom, peace, which through noun declension can be possessive. This means that the author is in fact Solomon, but he narrates the book from the perspective of God, who is conversing with the Jewish people, his allegorical bride.

Wisdom

The book is believed to have been written in Greek, but in a style patterned on that of Hebrew verse. Although the author's name is nowhere given in the text, the writer was traditionally believed to be King Solomon because of unmistakable references such as that found in IX:7-8, "Thou hast chosen me to be a king of thy people, and a judge of thy sons and daughters: Thou hast commanded me to build a temple upon thy holy mount..." The formulation here is similar to that of Ecclesiastes I:12, "I, Koheleth, was king in Jerusalem over Israel," which also fails to denote Solomon by name, but leaves no doubt as to whom the reader should identify as the author. However, the traditional attribution of The Book of Wisdom to Solomon has been soundly rejected in modern times. Says the Catholic Encyclopedia: "at the present day, it is freely admitted that Solomon is not the writer of the Book of Wisdom, which has been ascribed to him because its author, through a literary fiction, speaks as if he were the Son of David."

Scholars believe that the book represents the most classical Greek language found in the Septuagint, having been written during the Jewish Hellenistic period (the 1st or 2nd century BC). The author of the text appears well versed in the popular philosophical, religious, and ethical writings adopted by Hellenistic Alexandria.

Sirach

The evidence seems to show that the author's name was Yeshua, son of Shimon, son of Eleazar ben Sira. In the Greek text, the author is called "Jesus the son of Sirach of Jerusalem." (l.27) "Jesus" is the Anglicized form of the Greek name Ιησους, the equivalent of Syriac Yeshua` and Masoretic Hebrew Yehoshua`.

The copy owned by Saadia Gaon, the prominent rabbi, Jewish philosopher, and exegete of the 10th Century AD, had the reading "Shim`on, son of Yeshua`, son of El`azar ben Sira"; and a similar reading occurs in the Hebrew manuscript B. By interchanging the positions of the names "Shim`on" and "Yeshua`," the same reading is obtained as in the other manuscripts.

The correctness of the name "Shim`on" is confirmed by the Syriac version, which has "Yeshua`, son of Shim`on, surnamed

Bar Asira." The discrepancy between the two readings "Bar Asira" and "Bar Sira" is a noteworthy one, "Asira" ("prisoner") being a popular etymology of "Sira."

The surname Sira means "the thorn" in Aramaic. The Greek form, Sirach, adds the letter chi similar to Hakeldamach in Acts 1:19.

According to the Greek version, though not according to the Syriac, the author traveled extensively (xxxiv. 11) and was frequently in danger of death (ib. verse 12). In the hymn of chapter li. he speaks of the perils of all sorts from which God had delivered him, although this is probably only a poetic theme in imitation of the Psalms. The calumnies to which he was exposed in the presence of a certain king, supposed to be one of the Ptolemaic dynasty, are mentioned only in the Greek version, being ignored both in the Syriac and in the Hebrew text. The only fact known with certainty, drawn from the text itself, is that Ben Sira was a scholar, and a scribe thoroughly versed in the Law, and especially in the "Books of Wisdom."

Ben Sirah, a Jew who had been living in Jerusalem, may have authored the work in Alexandria, Egypt circa 180–175 BC, where he is thought to have established a school.

Translation and dating of the work

The Prologue to Ben Sira is generally considered the earliest witness to a canon of the books of the prophets. Thus the date of the text as we have it is the subject of intense scrutiny.

The Greek translator states in his preface that he was the grandson of the author, and that he came to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of "Euergetes". This epithet was borne by only two of the Ptolemies. Of these, Ptolemy III Euergetes reigned only twenty-five years (247-222 B.C.) and thus Ptolemy VIII Euergetes must be intended; he ascended the throne in the year 170 BC, together with his brother Philometor, but he soon became sole ruler of Cyrene, and from 146 to 117 held sway over all Egypt. He dated his reign from the year in which he received the crown (i.e., from 170). The translator must therefore have gone to Egypt in 132 BC.

Considering the average length of two generations, Ben Sira's date must fall in the first third of the Second Century BC. Furthermore, Ben Sira contains a eulogy of "Simon the High Priest, the son of Onias, who in his life repaired the House" (50:1). Most scholars agree that it seems to have formed the original ending of the text, and that the second High Priest Simon (died 196 BC) was intended. Struggles between Simon's successors occupied the years 175–172 BC and are not alluded to, nor is the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168.

Ben Sira's grandson was in Egypt, translating and editing after the usurping Hasmonean line had definitively ousted Simon's heirs in long struggles and was finally in control of the High Priesthood in Jerusalem. Comparing the Hebrew and Greek versions shows that he altered the prayer for Simon and broadened its application ("may He entrust to us his mercy"), in order to avoid having a work centered around praising God's covenanted faithfulness that closed on an unanswered prayer.

Isaiah

One of the most critically debated issues in Isaiah is the proposition that it may have been the work of more than a single author. Different proposals suggest that there have been two or three main authors (Original Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, Trito-Isaiah), while alternative views suggest an additional number of minor authors or editors.

Almost all scholars who believe that there are multiple authors recognize some sort of division at the end of chapter 39 and that subsequent portions were written by one or more additional authors, referred to collectively as Deutero-Isaiah. Supporters of the three author proposal see a further division at the end of chapter 55. For most of the twentieth century the three-author position was the most widely held; in the 1990s, more complex and carefully nuanced positions (such as that from Williamson, 1994) started to appear. The typical objections to single authorship of the book of Isaiah are as follows:

- Anonymity → That is to say that Isaiah's name is suddenly not used from chapter 40-66.
- Style → There is a sudden change in the mood of the book from Isaiah after chapter 40.
- Historical Situation → The first portion of the book of Isaiah speaks of an impending judgment which will befall the wicked Israelites whereas the later portion of the book discusses God's mercy and restoration as though the exile were already a present reality.
- Supernaturalism → Critics often reject the unity of the work as such would require that the author had intimate knowledge of future events-- a possibility precluded by the naturalism under-girding much of higher criticism.

These and other considerations have led most modern critical scholars to conclude that the book of Isaiah, in its present form, is the result of an extensive editing process, in which the promises of God's salvation are re-interpreted and claimed for the Judean people through the history of their exile and return to the land of Judah. Since it is probably useless to try to reconstruct a precise account of the history of the book's composition (though many have tried), biblical scholars such as Brevard Childs have argued for reading the book as a literary unity. In fact, the most notable change in the scholarly climate has been a recognition that even if the book is the work of many editors, it has been handed down, most recently, as a unity,

and should be studied as such. Current research is exploring the book's inter-textuality, the allusions and references later editors made to connect the different layers of the book.

Traditional position

Jews and Christians have traditionally understood the book to have one author, Isaiah himself. While quoting Isaiah, the gospel of John implies as much. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus attributes both sections of the book of Isaiah to a single author. The distinctive use of the title "the Holy One of Israel" for God suggests a single author.

Chaim Dov Rabinowitz (Daat Soferim Isaiah- Introduction) points to the statement in the Talmud (Bava Basra 15a) that the book of Isaiah was written by "King Hezekiah and his assistants. These assistants may have lived long after Isaiah (hence the so called "supernaturalism"). In addition, since the book of Isaiah was a product of many authors (all drawing upon one oral tradition of Isaiah's prophecies) there would naturally be changes in style.

Ben Sira 48:27-28 implies that Isaiah prophesied the prophecy of Isaiah 44. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain the complete book of Isaiah.

Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz (1872 - 1946) wrote that the question of the book's authorship doesn't affect Jewish understanding of the book.

A Contemporary Roman Catholic understanding

According to the introduction to the Book of Isaiah in the New American Bible, the book is a collection of poems composed by Isaiah, with additional material added by later disciples of the prophet. Through chapter 39 most of the material is Isaiah's and is an accurate account of the situation in eighth-century Judah. Chapters 13-14, 24-27, and 34-35 were probably the work of others. Chapters 40-55 were probably written by an anonymous poet near the end of the Babylonian captivity, while chapters 56-66 were written later by anonymous disciples committed to continuing Isiah's work.

Jeremiah

It was originally written in a complex and poetic Hebrew (apart from verse 10:11, curiously written in Aramaic), recording the words and events surrounding the life of the Jewish prophet Jeremiah who lived at the time of the destruction of Solomon's Temple (587/6 BC) in Jerusalem during the fall of the Kingdom of Judah at the hands of Babylonia.

Lamentations

According to tradition, authorship is assigned to the Prophet Jeremiah, who was a court official during the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, during which the First Temple was destroyed and King Jehoiachin was taken prisoner (cf. Is 38 ff and Is 52). In the Septuagint and the Vulgate the Lamentations are placed directly after the Prophet.

It is said that Jeremiah retired to a cavern outside the Damascus gate, where he wrote this book. That cavern is still pointed out by tour guides. "In the face of a rocky hill, on the western side of the city, the local belief has placed 'the grotto of Jeremiah.' There, in that fixed attitude of grief which Michelangelo has immortalized, the prophet may well be supposed to have mourned the fall of his country" (Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, History of the Jewish Church).

However, the strict acrostic style of four of the five poems is not found at all in the Book of Jeremiah itself, and authorship of Jeremiah is disputed. It is however known for certain that Jeremiah did write a lament on the death of King Josiah, that was well known in his time. It was common practice in ancient times for an anonymous writer seeking recognition for his work to write eponymously in the name of someone more famous (although neither Jeremiah's name nor that of any other author appears in the text itself). The work is probably based on the older Mesopotamian genre of the "city lament", of which the Lament for Ur is among the oldest and best-known.

According to F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "the widely observed unity of form and point of view... and general resemblance in linguistic detail throughout the sequence are broadly suggestive of the work of a single author," though other scholars see Lamentations as the work of multiple authors.

Setting

Most commentators see Lamentations as reflecting the period immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, though Provan argues for an ahistorical interpretation. Many elements of the lament are borne out in the historical narrative in 2 Kings concerning the fall of Jerusalem: Jerusalem lying in ruins (Lamentations 2:2 and 2 Kings 25:9), enemies entering the city (Lamentations 4:12 and 2 Kings 24:11), people going into exile (Lamentations 1:3 and 2 Kings 24:14) and the sanctuary being plundered (Lamentations 1:10 and 2 Kings 24:13). On the other hand, Babylon is never mentioned in Lamentations, though this could simply be to make the point that the judgment comes from God, and is a consequence of Judah disobeying him.

Date

Lamentations was probably composed soon after 586 BC. Kraus argues that "the whole song stands so near the events that one feels everywhere as if the terrible pictures of the destruction stand still immediately before the eyes of the one

lamentings ."

Baruch

The best available scholarship suggests that this book was written during or shortly after the period of the Maccabees (c 170 – 160 BC). In the Vulgate, the King James Bible, and many other versions, the Letter of Jeremiah is appended to the end of this book as a sixth chapter.

Ezekiel

In 1924, Gustav Hoelscher questioned the authorship of Ezekiel, challenging the conventional wisdom that the book was written by one person and expresses one train of thought and style, and arguing instead that 1,103 of the verses in Ezekiel were added at a later date.

Since then, the academic community has been split into a number of different camps over the authorship of the book. W. Zimmerli proposes that Ezekiel's original message was influenced by a later school that added a deeper understanding to the prophecies. Other groups, like the one led by M. Greenberg, still tend to see the majority of the work of the book done by Ezekiel himself.

Traditionally, the book of Ezekiel is thought to have been written in the 500s BC during the Babylonian exile of the southern Israelite kingdom, Judah. This date is confirmed to some extent in that the author of the book of Ezekiel appears to use a dating system which was only used in the 500s BC.

The Book of Ezekiel can be dated based on the links it records between the rule of King Jehoiachin (King of Jerusalem) and the other events that the book describes.

According to this system, Ezekiel was originally written in the 22 year period between 593 to 571 BC. The following table lists events in Ezekiel with their dates.

Event	Verse Reference	Date
Chariot Vision (Merkabah)	1:1-3	June 6, 593 BC.
Call to be a Watchman	3:16	June 13, 593
Temple Vision	8:1	August 23, 592
Discourse with Elders	20:1	July 19, 591
Second Siege of Jerusalem	24:1	December 22, 589
Judgment on Tyre	26:1	March 30, 587
Judgment on Egypt	29:1	December 13, 588
Judgment on Egypt	29:17	March 3, 571
Judgment on Egypt	30:20	April 5, 587
Judgment on Egypt	31:1	May 28, 587
Lament over Pharaoh	32:1	February 18, 586
Lament over Egypt	32:17	April 2, 586
Fall of Jerusalem	33:21	December 13, 586
New Temple Vision	40:1	September 26, 573

On the fifth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of his exile (5 Tammuz, 593 BC), he said he beheld on the banks of the Chebar the glory of God, who consecrated him as a prophet. The latest date in his book is the first day of the first month in the twenty-seventh year of his exile (1 Nisan, 571 BC); consequently, his prophecies extended over twenty-two years.

The elders of the exiles repeatedly visited him to obtain a divine oracle (chapters 8, 14, 20). He exerted no permanent influence upon his contemporaries, however, whom he repeatedly calls the "rebellious house" (2:5, 6, 8; 3:9, 26, 27; and elsewhere), complaining that although they flock in great numbers to hear him they regard his discourse as a sort of aesthetic amusement, and fail to act in accordance with his words (33:30-33). If the enigmatic date, "the thirtieth year" (1:1), be understood to apply to the age of the prophet, Ezekiel was born exactly at the time of the reform in the ritual introduced by Josiah. Concerning his death nothing is known.

He had a house in the place of his exile, Tel-Abib, where he lost his wife, in the ninth year of his exile, by some sudden and unforeseen stroke (Ezek. 8:1; 24:18).

His ministry extended over twenty-six years 597 - 571 BC (29:17), during part of which he was contemporary with

Jeremiah, and probably also with Obadiah. According to tradition, he would also have been contemporary with Daniel (however, Daniel is regarded by some as being written much later, with Ezekiel's references to "Daniel" being seen as references to an ancient Ugaritic hero of that name, not a contemporary). The time and manner of his death are unknown. His reputed tomb is pointed out in the neighborhood of Hilla or ancient Babylon, at a place called Al Kifl.

After being led away by the Babylonians on May 29, 597, Ezekiel, along with the other Israelites, was resettled in Babylon. Ezekiel himself lived in his own home in exile at Tel-abib near Chebar canal, which was near Nippur in Babylonia.

Daniel

Traditionally, the Book of Daniel was believed to have been written by its namesake during and shortly after the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century BC. Although this view continues to be held by traditionalist Christians and Jews, it has been dismissed by critical scholars. Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the altar around 167 BC, and the Book of Daniel (in its final form) was written, these scholars propose, in reaction to that incident. The citing of Antiochus as being the one whose abomination causes desolation is accurate, based upon independently documented historical data and careful analysis of the text. (A conceptual precedent of sorts was set by Manassah when he set up idols on temple grounds, which allegedly resulted in the desolation of Jerusalem by the god of Israel.) Traditionalists, attempting to establish an earlier date for the Book of Daniel, occasionally make reference to Josephus, who states that upon Alexander the Great's approach, a small party met him outside of Jerusalem, telling him that his presence was ordained by scripture. However, Josephus wrote about 400 years after the event in question, and cannot be justifiably considered as a reliable source in this matter. Additionally, some point to the Dead Sea scrolls found at Qumran dating to the mid-2nd-cent BC. These scrolls include several manuscript copies of Daniel, the premise being that there must have been much time between the original writing and the copying of the manuscripts found at Qumran, since it would have taken time for the book to have gained acceptance and be made available for copying. However, it is more likely that the relatively large number of copies at Qumran was due to the current (at the time) popularity of this recently "published" book.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Critical scholars have asserted that the prophecies in the Book of Daniel reflect the persecutions of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC), and his desecration of the altar in the temple at Jerusalem, and consequently they date its composition to that period. In particular, the vision in Chapter 11, which focuses on a series of wars between the "King of the North" and the "King of the South," is generally interpreted as a record of Levantine history from the time of Alexander the Great down to the era of Antiochus IV, with the "Kings of the North" being the Seleucid kings of Syria and the "Kings of the South" being the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt.

This conclusion regarding the date of composition was first drawn by the philosopher Porphyry of Tyros, a third century pagan and Neoplatonist, whose fifteen-volume work Against the Christians is only known to us through Jerome's reply. The identification of Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel, however, is a much older interpretation which seems to be reflected, for example, in 1 Maccabees 1:54 (c100 BC), where an idol set up upon the altar of burnt offering under Antiochus is referred to as an "abomination of desolation" (cf Daniel 9:27, 11:31). This identification is made explicit in Josephus' exposition of Daniel chapter eight (Antiquities 10:11, c94 AD) where he almost certainly cites a common Jewish interpretative tradition by identifying the "little horn" as Antiochus.

Four Kingdoms

Many biblical scholars have concluded that the four kingdoms beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, mentioned in the "statue vision" of chapter 2, are identical to the four "end-time" kingdoms of the vision in chapter 7, and usually consider them to represent (1) Babylonia, (2) Media, (3) Persia, and (4) Macedonia. Some conservative Christians (eg. Young) believe that they should be identified as (1) the Neo-Babylonian empire, (2) the Medo-Persian empire (3) the Macedonian empire of Alexander and his successors, and (4) the Roman empire. Others (eg. Stuart, Lagrange) have advocated the following schema: (1) the Neo-Babylonian, (2) the Medo-Persian, (3) the short-lived rule of Alexander, and (4) the rival Diadochi, viz. Egypt and Syria.

There are serious difficulties in assigning Media and Persia to different world empires. Daniel, in his first reference to the empire that succeeds Babyon, calls it the "Medes and the Persians" (Daniel 6:28: "Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." Daniel also quotes the king and the subordinate rulers calling their own kingdom the "Medes and Persians" (Daniel 6:8, 12, 15), while Cyrus was married to a Mede and himself had Mede blood, making the Medes and Persians merged kingdoms by marriage at the time of the conquest of Babylon. As noted previously, however, a late author's apparent reliance on Jeremiah may explain this.

Language

Scholars have speculated about the bilingual literary structure of Daniel - Chapters 2 through 7 in Aramaic, the rest in Hebrew. One of the most frequent speculations is that the entire book (excepting 9:4-20) was originally written in Aramaic, with portions translated into Hebrew, possibly to increase acceptance - many Aramaisms in the Hebrew text find proposed

explanation by the hypothesis of an inexact initial translation into Hebrew.

According to John Collins in his 1993 commentary, Daniel, Hermeneia Commentary, the Aramaic in Daniel is of a later form than that used in the Samaria correspondence, but slightly earlier than the form used in the Dead Sea Scrolls, meaning that the Aramaic chapters 2-6 may have been written earlier in the Hellenistic period than the rest of the book, with the vision in chapter 7 being the only Aramaic portion dating to the time of Antiochus. The Hebrew portion is, for all intents and purposes, identical to that found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, suggesting a second century BC date for the Hebrew chapters 1 and 8-12.

Contrary to the above, the Expositor's Bible Commentary (Zondervan, 1990) claims that the language of Daniel, in comparison with the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the Hellenistic period, "prove quite conclusively to any scholar that the second-century date and Palestinian provenance of the Book of Daniel cannot be upheld any longer without violence being done to the science of linguistics". It adds that the serious mistakes of the Septuagint to render many Persian and Accadian terms, as the offices mentioned in Daniel 3:3, proves ignorance of words of the old past, already forgotten in the Hellenistic period, indicating that the Book of Daniel was written in the late 6th century B.C.E.

E.C.Lucas, Daniel, Apollos OT Commentary (Apollos, 2002) pp 307f is more cautious in his assessment of linguistic arguments as well. Evaluating Collin's approach he considers "the wide geographical spread from which the material comes and the implicit assumption that linguistic developments would have occurred uniformly throughout this area" a weakness and concludes, "The character of the Hebrew and Aramaic could support a date in the fifth or fourth century for the extant written form of the book, but does not demand a second-century date." He agrees with Collins that there are "clear differences" between Qumran Hebrew and the Hebrew of Daniel.

Loan words

Three Greek words used within the text have long been considered evidence for a late dating of Daniel. All three are terms for musical instruments. The existence of the Greek word symphonia was cited by Rowlings as having its earliest use in second century BC, but it has subsequently been shown that Pythagoras used the term to denote an instrument, while its use to refer to a group performing together is found in the 'Hymni Homerica, ad Mercurium 51'; both instances date from the sixth century BC, the supposed setting of Daniel.

It is known that "Greek mercenaries and slaves served in the Babylonian and Assyrian periods, some of whom were undoubtedly versed in Greek music and musical instruments." It has been speculated that this would explain the existence of the three Greek musical terms in Daniel's book. On the other hand, it has been claimed that the non-existence of other Greek words is a strong witness against the theory of the writing of the book in the Hellenistic period, since "it is inconceivable that Greek terms for government and administration would not have been adopted into Aramaic by the second century B.C."

There are also nineteen Persian loan-words in the book, most of them having to do with governmental positions.

Use of the word 'Chaldeans'

The book of Daniel uses the term "Chaldean" to refer both to an ethnic group, and to astrologers in general. According to Montgomery and Hammer, Daniel's use of the word 'Chaldean' to refer to astrologers in general is an anachronism, as during the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods (when Daniel is said to have lived), it referred only to an ethnicity.

Hosea

Hosea prophesied during a dark and melancholy era of Israel's history, the period of the Northern Kingdom's decline and fall in the 8th century BC. The apostasy of the people was rampant, having turned away from God in order to serve the calves of Jeroboam (see 1 Kings 12.26-30; Hosea 8.4-6) and Baal, a Canaanite god of fertility.

Hosea was himself a native of the Northern Kingdom, and wrote in a distinctive northern dialect.

Joel

Joel was probably a resident in Judah, as his commission was to that people. He makes frequent mention of Judah and Jerusalem (1:14; 2:1, 15, 32; 3:1, 12, 17, 20, 21). The name Joel was common in Israel and is usually interpreted as meaning Yahweh is God.

Scholars debate the date of Joel with four main schools of thought:

- 835-796BC During the time when Joash was too young to govern and Jehoiada did so in his place (2 Kings 11; 2 Chron. 23-24).
- About 775-725BC Roughly contemporary with Hosea and Amos.
- About 500BC Roughly contemporary with Zechariah.
- About 639-608BC during Josiah's reign.

Amos

Amos was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam ben Joash (Jeroboam II), ruler of Israel from 793 BC to 753 BC, and the reign of Uzziah, King of Judah, at a time when both kingdoms (Israel in the North and Judah in the South) were peaking in prosperity. He was a contemporary of the prophet Hosea, but likely preceded him. Many of the earlier accounts of prophets found in the Old Testament are found within the context of other accounts of Israel's history. Amos, however, is the first prophet whose name also serves as the title of the corresponding biblical book in which his story is found.

Time when written

Most scholars believe that Amos gave his message in the autumn of 750 BC or 749 BC It is generally understood that his preaching at Bethel lasted only a single day at the least and a few days at the most. Leading up to this time, Assyrian armies battled against Damascus for a number of years, which greatly diminished Syria's threat to Israel. As a result of the fighting amongst its neighbors, Israel had the benefit of increasing its borders almost to those of the time of David and Solomon.

It should also be noted that Amos preached about two years before a very large earthquake, and made reference to it twice in his book. Zechariah remembers this earthquake over 200 years later (Zech 14:5).

Place where written

Some scholars believe that Amos' message was recorded after he delivered it to the Northern Kingdom, upon returning to his southern homeland of Tekoa, a town eight kilometres south of Bethlehem. It is mentioned many times in the Old Testament (Joshua 15:39, 2 Samuel 14:9 and 23:26, 1 Chronicles 11:28). Rehoboam is reported to have fortified Tekoa along with other cities in Judah in 2 Chronicles 11:5-6.

There are some differing opinions as to the location of the Tekoa Amos was presumably from. It is believed by most that Amos was a southern farmer, called by God to deliver his prophetic message in the North. However, some believe that Amos was actually from a Tekoa in the North, near Galilee, but this is most likely not true. They believe that it is more probable that Amos was from the North because it has conditions more suitable for the cultivation of sycamore figs than the Tekoa of the South. Sycamore figs grow at a low elevation, lower than the Tekoa of Judah, which is at a relatively high elevation of 850 metres (overlooking both Jerusalem and Bethlehem). Others have discredited the theory about the Galilean Tekoa, citing that the difference in elevation between the two locations is not significant. Scholars in support of the idea of Amos being from the North also say it makes more sense because of Amaziah's accusation of conspiracy in chapter seven, verse 10. A conspirator, they argue, is more likely to be a national.

Two other opinions of where Amos' writings were recorded deserve mention. They are that 1) disciples of Amos followed him and recorded his message and 2) that someone in his audience in the North recorded his message.

Obadiah

Its authorship is generally attributed to a person named Obadiah, which means “servant (or worshiper) of the Lord”. The date of composition is disputed among scholars and is difficult to determine due to the lack of personal information about Obadiah, his family, and his historical milieux. The date of composition must therefore be determined based on the prophecy itself. Edom is to be destroyed due to its lack of defense for its brother nation, Israel, when it was under attack. There are two major historical contexts within which the Edomites could have committed such an act. These are during 853 – 841 B.C. when Jerusalem was invaded by Philistines and Arabs during the reign of Jehoram (recorded in 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8-20 in the Christian Old Testament) and 605 – 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was attacked by King Nebuchadnezzer of Babylon, which led to the Babylonian exile of Israel. The earlier period would place Obadiah as a contemporary of the prophet Elisha, and the later would place Obadiah as a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah, both of whom were prophets in the respective time periods. The later period appears to be the scholarly consensus as Obadiah 1-9 parallels Jeremiah 49:7-22. The passage in Jeremiah dates from the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim (604 B.C.), and therefore Obadiah 11-14 seems to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzer (586 B.C.). It is more likely that Obadiah and Jeremiah together were drawing on a common source presently unknown to us than Jeremiah drawing on previous writings of Obadiah as his source. There is also much material found in Obadiah 10-21 which Jeremiah does not quote, and which, had he had it laid out before him, would have suited his purpose admirably. Despite everything, however, there are a number scholars who support both dates and even some who support dates other than the two major possibilities presented. Therefore, any date for the composition Obadiah must be held tentatively.

Jonah

The Book of Jonah is the fifth book in a series of books called the Minor Prophets. Unlike other prophetic books however, this book is not a record of a prophet’s words toward Israel. Instead of the poetry and prophetic prose of Isaiah or Lamentations, this book tells the story of a reluctant prophet who arguably becomes one of the most effective prophets in the entire Bible.

The character of the story is based on an obscure figure (Jonah) who lived during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 BC). In the Hebrew Bible, Jonah son of Amittai is only elsewhere mentioned at II Kings 14:25. The book itself was probably written in the post-exilic period (after 530 BC) and based on oral traditions that had been passed down from the eighth century BC.

(It should be noted that this view is problematic for various reasons, including the story's setting in the north and not the southern part of Israel [i.e. Judah].) Jonah is considered a Minor Prophet because the book was originally written with the other, smaller prophetic books on a single scroll (also known as the Book of the Twelve).

Micah

Micah prophesied throughout the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, roughly 777–717 BC. Micah was brought up in Moresheth-Gath in the Philistine plain, thus he is known as Micayahu of Moresheth. The prophet's name, in its elongated form "Micayahu," is commonly translated "Who is like God?" or possibly, "He who is like Him (God)."

Micah grew up in the poorer, working class of his small farming community. The quality of his prophecy, however, has caused many scholars to believe that he received a good education and/or may have been one of the wealthier members of the community; i.e. a land owner. Still others consider him as an elder of the community, indicating his respect among his people. Regardless of his background, he was well aware of the avarice and injustices of the rich.

Few Old Testament scholars today would defend Micah's authorship of the entire book. However, some scholars attribute much more of the material to Micah than others. The authorship of the book of Micah is somewhat controversial. It is generally agreed that Micah composed chapters 1 through 3; some scholars hold that chapter 6 and sections of chapter 7 were also written by the historical Micah. The primary reasons given are because chapters 3-5 foretell of events in the 6th century BC and chapters 6-7 have elements of a universal religious outlook which was not widely present in Judaism until much later.

Date of composition

The superscription suggests the time of the ministry of Micah as being during the reigns of Jotham (742–735 BC), Ahaz (735–715 BC), and Hezekiah (715–687 BC). These figures allow a maximum period of fifty-five years for Micah's ministry, but it is not likely that he was active as a prophet during all of that time. He was active during the late eighth century BC; he was among the earliest of the Minor Prophets. The message in Micah 1:2–9 was given before the destruction of Samaria in 721. The appeal of Jeremiah's supporters to the prophecy of Micah confirms his connection with Hezekiah: "And some of the land arose and said to all the assembled people, Micah of Moresheth prophesied during the days of Hezekiah king of Judah" (Jeremiah 26:17).

Setting

Micah had a populist message in a small town southwest of Jerusalem, Moresheth-gath. Most of the messages of hope can be credited to Micah, but often their general content hinders reconstruction of a specific historical setting. Although we read the canonical book through the eyes of the postexilic community of faith, who come to the fore in 7:8–20, the importance of these sections lies in the spiritual message of these prophetic texts. For this reason, scholars look very carefully at messages of hope. They ask whether they came from the prophet who gave his name to the book or from later prophets. Certainly the final edition of the book gives the impression of coming from early postexilic times.

Nahum

Nahum prophesied, according to some, in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz (740s BC). Others, however, think that his prophecies are to be referred to the latter half of the reign of Hezekiah (700s BC). Probably the book was written in Jerusalem, where he witnessed the invasion of Sennacherib and the destruction of his host (2 Kings 19:35).

Jonah had already uttered his message of warning, and Nahum was followed by Zephaniah, who also predicted (Zephaniah 2:4-15) the destruction of the city, predictions which were fulfilled (625 BC) when Nineveh was destroyed apparently by fire, and the Assyrian empire came to an end, an event which changed the face of Asia.

Habakkuk

The book was probably composed in the late 7th or early 6th century BC. Chapter 3 is an independent addition, according to most scholars, now recognized as a liturgical piece. The first two chapters are regarded by many as the work of a cult prophet attached to the Jerusalem Temple, possibly also the author of chapter 3.

There is not much biographical information on the prophet Habakkuk; in fact less is known about him than any other prophet. Due to the liturgical nature of the book of Habakkuk, there have been some scholars who think that Habakkuk may have been a temple prophet. Temple prophets are described in 1 Chronicles 25:1 as using lyres, harps and cymbals. Some feel that this may be echoed in Habakkuk 3:19b. His name comes either from the Hebrew word חבק habhak meaning "embrace" or else from an Akkadian word hambakuku for a kind of plant.

The prophet Habakkuk is also mentioned in the tale of Bel and the Dragon, included in a deuterocanonical late section of the Book of Daniel. In the superscription of the Old Greek version Habakkuk is called the son of Joshua of the tribe of Levi. In this book Habakkuk is lifted by an angel to Babylon to provide Daniel with some food while he is in the lion's den.

Historical context

It is unknown when Habakkuk lived and preached, but the reference to the rise and advance of the Chaldeans in 1:6-11 places him in the last quarter of the 7th century BC. One possible period might be during the reign of Jehoiakim, from 609-598 BC. The reasoning for this date is that during his reign that the Babylonians were growing in power. The Babylonians marched against Jerusalem in 598. Jehoiakim died while the Babylonians were marching towards Jerusalem and Jehoiakim's 8 year old son, Jehoiachin assumed the throne. Upon the Babylonians' arrival, Jehoiachin and advisors surrendered Jerusalem after a short time. With the transition of rulers and the age/inexperience of Jehoiachin, they were not able to stand against Chaldean forces. There is a sense of an intimate knowledge of the Babylonian brutality in 1:12-17.

Zephaniah

The superscription of the Book of Zephaniah attributes its authorship to "Zephaniah son of Cushi son of Gedaliah son of Amariah son of Hezekiah, in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah" (1:1, NRSV). All that is known of Zephaniah comes from the text. The superscription of the book is lengthier than most and contains two features. The name Cushi, Zephaniah's father, means 'Ethiopian'. In a society where genealogy was considered extremely important because of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants, the author may have felt compelled to establish his Hebrew lineage. In fact, this lineage is traced back to Hezekiah, who was king of Judah. The author of Zephaniah does not shrink from condemning the Cushites or Ethiopians. Chapter 2:12 contains a succinct but unequivocal message: "You also, O Ethiopians, / Shall be killed by my sword." Zephaniah's familial connection with King Hezekiah may have also legitimized his harsh indictment of the royal city in 3:1-7.

As with many of the other prophets, there is no external evidence to directly associate composition of the book with a prophet by the name of Zephaniah. Some scholars believe that much of the material does not date from the days of King Josiah (ca. 640-609 BC), but is actually post-monarchic. Three general possibilities are that a person, possibly named Zephaniah, prophesied the words of the book of Zephaniah; the general message of a Josianic prophet is conveyed through the book of Zephaniah; or the name could have been employed, either during the monarchic or post-monarchic period, as a 'speaking voice', possibly for rhetorical purposes. Although it is possible that a post-monarchic author assumed the persona of a monarchic prophet to add credibility to his message, there is no evidence to support such a claim.

If the superscription of the book of Zephaniah is a reliable indicator of the time that the bulk of the book was composed, then Zephaniah was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah (or Jeremias). King Josiah ruled over Judah from approximately 640-609 BC. Some scholars believe that the picture of Jerusalem which Zephaniah gives indicates that he was active prior to the religious reforms of King Josiah which are described in 2 Kings 23. These reforms took place in 622 BC. Scholars also cite the reference to "the officials and the king's sons . . ." in 1:8 as evidence that the kingdom was still ruled by a regent for Josiah. The portrait of foreign nations in chapter 2 also indicates the late seventh century.

Zephaniah was probably the first prophet following the prophecies of Isaiah and the violent reign of Manasseh. Both Zephaniah and Jeremiah urged King Josiah to enact religious reforms, which he eventually did.

Other scholars have presented evidence pointing to a post-monarchic date (as late as 200 BC) based on language and theme, although the book might still have been based on an earlier composition.

Haggai

It was written by the prophet Haggai around 520 BC some 18 years after Cyrus had conquered Babylon and issued a decree in 538 BC allowing the captive Jews to return to Judea.

Zechariah

Zechariah's ministry took place during the reign of Darius the Great (Zechariah 1:1), and was contemporary with Haggai in a post-exilic world after the fall of Jerusalem in 586/7 BC. Ezekiel and Jeremiah wrote prior to the fall of Jerusalem, while continuing to prophesy in the earlier exile period. Scholars believe Ezekiel, with his blending of ceremony and vision, heavily influenced the visionary works of Zechariah 1-8. Zechariah is specific about dating his writing (520-518 BC).

Some scholars accept the book as the writings of one individual. For example, George Livingstone Robinson's dissertation on chapters 9-14 concluded that those chapters had their origin in the period between 518 and 516 B.C. and stand in close relation to chapters 1-8, having most probably been composed by Zechariah himself.

Others have concluded that there was more than one contributor to the book. In this view, chapters 1–8 are treated as being the work of the "original" Zechariah. His prophecies and writings were collected by his disciples and his prophetic mantle handed down to other disciples, who bear responsibility for chapters 9–14; so, rather than a single author, there was an inspired tradition of Zechariah after the "original" prophet, and the character of this original is to be found within the lines of chapters 1–8.

Malachi

The last of the twelve minor prophets (canonically) and the final book of the Hebrew Bible is commonly attributed to a prophet by the name of Malachi. Although the appellation Malachi has frequently been understood as a proper name, its

Hebrew meaning is simply "my [i.e., god's] messenger" (or 'his messenger' in the Septuagint). This sobriquet occurs in the superscription at 1:1 and in 3:1, although it is highly unlikely that the word refers to the same character in both of these references. Thus, there is substantial debate regarding the identity of the author of the biblical book of Malachi. The Jewish Targum identifies Ezra (or Esdras) as the author of Malachi. St. Jerome suggests this may be due to the fact that Ezra is seen as an intermediary between the prophets and the 'great synagogue'. There is, however, no historical evidence to support this claim. Some scholars note affinities between Zechariah 9-14 and the book of Malachi. Zechariah 9, Zechariah 12, and Malachi 1 are all introduced as "Oracle, the word of Yahweh." Many scholars argue that this collection originally consisted of three independent and anonymous prophecies. Two were subsequently appended to the book of Zechariah (as what scholars refer to as Deutero-Zechariah) and the third became the book of Malachi. As a result, most scholars consider the book of Malachi to be the work of a single author who may or may not have been identified by the title Malachi. The present division of the oracles results in a total of twelve books of minor prophets – a number parallelling the sons of Jacob who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Catholic Encyclopedia asserts that "We are no doubt in presence of an abbreviation of the name Mál'akhîyah, that is 'Messenger of Yah'".

Nothing is known of the biography of the author of the book of Malachi although it has been suggested that he may have been Levitical (which is curious, considering that Ezra was a priest.) The books of Zechariah and Haggai were written during the lifetime of Ezra (see 5:1), perhaps this may explain the similarities in style. Although the Ezra theory is disputed, no other authorship theories are dominant.

According to the editors of the 1897 Easton's Bible Dictionary, the name "Malachi" is not a proper noun and is assumed to be an abbreviation of ("messenger of Yhwh").

The Septuagint superscription is ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγήλου αὐτοῦ, (by the hand of his messenger/angel). The interpretation of the Septuagint found an echo among the ancient Fathers of the Church and ecclesiastical writers, and even gave rise, especially among the disciples of Origen, to the "strangest fancies".

There are very few historical details in the book of Malachi. The greatest clue as to its dating may lie in the fact that the Persian-era term for governor (pehâ) is used in 1:8. This points to a post-exilic date of composition both because of the use of the Persian period term and because Judah had a king before the exile. Since, in the same verse, the temple has been rebuilt, the book must also be later than 515 BC. Malachi was apparently known to the author of Ecclesiasticus early in the Second Century BC. Because of the development of themes in the book of Malachi, most scholars assign it to a position between Haggai and Zechariah, slightly before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 BC.

The book of Malachi deals directly with abuses in the restored Temple system -- apparently from first hand experience. Thus, the book was almost certainly written in Jerusalem.

Matthew

The most Jewish of the gospels, Matthew seems to have been written primarily for a Jewish audience. Although the document is internally anonymous, the authorship of this Gospel has been traditionally ascribed to Matthew the Evangelist, a tax collector who became an Apostle of Jesus. The surviving testimony of the church fathers is unanimous in this view, and the tradition had been accepted by Christians at least as early as the 2nd century up to modern times. In addition, the title "According to Matthew" is found in the earliest codices, which date to the fourth century. Beginning in the 18th century, however, scholars have increasingly questioned that traditional view, and today the majority agree Matthew did not write the Gospel which bears his name. Matthew primarily writes for the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians and Gentiles who were, at least partly, Torah observant.

The relationship of Matthew to the Gospels of Mark and Luke is an open question known as the synoptic problem. The three together are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels and have a great deal of overlap in sentence structure and word choice. Out of a total of 1,071 verses, Matthew has 387 in common with Mark and the Gospel of Luke, 130 with Mark alone, 184 with Luke alone; only 370 being unique to itself.

Although the author of Matthew wrote according to his own plans and aims and from his own point of view, most scholars agree he borrowed extensively from Mark, and possibly another source or sources as well. The most popular view in modern scholarship is the two-source hypothesis, which speculates that Matthew borrowed from both Mark and a hypothetical sayings collection, called Q (for the German Quelle, meaning "source"). A similar but less common view is the Farrer hypothesis, which theorizes that Matthew borrowed material only from Mark, and that Luke wrote last, using both earlier Synoptics. A minority of scholars subscribe to Early Christian tradition, which asserts Matthean priority, with Mark borrowing from Matthew (see: Augustinian hypothesis and Griesbach hypothesis). For example, in 1911, the Pontifical Biblical Commission asserted that Matthew was the first gospel written, that it was written by the evangelist Matthew, and that it was written in Aramaic.

In The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins (1924), Burnett Hillman Streeter argued that a third source, referred to as M and also hypothetical, lies behind the material in Matthew that has no parallel in Mark or Luke. Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, there were various challenges and refinements of Streeter's hypothesis. For example, in his 1953 book The

Gospel Before Mark, Pierson Parker posited an early version of Matthew (proto-Matthew) as the primary source of both Matthew and Mark, and the Q source used by Matthew.

Critical biblical scholars, like Herman N. Ridderbos in his book Matthew, do not consider the apostle Matthew to be the author of this Gospel. He cites a number of reasons such as the text being in Greek, not Aramaic, the Gospel's heavy reliance on Mark, and the lack of characteristics usually attributed to an eyewitness account. Francis Write Beare goes on to say "there are clear indications that it is a product of the second or third Christian generation. The traditional name of Matthew is retained in modern discussion only for convenience."

Date of gospel

There is little in the gospel itself to indicate with clarity the date of its composition. The majority of scholars date the gospel between the years 70 and 100. The writings of Ignatius show "a strong case ... for [his] knowledge of four Pauline epistles and the Gospel of Matthew", which gives a terminus ad quem of c. 110. Scholars cite multiple reasons to support this range, such as the time required for the theological views to develop between Mark and Matthew (assuming Markan priority), references to historic figures and events circa 70, and a later social context. Some significant conservative scholars argue for a pre-70 date, generally considering the gospel to be written by the apostle Matthew. In December 1994, Carsten Peter Thiede redated the Magdalen papyrus, which bears a fragment in Greek of the Gospel of Matthew, to the late 1st century on palaeographical grounds. Scholars date this fragment to the 3rd century, so Thiede's article provoked much debate.

A minority of Christian scholars argue for an even earlier date, as seen in the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia: "Catholic critics, in general, favor the years 40–45..." In recent times, John Wenham, one of the biggest supporters of the Augustinian hypothesis, is considered to be among the more notable defenders of an early date for the Gospel of Matthew.

Possible Aramaic gospel of Matthew

There are numerous testimonies, starting from Papias and Irenaeus, that Matthew originally wrote in Hebrew letters, which is thought to refer to Aramaic. The sixteenth century Erasmus was the first to express doubts on the subject of an original Aramaic or Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew: "It does not seem probable to me that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, since no one testifies that he has seen any trace of such a volume." Here Erasmus distinguishes between a Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew letters and the partly lost Gospel of the Hebrews and Gospel of the Nazoraeans, from which patristic writers do quote, and which appear to have some relationship to Matthew, but are not identical to it. The Gospel of the Ebionites also has a close relationship to the Gospel of the Hebrews and Gospel of the Nazoraeans, and hence some connection to Matthew. The similarly named Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew has almost nothing to do with Matthew, however, and instead is a combination of two earlier infancy Gospels.

Most contemporary scholars, based on analysis of the Greek in the Gospel of Matthew and use of sources such as the Greek Gospel of Mark, conclude that the New Testament Book of Matthew was written originally in Greek and is not a translation from Hebrew or Aramaic (Greek primacy). If they are correct, then the Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome possibly referred to a document or documents distinct from the present Gospel of Matthew. A smaller number of scholars, including the Roman Catholic Pontifical Biblical Commission, believe the ancient writings that Matthew was originally in Aramaic, arguing for Aramaic primacy. These scholars normally consider the Peshitta and Old Syriac versions of the New Testament closest to the original autographs.

Biblical scholar Stephen L. Harris of the Jesus Seminar mentions that the claims of Matthew Levi being the author could actually be references to "an early Christian, perhaps named Matthew, who assembled a list of messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Bible, a collection that the creator of our present gospel may have used." The Jesus narrative would then have been assembled around these Tanakh verses.

Mark

The general theory is that Mark is a Hellenistic gospel, written primarily for an audience of Greek-speaking residents of the Roman Empire. Jewish traditions are explained, clearly for the benefit of non-Jews (e.g., Mark 7:1–4; 14:12; 15:42). Aramaic words and phrases are also expanded upon by the author, e.g., ταλιθα κουμ (talitha koum, Mark 5:41); κορβαν (Corban, Mark 7:11); αββα (abba, Mark 14:36).

Alongside these Hellenistic influences, Mark makes use of the Old Testament in the form in which it had been translated into Greek, the Septuagint, for instance, Mark 1:2; 2:23–28; 10:48b; 12:18–27; also compare 2:10 with Daniel 7:13–14. Those who seek to show the non-Hellenistic side of Mark note passages such as 1:44; 5:7 ("Son of the Most High God"; cf. Genesis 14:18–20); Mark 7:27; and Mark 8:27–30. These also indicate that the audience of Mark has kept at least some of its Jewish heritage, and also that the gospel might not be as Hellenistic as it first seems.

The gospel itself is anonymous, but as early as Papias in the early 2nd century, a text was attributed to Mark, a disciple of Peter, who is said to have recorded the Apostle's discourses. Papias' authority in this was John the Presbyter. While the text of Papias is no longer extant, it was quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea:

This, too, the presbyter used to say. 'Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of his followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter's. Peter used to adapt his teachings to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some of the things as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only – to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it.

Irenaeus confirmed this tradition, as did Origen, Tertullian, and others. Clement of Alexandria, writing at the end of the 2nd century, reported an ancient tradition that Mark was urged by those who had heard Peter's speeches in Rome to write what the apostle had said. Following this tradition, scholars have generally thought that this gospel was written at Rome. Among recent alternate suggestions are Syria, Alexandria, or more broadly any area within the Roman Empire. In any case, many scholars do not accept the Papias citation as a reliable representation of the Gospel's history, pointing out that there is no distinctive Petrine tradition in Mark.

It has been argued that there is an impending sense of persecution in the Gospel, and that this could indicate it being written to sustain the faith of a community under such a threat. As the main Christian persecution at that time was in Rome under Nero, this has been used to place the writing of the Gospel in Rome. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Latinized vocabulary employed in Mark (and in neither Matthew nor Luke) shows that the Gospel was written in Rome. Also cited in support is a passage in First Peter: "The chosen one at Babylon sends you greeting, as does Mark, my son."; Babylon being interpreted as a derogatory or code name for Rome, as the famous ancient city of Babylon ceased to exist in 275 BC.

However, the Rome-Peter theory has been questioned in recent decades. Some scholars believe that the Gospel of Mark contains mistakes concerning Galilean geography, supporting that the author, or his sources, were unfamiliar with the actual geography of that area, unlike the historical Peter. Furthermore, certain scholars dispute the connection of the gospel with persecution, identified with Nero's persecution in Rome, asserting that persecution was widespread, albeit sporadic beyond the borders of the city of Rome.

It is generally agreed among contemporary scholars that the Gospel of Mark was the first of the canonical gospels to be written, whereas the traditional view, popular amongst the Church fathers and especially Augustine of Hippo, holds that Mark was composed second, after the Gospel of Matthew. This assertion of Markan Priority is closely associated with the Two-Source Hypothesis, Q hypothesis, and the Farrer hypothesis.

Date

A wide range of recent critical scholars believe that Mark was written at the earliest after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70. There is one proposal based on a papyrus find among the Dead Sea Scrolls that advocates an earlier date. However, as most scholars agree with the Two-source hypothesis that proposes that Mark was one of the sources for the other Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke, the dating of Mark according to this viewpoint depends on the dating of Matthew and Luke. There are differing opinions as to what is the latest possible date for the composition of Mark.

Traditional viewpoint

Traditionally, John Mark was said to have been written sometime after the death of Peter which was stated to have occurred in Rome either in 64 or 67. Mark was said to have been a disciple of Peter's who did not personally witness any of these events he described, but recalled and wrote down what Peter had told him.

Pre-70 (Before the destruction of the Second Temple)

Two papyrologists, Fr. Jose O'Callaghan and Carsten Peter Thiede, have proposed that lettering on a postage-stamp-sized papyrus fragment found in a cave at Qumran, 7Q5, represents a fragment of Mark (Mark 6:52–53); thus they assert that the present gospel was written and distributed prior to 68. Computer analysis has shown that, assuming their disputed reading of the letters to be correct, only Mark matches these twenty letters and five lines among all known Greek manuscripts. Most papyrologists, however, consider this identification of the fragmentary text, and its supposition that Early Christians lived at Qumran, to be dubious. It is written on a scroll, and all known early papyrus Gospel manuscripts come from codices. It is true that no other known Greek work matches its wording, but no extant copy of Mark matches it exactly either, as it misses the phrase "to land" found in 6:52–53. It also could come from an unknown Greek work or a Christian could have left a copy of Mark there around the time the Qumran community was destroyed. most scholars reject the assertion of Callaghan and Thiede that a fragment of Mark was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls on grounds of insufficient evidence.

Post-70 (After the destruction of the Second Temple)

Mark 13:14-23, known as the "Little Apocalypse", is a key passage for dating the text. Using the method of Higher Criticism to analyze the Biblical text and to discover the historical framework in which it was written, correspondences have been seen by scholars between this passage and the calamities of the First Jewish Revolt of 66–70. The passage predicts that Herod's Temple would be torn down completely, and this was done by the forces of the Roman general Titus in the year 70. Scholars have also pointed out that the last verse of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen Mark 12:9 alludes to the

slaughter and exile of the Jews from Jerusalem by the Romans after 70. Others see the reference in Mark 14:58-59 to the false accusation that Jesus threatened to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days as another reference to the destruction of the Temple in 70.

Post-135 (After the Bar Kokhba Revolt)

A small group of scholars, including the German radical critical scholar Hermann Detering, see a 2nd century date for Mark. These scholars make the case that the "Little Apocalypse" Mark 13:14-23 refers to the events of the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132-135, and which they see as a much better fit to events described in this text than the First Jewish Revolt of 70. The parallels that they see are as follows: The Emperor Hadrian in the year 130 started to rebuild the ruined city of Jerusalem as a pagan Roman Colony named Aelia Capitolina. The "abomination of desolation" Mark 13:14 according to this hypothesis alludes to the statue of Jupiter Capitolinus that the Emperor Hadrian attempted to install in a temple to Jupiter on the site of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The leader of the revolt, Simon Bar Kokhba claimed to be the anointed Jewish Messiah (cf. Mark 13:21-25). The Romans suppressed the revolt with as many as twelve legions, and pursued a scorched earth policy. According to Cassius Dio, 580,000 Jews were killed, 50 fortified towns and 985 villages razed.

Luke

Contemporary scholars generally conclude that the author, possibly a Gentile Christian, wrote the gospel about 85-90. Most scholars hold the two-source hypothesis as most probable, which argues that the author used the Gospel of Mark and the hypothetical Q document in addition to unique material, as sources for the gospel. The author of Luke is usually agreed to be more faithful to the wording and order of the Q material than was the author of Matthew. As an alternative to the two-source hypothesis, a few scholars hold to the traditional view that Luke is based on Matthew. The two major hypothesis that hold this position are the Griesbach hypothesis and the Augustinian hypothesis. A minority, such as John Knox (not the same as the Scottish reformer John Knox) propose that the Gospel of Luke was the Proto-orthodox edit of the Gospel of Marcion.

Like the rest of the New Testament, the gospel was written in Greek. Like Mark (but unlike Matthew), the intended audience is gentile, and it assures readers that Christianity is an international religion, not a Jewish sect. Scholars are divided on whether the author is indeed Paul's physician companion, Luke. Several cities have been proposed as its place of origin with no consensus.

Author

Early tradition, witnessed by the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus (c. 170), Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, held that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were both written by Luke, a companion of Paul. The oldest manuscript of the gospel (ca. 200) carries the attribution “the Gospel according to Luke”. Donald Guthrie describes the early Christian testimony concerning the gospel's authorship as in full agreement, although "some scholars attach little importance to it". The claim that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written by the same author is considered by contemporary scholarship to be “almost certain”. The most direct evidence comes from the prefaces of each book. Both prefaces are addressed to Theophilus, possibly although not certainly the author's patron, and the preface of Acts explicitly references "my former book" about the life of Jesus. Furthermore, there are linguistic and theological similarities between the two works, suggesting that they have a common author. Both books also contain common interests. With the agreement of nearly all scholars, Udo Schnelle writes, "The extensive linguistic and theological agreements and cross-references between the Gospel of Luke and the Acts indicate that both works derive from the same author". Those biblical scholars who consider the two books a single, two-volume work often refer to both together as Luke-Acts.

Given this, the internal evidence of the Acts of the Apostles concerning its author pertains to the authorship of the Gospel. This evidence, especially passages in the narrative where the first person plural is used, points to the author being a companion of Paul. As D. Guthrie put it, of the known companions of Paul, Luke is “as good as any… [and] since this is the traditional ascription there seems no reason to conjecture any other.” There is further evidence from the Pauline Epistles. Paul described Luke as “the beloved physician”, and scholars have long found evidence of technical medical terminology used in both the Gospel and Acts, though this argument has been challenged and it is without universal acceptance.

The traditional view of Lukan authorship is “widely held as the view which most satisfactorily explains all the data.” The list of scholars maintaining authorship by Luke the physician is lengthy, and represents scholars from a wide range of theological opinion. But there is no consensus, and the current opinion concerning Lukan authorship has been described as ‘about evenly divided’. on who the author was.

Date

The terminus ad quem or latest possible date for Luke is bound by the earliest papyri manuscripts that contains portions of Luke (late 2nd/early 3rd century) and the mid to late 2nd century writings that quote or reference Luke. The work is reflected in the Didache, the Gnostic writings of Basilides and Valentinus, the apologetics of the Church Father Justin Martyr, and was used by Marcion. Donald Guthrie claims that the Gospel was likely widely known before the end of the

first century, and was fully recognized by the early part of the second, while Helmut Koester states that aside from Marcion, "there is no certain evidence for its usage," prior to ca. 150. While some scholars argue for a pre-70 date for when the gospel was written, most scholars place the date ca. 80-90.

Before 70

Arguments for a pre-70 date are largely bound up with the complicated arguments concerning the date of the book of Acts, with most proponents arguing for a date around 60-61 for the Gospel. This incorporates the conjecture that Luke collected much of his unique material during the imprisonment of Paul in Caesarea, when Luke attended to him. Acts does not mention Paul's martyrdom, which occurred some time in the 60s, nor the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies concerning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which occurred in 70. A few scholars who also argue for an early date of First Epistle to Timothy believe 1 Timothy 5:18 is referencing Luke 10:7, and thus argue Luke pre-dates Paul's death.

After 70

In contrast to the traditional view, many contemporary scholars regard Mark as a source text used by the author of Luke, following from the theory of Markan Priority. Since Mark may have been written around the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, around 70, Luke would not have been written before 70. These scholars have suggested dates for Luke from 75 to 100. Support for a later date comes from a number of reasons. One argument is that the references to the Jerusalem temple's destruction are seen as evidence of a post-70 date. The universalization of the message of Luke is believed to reflect a theology that took time to develop. Differences of chronology, "style", and theology suggest that the author of Luke-Acts was not familiar with Paul's distinctive theology but instead was writing a decade or more after his death, by which point significant harmonization between different traditions within Early Christianity had occurred. Furthermore, Luke-Acts has views on christology, eschatology, and soteriology that are similar to the those found in Pastoral epistles, which are often seen as pseudonymous and of a later date than the undisputed Pauline Epistles.

Debate continues among non-traditionalists about whether Luke was written before or after the end of the 1st century. Those who would date it later argue that it was written in response to heterodoxical movements of the early 2nd century, for example see Gospel of Marcion. Those who would date it earlier point out both that Luke lacks knowledge of the episcopal system, which had been developed in the 2nd century, and that an earlier date preserves the traditional connection of the gospel with the Luke who was a follower of Paul.

Audience

The consensus is that Luke was written by a Greek or Syrian for gentile or non-Jewish Christians. The Gospel is addressed to the author's patron, Theophilus, which in Greek simply means friend of God or (be)loved by God or loving God, and may not be a name but a generic term for a Christian. The Gospel is clearly directed at Christians, or at those who already knew about Early Christianity, rather than a general audience, since the ascription goes on to state that the Gospel was written "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:3–4).

John

See the article on the Fourth Gospel.

Acts

While the precise identity of the author is debated, the general consensus is that the author was a Greek Gentile writing for an audience of Gentile Christians.

Common authorship of Luke and Acts

There is substantial evidence to indicate that the author of The Gospel of Luke also wrote the Book of Acts. The most direct evidence comes from the prefaces of each book. Both prefaces are addressed to Theophilus, the author's patron—and perhaps a label for a Christian community as a whole as the name means "Lover of God". Furthermore, the preface of Acts explicitly references "my former book" about the life of Jesus—almost certainly the work we know as The Gospel of Luke.

Furthermore, there are linguistic and theological similarities between the Luke and Acts. As one scholar writes,"the extensive linguistic and theological agreements and cross-references between the Gospel of Luke and the Acts indicate that both works derive from the same author" Because of their common authorship, the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles are often jointly referred to simply as Luke-Acts. Similarly, the author of Luke-Acts is often known as "Luke"—even among scholars who doubt that the author was actually named Luke.

Luke the physician as author

The traditional view is that the Gospel of Luke and Acts were written by the physician Luke, a companion of Paul. This Luke is mentioned in Paul's Epistle to Philemon (v.24), and in two other epistles which are traditionally ascribed to Paul (Colossians 4:14 and 2 Timothy 4:11).

The view that Luke-Acts was written by the physician Luke was nearly unanimous in the early Christian church. The

Papyrus Bodmer XIV, which is the oldest known manuscript containing the start of the gospel (dating to around 200 AD), uses the title "The Gospel According to Luke". Nearly all ancient sources also shared this theory of authorship—Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the Muratorian Canon all regarded Luke as the author of the Luke-Acts. Neither Eusebius of Caesarea nor any other ancient writer mentions another tradition about authorship.

In addition to the authorship evidence provided by the ancient sources, some feel the text of Luke-Acts supports the conclusion that its author was a companion of Paul. First among such internal evidence are portions of the book which have come to be called the "'we' passages". Although the bulk of Acts is written in the third person, several brief sections of the book are written from a first-person perspective. These "we" sections are written from the point of view of a traveling companion of Paul: e.g. "After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia", "We put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace" Such passages would appear to have been written by someone who traveled with Paul during some portions of his ministry. Accordingly, some have used this evidence to support the conclusion that these passages, and therefore the entire text of the Luke-Acts, were written by a traveling companion of Paul's. The physician Luke would be one such person.

It has also been argued that level of detail used in the narrative describing Paul's travels suggests an eyewitness source. Some claim that the vocabulary used in Luke-Acts suggests its author may have had medical training, but this claim has been widely disputed.

Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews

The Pauline Epistles – for dating and so forth, see the relevant articles.

James

The author identifies himself in the opening verse as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ". From the middle of the third century, patristic authors cited the Epistle as written by James the Just, a relation of Jesus and first Bishop of Jerusalem. Not numbered among the Twelve Apostles, unless he is identified as James the Less, James was nonetheless a very important figure: Paul described him as "the brother of the Lord" in Galatians 1:19 and as one of the three pillars of the Church in 2:9. He is traditionally considered the first of the Seventy Disciples. John Calvin and others suggested that the author was the Apostle James, son of Alphaeus, who was often identified with James the Just. If written by James the Just, the place and time of the writing of the epistle would be Jerusalem, where James was residing before his martyrdom in 62.

Authorship has also occasionally been attributed to the apostle James the Great, brother of John the Evangelist and son of Zebedee. The letter does mention persecutions in the present tense (2:6), and this is consistent with the persecution in Jerusalem during which James the Great was martyred (Acts 12:1). However, some challenge the early date on the basis of some of the letter’s content, which they interpret to be a clarification of St. Paul’s teachings on justification found in his Epistle to the Romans, written c. 54.If written by James the Great, the location would have also been Jerusalem, sometime before 45.

The Catholic Encyclopedia accepts James the Just as the author and dates the writing of the epistle between 47 AD (after a famine in Jerusalem attested to by Josephus) and 52 AD (at which point James made some decision as bishop).

Lastly, many scholars consider the epistle to be written in the late first or early second centuries, after the death of James the Just. Among the reasons for this are:

- the author introduces himself merely as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ", without invoking any special family relationship to Jesus.
- the cultured Greek language of the Epistle, it is contended, could not have been written by a Jerusalemite Jew (though there were many Greek-speakers in Jerusalem and a Greek-speaking scribe could have taken dictation).
- the author fails to mention Jewish ritual requirements such as circumcision, whereas James the Just is known from Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles to have been particularly concerned with ministering to the Jewish and circumcised (however, since it is addressed to a Jewish audience, such requirements would naturally be taken for granted; moreover, the Epistle could have been written before the end of Paul's First Missionary Journey (46-48 AD), when the inclusion of gentiles first became an issue).
- the author fails to mention any details of Jesus's life (however, the doctrines resemble Jesus's own doctrines as recorded in the Gospels, more than Paul's doctrines).
- the epistle was only gradually accepted into the (non-Jewish) canon of the New Testament.

The Epistle was first definitely quoted by Origen, and possibly a bit earlier by Irenaeus of Lyons as well as Clement of Alexandria in a lost work according to Eusebius.

I Peter

The author identifies himself in the opening verse as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus", and the view that the epistle was written by St. Peter is attested to by a number of Church Fathers: Irenaeus (140-203), Tertullian (150-222), Clement of Alexandria (155-215) and Origen (185-253). If Polycarp, who was martyred in 156, and Papias alluded to this letter, then it must have been written before the mid-2nd century. However, the Muratorian Canon of c. 170 did not contain this, and a number of other General epistles, suggesting they were not yet being read in the Western churches. Unlike The Second Epistle of Peter, the authorship of which was debated in antiquity, there was little debate about Peter's authorship until the advent of biblical criticism in the 18th century. Assuming the letter is authentic and written by Peter who was martyred c. 64, the date of this epistle is probably between 60-64.

One theory is that 1 Peter was written by a secretary, or amanuensis, Silvanus, who is mentioned towards the end of the epistle: "By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto you briefly" (5:12). In the following verse the author includes greetings from "she that is in Babylon, elect together with you," taken for the church "in Babylon", which may be an early use of this Christian title for Rome, familiar from the Book of Revelation.

II Peter

The letter opens by identifying the author as "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:1). Elsewhere, the author clearly presents himself as the Apostle Peter, stating that the Lord revealed to him the approach of his own death (II Peter 1:14), that he was an eyewitness of the Transfiguration (II Peter 1:16-18), that he had previously written another epistle to the same audience (II Peter 3:1; cf. 1 Peter), and he called Paul the Apostle "our beloved brother" (II Peter 3:15).

Although 2 Peter internally purports to be a work of the apostle, most biblical scholars have concluded that Peter is not the author, and instead consider the epistle pseudepigraphical. Reasons for this include its linguistic differences from 1 Peter, its apparent use of Jude, possible allusions to second-century gnosticism, encouragement in the wake of a delayed parousia, and weak external support. In addition, specific passages offer further clues in support of pseudepigraphy, namely the author's assumption that his audience is familiar with multiple Pauline epistles (II Peter 3:15-16), his implication that the Apostlic generation has passed (II Peter 3:4), and his differentiation between himself and "the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (II Peter 3:2).

A minority of scholars have disagreed with this position and forwarded reasons in support of genuine Petrine authorship. They argue that the letter did not fit a specific pattern of what they consider pseudepigraphy. The author did not use first person narrative, which Donald Guthrie argues was typical in pseudepigraphy. Certain details in the Transfiguration account differ from the synoptic gospels and that passage lacks embellishment which E. M. B. Green argues was common in apocryphal books. An uncommon title, "our beloved brother," is given to Paul, where later literature used other titles. The author states that Paul's letters are difficult to understand (II Peter 3:15-16) which Donald Gurthie argues runs counter to the tendency in pseudoepigraphy to enhance the heroic alleged author.

These scholars who accept Petrine authorship have a number of explanations concerning the relation between 2 Peter and Jude. It could be that, conversely, Jude used 2 Peter. Other scholars argue that even if 2 Peter used Jude, that does not exclude Petrine authorship. On remaining points, Ben Witherington III argued that the text we have today is a composite, including points taken from the Epistle of Jude, but that it containing a genuine "Petrine fragment", which he identified as II Peter 1:12-21. Finally, some scholars have advanced the hypothesis that differences in style could be explained by Peter having employed different amanuenses (secretaries) for each epistle, or if Peter wrote the second letter himself, while using Silvanus (Silas) as an amanuensis for the first.

However, the great majority of scholarship agrees that Peter could not have written this letter. For example, textual critic Daniel Wallace writes that, for most experts, "the issue of authorship is already settled, at least negatively: the apostle Peter did not write this letter" and that "the vast bulk of NT scholars adopts this...perspective." Werner Kummel exemplifies this position, stating, "It is certain, therefore, that II Pet does not originate with Peter, and this is today widely acknowledged.", as does Stephen L Harris, who states that "[v]irtually no authorities defend the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter." Evangelical historians D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo wrote that "most modern scholars do not think that the apostle Peter wrote this letter. Indeed, for no other letter in the New Testament is there a greater consensus that the person who is named as the author could not, in fact, be the author."

The questions of authorship and date are closely related. Self-evidently if Peter the Apostle wrote this epistle then it must have been written prior to his death in c 65-67AD. Many scholars generally consider the epistle to be written between c 100-150AD and so contend that it is pseudepigraphical.

I John

The epistle is traditionally held to have been written by John the Evangelist, and probably also at Ephesus, and when the writer was in advanced age (around 90 to 100 AD). The Epistle's content, language and conceptual style is an indication that

a common authorship existed between this letter, the two other letters attributed to the Apostle John, as well as the Gospel of John. Whether the author was the Apostle John himself, someone who wrote under his name and spoke "for him", or whether a body of authors contributed to the writing of all four Johannine texts is an open question. However, "The three Epistles and the Gospel of John are so closely allied in diction, style, and general outlook that the burden of proof lies with the person who would deny their common authorship" (B. H. Streeter, The Four Gospels, rev. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1930) 460). Some modern scholars believe that the common author or authors did not include John himself.

II John

Scholarly consensus is generally that this letter was written around 90-100 AD. Of the thirteen verses composing this epistle seven are in the First Epistle of John (which might suggest a common author). The language of this epistle is remarkably similar to 3 John. It is therefore the scholarly consensus that the same man wrote both of these letters, although some have doubted that he also wrote the Gospel of John, the First Epistle, or the Book of Revelation.

III John

The language of this epistle is remarkably similar to 2 John, and it is the scholarly consensus that the same man wrote both of these letters, although it has been debated whether or not this man also wrote the Gospel of John, 1 John, or Revelation, and the Authorship of the Johannine works is generally agreed by modern scholars to have been by multiple people (all known as John) rather than just one. Even in ancient times it was argued that this John the Presbyter was different to the John who wrote 1 John, and this was affirmed by an official church ruling at the Council of Rome, where it was ordered that the author of 1 John should be known as John the Evangelist while the author of 2&3 John should be known as John the Presbyter.

The earliest possible attestations for 3 John come from Tertullian and Origen. Tertullian, "On Monogamy" ch.vi quotes a brief phrase—"follow the better things"— from 3 John i.11 "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good", a phrase that might also have been adapted from the Septuagint Psalm xxxvi. 27 (xxxvii in the Hebrew Bible) or from the First Epistle of Peter iii.11. Origen's Commentary on Matthew book xi says "But many things might be said about the Word Himself who became flesh", which has been offered as a parallel showing the use of logos in 3 John i.7. Irenaeus in Adversus Haereses iii. 16. 7 (written ca. 175), quotes 2 John. 7 and 8, and in the next sentence I John 4:1, 2, as from "the Letter of John."; he does not quote from 3 John. The Muratorian Canon accepts two letters of John only.

The Third Epistle of John was likely written between AD 90 and AD 110.

Jude

The epistle is titled as written by "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (NRSV). If taken literally this means that the author is a brother of Jesus, an attribution which is now increasingly considered as the most probable.

Though it is held as canonical in the majority of Christian churches, some scholars consider the letter a pseudonymous work written between the end of the first century and the first quarter of the 2nd century, arguing from the references to the apostles (verse 1:17-18), tradition (1:3); the book's competent Greek style and the opposition to Gnosticism. Nevertheless, conservative scholars date it between 66 to 90.

"More remarkable is the evidence that by the end of the second century Jude was widely accepted as canonical...' Clement, Tertullian and the Muratorian canon considered the letter canonical. The authorship was called into question when Origen first spoke of the doubts held by some—albeit not him. Eusebius classified it with the "disputed writings, the antilegomena." The letter was eventually accepted as part of the canon by the Church father Athanasius and the Synods of Laodicea (c. 363) and Carthage (397). Doubts regarding Jude's authenticity were revived at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

The debate has continued over the author's identity as the apostle, the brother of Jesus, both, or neither. Some scholars have argued that since the author of that letter has not identified himself as an apostle and actually refers to the apostles as a third party, he cannot be identified with the Jude who is listed as one of the Twelve (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13; cf John 14:22). Others have drawn exactly the opposite conclusion ie as Jude was not an apostle, he would not have made such a claim on his own behalf. The person intended is sometimes identified as another Jude, named in the gospels among the relatives of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and the James referred to as his brother James, to whom the Letter of James is attributed. Little is known of this Jude, which would explain the apparent need to identify him by reference to his better-known brother.

Revelation / Apocalypse

Traditional view

The author of Revelation identifies himself several times as "John" (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The author also states that he was in exile on the island of Patmos when he received his first vision (1:9; 4:1–2). As a result, the author of Revelation is referred to as John of Patmos. John explicitly addresses Revelation to seven churches of Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (1:4, 11). All of these sites are located in what is now Turkey.

The traditional view holds that John the Apostle—considered to have written the Gospel and epistles by the same name—

was exiled on Patmos in the Aegean archipelago during the reign of Emperor Domitian, and wrote the Revelation there. Those in favor of a single common author point to similarities between the Gospel and Revelation. For example, both works are soteriological (e.g., referring to Jesus as a lamb) and possess a high Christology, stressing Jesus' divine side as opposed to the human side stressed by the Synoptic Gospels. In the Gospel of John and in Revelation, Jesus is referred to as "the Word of God" (Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ). Explanations of the differences between John's work by proponents of the single-author view include factoring in underlying motifs and purposes, authorial target audience, the author's collaboration with or utilization of different scribes and the advanced age of John the Apostle when he wrote Revelation.

A natural reading of the text would reveal that John is writing literally as he sees the vision (Rev 1:11; 10:4; 14:3; 19:9; 21:5) and that he is warned by an angel not to alter the text through a subsequent edit (Rev 22:18-19), in order to maintain the textual integrity of the book.

Early views

A number of Church Fathers weighed in on the authorship of Revelation. Justin Martyr avows his belief in its apostolic origin. Irenaeus (178) assumes it as a conceded point. At the end of the 2nd century, we find it accepted at Antioch, by Theophilus, and in Africa by Tertullian. At the beginning of the 3rd century, it is adopted by Clement of Alexandria and by Origen, later by Methodius, Cyprian, and Lactantius. Dionysius of Alexandria (247) rejected it, upon doctrinal rather than critical grounds. Eusebius (315) suspended his judgment, hesitating between the external and internal evidence; see also Antilegomena. Some canons, especially in the Eastern Church, rejected the book, while most others included it.

Modern views

Although the traditional Church view still has adherents, many modern scholars believe that John the Apostle, John the Evangelist, and John of Patmos refer to three separate individuals. This can be determined via new means of inquiry such as textual criticism. Certain lines of evidence suggest that John of Patmos wrote only Revelation, not the Gospel of John nor the Epistles of John. For one, the author of Revelation identifies himself as "John" several times, but the author of the Gospel of John never identifies himself directly. While both works liken Jesus to a lamb, they consistently use different words for lamb when referring to him—the Gospel uses amnos, Revelation uses arnion. Lastly, the Gospel is written in nearly flawless Greek, but Revelation contains grammatical errors and stylistic abnormalities which indicate its author may not have been as familiar with the Greek language as the Gospel's author.

In the Anchor Bible volume on Revelation, J. Massynberde Ford contends that the core verses of the book, in general chapters 4 through 22, are surviving records of the prophecies of John the Baptist. For example, she notes that the images of the Lamb of God are only found in Gospel sections associated with John the Baptist, and ties other hallmarks of Revelation to what is known of the Baptist. This viewpoint, however, has not received wide acceptance in the scholarly community.

Dating

According to early tradition, the writing of this book took place near the very end of Domitian's reign, around 95 or 96. Others contend for an earlier date, 68 or 69, in the reign of Nero or shortly thereafter. The majority of modern scholars also use these dates. Those who are in favor of the later date appeal to the external testimony of the Christian father Irenaeus (d. 185), who stated that he had received information relative to this book from those who had seen John face to face. He says that "it was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign" (A.H. 5.30.3), who according to Eusebius had started the persecution referred to in the book; however, recent scholars dispute that the book is situated in a time of ongoing persecution and have also doubted the reality of a large-scale Domitian persecution.

Some exegetes (Paul Touilleux, Albert Gelin, André Feuillet) distinguish two dates: publication (under Domitian) and date of the visions (under Vespasian). Various editors would have a hand in the formation of the document, according to these theories. The dating of the work is still widely debated in the scholarly community.