

THE DOCUMENTARY

HYPOTHESIS

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH THOUGHT
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THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE PENTATEUCH

Eight Lectures
by
Umberto Cassuto

With an introduction by
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Translated from the Hebrew by
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Umberto Cassuto (1883–1951) held the chair of Bible studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His books include *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, and a treatise on Ugaritic literature entitled *The Goddess Anath*.

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INTRODUCTION

We must stress, with the utmost emphasis, that there is no school of biblical scholarship today that is not founded on the critical analysis of the sources in the [Pentateuch]... and anyone who does not accept the division of the text according to the sources and the results flowing therefrom has to discharge the onus, if he wishes to be considered a collaborator in our scientific work, of proving that all the research work done till now was futile.

—Hugo Gressmann, editor,
Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 1924

Rarely have such grandiose theories of origination been built and revised and pitted against one another on the evidential equivalent of the head of a pin; rarely have so many worked so long and so hard with so little to show for their trouble.

—Meir Sternberg,
The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 1985

IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY of modern biblical scholarship, perhaps no issue has been as hotly debated as that of the origins and dating of Scripture generally and of the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, in particular. Hugo Gressmann, a leading German biblicalist

and the editor of the most prestigious journal in the field of biblical studies, could indeed speak for the entire establishment of biblical scholarship in 1924 when he confidently affirmed the assumptions and findings of the Graf-Wellhausen theory of a source-critical approach to the Bible, known also as the documentary hypothesis. Yet sixty years later—and all the more so in the twenty years since then—Meir Sternberg, the author of some of the most important works in the literary analysis of Scripture, could invoke echoes of Churchill in his critique of the entire enterprise. In fairness, Sternberg’s comments do not reflect the unanimous consensus of biblical scholarship—either then or even now. But it may be accurately stated that there has been a growing disaffection from historical paradigms of biblical study. And while one still routinely sees references to the putative sources J, E, P, and D, some have wondered aloud whether Wellhausen’s construct has begun to show enough cracks and strains to place its own survival in doubt.¹

This brief essay, written on the 65th anniversary of the original publication of *The Documentary Hypothesis*, is an attempt to take a page from the history of ideas and trace the stated and unstated beliefs that have guided biblical scholars in their work over the past century. It is a journey through what Thomas Kuhn famously characterized as a “paradigm shift,”² a shift in biblical studies whose pivotal figure, nearly without rival, is that of the Italian-born Umberto Cassuto (1883–1951), who laid out his program in this short treatise.

A brief recapitulation of Kuhn’s theory concerning the nature of scientific inquiry is instructive in understanding the place of *The Documentary Hypothesis* within the spectrum of biblical scholarship. A mature science, according to Kuhn’s hypothesis, is one in which there exists a dominant paradigm—a conceptual framework that informs the scientist of what to expect as he engages in his or her scientific inquiry. It delineates the parameters of what can and cannot be considered acceptable solutions to a problem.

Only that which conforms to the paradigm is deemed true. The training of scientists consists of inculcating them with the tenets of the paradigm, the rules of the game, before they embark on their own research. To engage in “normal science” is to endeavor to tie up loose ends and adjust the paradigm to reality. Paradigms introduce a sociological factor into science. To practice science is to engage the mysteries of the natural order not in unmediated fashion, but through the lens of the paradigm, itself a human construct. This dogmatic aspect determines who is considered “in” in the scientific community, and who is “out.”

Inevitably, results will begin to arise that are inconsistent with the reigning paradigm. At first these will be dismissed and faults will be found either with the method employed or with the assumptions upon which they rest. As these bothersome findings persist and accumulate, however, a creative scientist will come forward to challenge the axioms of the paradigm and propose a new one that encompasses the “problematic” results as well in a systematic fashion. Because the old paradigm is but a human construct, it is subject to human foibles: its articulators will typically dig in their heels, and the new paradigm will gain traction only as the masters of the old one pass from the scene. New paradigms do gain influence, but only slowly.

The notion that the received text of the Pentateuch had a pre-history that consisted of smaller, earlier documents had been in currency in France and Germany since the mid-eighteenth century. Scholars had hypothesized about the existence of these documents on the basis of apparent duplications, repetitions, and contradictions. But the theories advanced before Wellhausen (1844–1918) had been piecemeal. Only his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1876) seemed to account for all the phenomena observed.³ Unlike earlier theories, Wellhausen’s purported to explain the entirety of

the Pentateuch. It offered clear parameters for determining how a given passage could be reliably assigned to a particular source document. Above all, it supplied a rationale for the entire edifice, tracing the historical evolution of the received text. Each of four source documents, he claimed, reflected a distinct stage not only in the development of the text but, more importantly, in the development of the religion of ancient Israel. Each document, asserted Wellhausen, was originally a full and independent account of the history of Israel, from its earliest beginnings through the time of Moses. The J document, the earliest of the four, was the account that had been formulated by scribes of the court of Judea. The E document had been produced by their rivals in the northern kingdom. Following the fall of Samaria in the late eighth century B.C.E., Wellhausen surmised, a redactor had melded the two accounts. The D document, comprising most of the Book of Deuteronomy, had been composed by scribes in Judea in the time of Josiah, toward the close of the First Temple period in the late seventh or early sixth century B.C.E. The P document had been authored by Temple priests early on in the Second Temple era following the return from exile (late sixth to early fifth centuries B.C.E.). Each document, claimed Wellhausen, was characterized by its own theology, politics, language, and style.

The theory was quickly adopted by biblical scholars everywhere, attaining the status of a paradigm. One is reminded of Hugo Gressmann's contention cited at the outset of this essay (and taken from the opening chapter of the present volume), that one had to accept this theory in order to be "considered a collaborator in our scientific work." Indeed, in the generation following Wellhausen, scholars labored nearly exclusively to tie up loose ends—sharpening the criteria for assigning the various Pentateuchal passages to the four documents, altering the dating and precise chronology of each document, and reviewing whether a given passage should be attributed to this document or that.

The greatest advance in biblical scholarship in the generation after Wellhausen took place within the paradigm of the documentary hypothesis. Hermann Gunkel spearheaded an attempt to get at what he considered the oral roots of the pentateuchal passages and to locate their original social function in the daily cultic and royal life of ancient Israel. In essence, Gunkel took Wellhausen's assumptions about sources one step further. Wellhausen had maintained that the Pentateuch could be reduced to four sources. Gunkel splintered these into dozens more.

In the present work, originally published in Hebrew in 1941 and presented here in accordance with Israel Abrahams' 1961 translation, Cassuto acknowledges that his counter-theory represents a challenge to the existing paradigm. He notes that at its inception, Wellhausen's idea had been cautiously regarded as a "theory" or a "hypothesis," with the tentativeness inherent in those terms. Cassuto decries the fact that "its original character had been entirely forgotten, and that a kindly fate had saved it from being mortal like other scientific hypotheses." Instead, it now bore the venerable status of an imposing edifice, in which proud attendants continue to "build and perfect it, and are still busy decorating its halls and completing its turrets." (p. 117) Upheld dogmatically by its practitioners, and serving as the measure of who could be considered a true biblicalist and who not, the documentary hypothesis was indeed a paradigm in the harshest sense of the word. Cassuto's experience attests that those who first challenged the hypothesis were quickly dismissed. Certainly, it was claimed in defense, a slight weakness in the theory here or there was insufficient to relegate the entire doctrine to the dustbin. Moreover, detractors could be easily dispensed with because they proposed no alternative to explain the data at hand.

Herein lies the significance of Cassuto's work. A distillation of the author's first major work, *La Questione della Genesi*,⁴ published in 1934, *The Documentary Hypothesis* attacked its subject

on multiple fronts. Moreover, it offered an alternative approach to the phenomena the source critics had observed. The key, suggested Cassuto, was to reject the assumptions of source criticism entirely and to articulate “a new edifice that is to be built in place of the old, collapsed structure”—in short, a new paradigm for biblical studies. Cassuto proposed that the increasing atomization and fragmentation of the biblical text be reversed. Instead, the Pentateuch had to be construed as a carefully constructed whole. It needed to be mined for the deliberate choice of each expression. What had been construed as contradiction, repetition, and variance were in fact literary tools succinctly conveying polyphous meaning. Cassuto saw within the Torah the literary devices of harmony, word play, assonance and consonance, elliptic and dramatic structure, and retrospection.⁵ He accepted the observations of source criticism, that the text exhibited phenomena that begged explanation. His close readings of the text as a well-integrated whole were, in his estimation, not merely an alternative approach to Scripture. Rather, they more fully and consistently accounted for the very phenomena that the source critics themselves had sought to explain. In a sentence, Cassuto represents a pivotal figure in the paradigm shift in modern biblical studies from source criticism to literary criticism. The transition has been slow, however, with literary analysis of the Bible beginning to flourish within the halls of academia only in the 1970s.

Cassuto’s critique of the documentary hypothesis was grounded in his knowledge of ancient Near Eastern languages and literature—a corpus of material publicized largely after Wellhausen had drafted his thesis. For example, Cassuto argued, the variation in divine names within a single work was commonplace in the literature of the biblical period. Similarly, whereas source critics had assumed that authors of all ages would never digress and would neither repeat nor contradict themselves, Cassuto demonstrated that these

premises imposed canons of modern literary convention upon bodies of literature to which they were entirely foreign. Indeed, it has since been shown that many phenomena that were fodder for the source critics have emerged in the Temple scroll found at Qumran, a work universally attributed to a single author.

Cassuto also questions one of the weakest aspects of the documentary hypothesis: the role of the four redactors it proposed and the hermeneutics that purportedly guided their work. Most significantly, he notes that when a particular divine name appears out of place in a document, the source critics failed to see this anomaly as a flaw in their theory. The documents, they insisted, are always consistent; the “wrong” name, then, must be the work of a careless redactor, and the text should be amended to reflect the intent of the original author.⁶

Photographs of Cassuto in his study are indicative of the breadth of European culture that he brought to his scholarship. Here we see a man impeccably dressed in a three-piece suit and tie, peering through round spectacles over a finely waxed mustache, its two ends curled to full crescents. Born in Florence in 1883, Cassuto received a state education from primary school through university, mastering the languages and literatures of Greek and Latin, French and Italian, English and German—resources he brings to bear in this work, as seen in his frequent references to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Indeed, his students note that in his final lecture, before his sudden demise in December of 1951, he elucidated the doubled stories of the Book of Numbers through analogy with those in medieval French epic poetry.⁷

This breadth of knowledge, in turn, contributed to the depth of Cassuto’s analysis. The highlight of the opening lecture of this work, for example, is his observation that the evolution of source

criticism in nineteenth-century biblical scholarship parallels developments within Homeric studies. Thus, he claimed, “it may well be that we have before us not an objective discovery of what is actually to be found in the ancient books, but the result of the subjective impression that these writings have on the people of a given environment.” (p. 15) “The mode of the period and country clearly stamped the labors of the scholars.” (p. 12)

Subsequent scholars have noted just how true this assessment is of the conditioned and tendentious underpinnings of Wellhausen’s theory. Reflecting upon his own work, Wellhausen wrote in 1901 that “our vital concern is research without presuppositions; research that does not find what it is supposed to find according to considerations of purpose and relevance, but what seems correct to the conscientious researcher from a logical and historical point of view.”⁸ But the cultural subsoil of the documentary hypothesis is today revealed. Its first layer is a tendency characteristic of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to delineate the development and evolution of trends. For Darwin, nature was not a unified whole, but dynamic throughout history. For Freud, the human psyche was not immutable from birth to death, but subject to conflict and struggle played out over time. For both these thinkers, change was of the essence, and a proper understanding of the sequence of things was vital to understanding the object of study. Hence, for Wellhausen, it was crucial not only to posit multiple source documents but to see them as reflections of distinct theological stages of Israel’s religious development. This is why we find within Wellhausen’s theory not only the claim of distinct documents, but a broad explanation of their historical sequence and historical setting.⁹

Coupled with Wellhausen’s historicist orientation was a strong romanticist streak. For romanticism, every cultural phenomenon has a primitive phase analogous to childhood, a classical phase

analogous to adulthood, and a decadent phase analogous to senility. Thus, for Wellhausen, E was a theological advance over the earlier, more primitive J. These texts were thought to reflect spontaneity and spirit, bearing out the romanticist belief that the primitive is the most sublime. By contrast, the work of the priests, P, the latest of the purported documents, was taken to mark a decadent stage in the religion of Israel, with its attention to ritual laws.¹⁰

The rise of alternative paradigms and a growing awareness of the documentary hypothesis' nineteenth-century ideological assumptions have led many scholars to disaffection with it. There is less and less consensus about the criteria for identifying each of the documents. In some circles, the P document is actually composed of seven P sub-documents. John Van Seters has recently demonstrated that the very notion of a redactor of the type Wellhausen envisioned is anachronistic; such redactors belong only to the age of print.¹¹ The trickle of comparative materials from the ancient Near East that were available to Wellhausen were never employed in the formulation of the theory. As that trickle has become a torrent, it has become evident that numerous hermeneutical assumptions of the source critics about consistency, redundancy, and repetition simply did not hold sway in the ancient Near East. Thus, today we are acutely aware of the nineteenth-century intellectual and literary currents that informed Wellhausen's work. For many in the field, the effort to critically and scientifically refract the sources of the Pentateuch from its received whole is the textual equivalent of attempting to unscramble an egg.

But we have told only half the story. Apart from being a learned scholar, Cassuto was also an ordained rabbi, having served as the chief rabbi of Florence and the head of its rabbinic seminary from 1922 to 1925. Though Cassuto does not say so explicitly, the

paradigm shift he wrought bore a subtext of Jewish-Christian polemics. To understand this shift, we need to understand source criticism's strong affinities with a sometimes anti-Semitic Protestant theology. Solomon Schechter famously equated "higher criticism" with "higher anti-Semitism,"¹² and one can indeed find anti-Jewish references in *The Prolegomena*. One example concerns the last eight chapters of First Chronicles, detailing David's efforts to procure materials for the construction of the First Temple under Solomon. In one particularly grievous comment on these chapters, Wellhausen writes, "1 Chr. 22-29 is a startling instance of that statistical phantasy of the Jews which revels in vast sums of money on paper."¹³ But, by and large, this is not the tone of *The Prolegomena*, and it would be a mistake to categorize it as an anti-Semitic manifesto. Yet the underpinnings of Wellhausen's hypothesis may be seen to have an affinity with Protestant theology in at least three ways.

Long before Wellhausen, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars considered the laws of the Pentateuch to be material whose composition was early relative to the other documents. Yet Wellhausen assigned these ordinances to the post-exilic period. This material included the P document, extending from Exodus 25 through the beginning of the Book of Numbers and dealing largely, though not exclusively, with cultic matters. In the introduction to *The Prolegomena*, he explains:

It was in vain that I looked for the light which was to be shed from this source [i.e., the laws] on the historical and prophetic books. On the contrary, my enjoyment of the latter was marred by the Law; it did not bring them any nearer to me, but intruded itself uneasily, like a ghost that makes a noise, but is not visible and really effects nothing.... At last, in the course of a casual visit in Göttingen in the summer of 1867, I learned that... Karl Heinrich Graf placed the Law later than the Prophets, and almost without knowing his reasons for the hypothesis, I was prepared to accept it.¹⁴

LECTURE 8

CONCLUSIONS

THE TOUR OF INSPECTION on which I invited you to accompany me during this course has come to an end. We must now retrace our steps and review the results achieved by our tour. To this review I propose to devote today's lecture—the concluding lecture of this series.

There stood before us an imposing edifice, accounted one of the most important and durable of contemporary scholarship, the structure of the documentary hypothesis. Those who built and perfected it, and are still busy decorating its halls and completing its turrets, were proud of it. But latterly there have arisen a few among them who have criticized one or another detail of its plan. They have argued, for example, that the design of this hall or that tower should be altered; or that a certain window should be closed or a new one opened in its place, and so on. Yet they have not dared to touch the main lineaments of its pattern. It seemed as though this structure could still endure for generations. *Wisdom has built her house*, as the biblical poet sang, *she has hewn her seven pillars* (Prov. ix 1). Although in the present

instance the house rested on five pillars and not on seven, as did Wisdom of old, yet the five pillars upheld the building in all its strength and glory.

So it seemed. But we did not permit the splendor of the edifice to blind us, nor did we allow the profound impression it apparently made on those who gazed upon it to mislead us; we decided to enter it with open eyes in order to test its stability and to probe the nature and value of the five pillars on which it rested.

We started with the first pillar, the variations in the use of the divine names, and a detailed study of the subject showed us that these changes depended on the primary signification of the Names and on the rules governing their use in life and literature, rules that applied to the entire body of biblical literature and even to post-biblical Hebrew writings, and are rooted in the literary traditions common to the peoples of the ancient East. Since we saw that these factors fully solved the problem of the changing of the divine names—leaving nothing unexplained—on the basis of principles that are radically different from those of the documentary theory, we came to the conclusion that the first pillar is void of substance.

We then approached the second pillar, the inequalities of language and style, of which we examined the most important examples. As a result of this investigation we found that these linguistic disparities, insofar as they really existed, could be explained with the utmost simplicity by reference to the general rules of the language, its grammatical structure, its lexical usages, and its literary conventions—general rules that applied equally to every Hebrew writer and every Hebrew book. We thus saw that in this respect, too, there was no question of different documents, and that the second pillar was only an empty delusion.

Thereafter, we probed the third pillar, the differences in the subject matter of the sections. We made a study of some of the most significant and typical instances of these divergences, and

we learnt that where there were actual discrepancies between the sections, they were not of a kind that could not be found in a homogeneous work. On the contrary, such incongruities were inevitable in a multi-faceted book like the one before us, which contains materials of varied origin and character, and consequently presents its themes from different viewpoints. Hence we concluded that the third pillar was also incapable of withstanding criticism.

After this, we proceeded to the fourth pillar, the duplications and repetitions. We considered classical illustrations of each of these categories, and we clearly saw, as a result of our study, that underlying both of them was a specific intention, which not only was reflected in the final redaction of the sections but was evident even in their original composition. We consequently decided that the fourth pillar was not stronger than the preceding three.

Finally, we turned our attention to the fifth pillar, the composite sections. For the purpose of investigating the conventional theory regarding the division of these sections, we examined in detail one of the most characteristic examples of this analysis, and we realized that this hypothesis relied on evidence that in truth did not point to a composite text; on the contrary, exact study revealed unmistakable and conclusive indications of a close connection between the parts of the section that were considered to belong to different sources. From all this, we judged the last pillar to be likewise without foundation.

I also added that apart from what we observed together in the course of this tour, a more comprehensive and detailed inspection of all the relevant material could be made in my company by those who would study my Italian work *La Questione della Genesi* on this subject. But I believe that the main conclusions that we have stated have been amply demonstrated and made clear to you.

But now what is the principle that emerges from these conclusions?

Since we saw in the first lecture that the whole structure of the documentary hypothesis rested on the five pillars enumerated, and subsequently we found that all these pillars were without substance, it follows that this imposing and beautiful edifice has, in reality, nothing to support it and is founded on air.

However, one of the critics of my book argued that my contentions were not conclusive because the structure of the hypothesis was upheld not by each pillar separately but by their combined strength, and that the views of the exponents of the documentary theory were based on the total effect created by all the evidence taken together. But this stricture is easily answered. If I had only shown that the pillars were weak and that not one of them was a decisive support, then the argument would have been valid; and in the past it was rightly used by the adherents of the dominant theory in rebuttal of the partial criticisms levelled by other scholars against their hypothesis. Although each pillar by itself was unable to carry the weight of the entire building, possibly they could do so unitedly. However, the evidence that I adduced went much further. I demonstrated not that it was *possible* to solve the problems in a different way from that of the documentary theory, but that they *must* be resolved differently, and that it was *impossible* to find a solution on the basis of this doctrine. I did not prove that the pillars were weak or that each one failed to give decisive support, but I established that they were not pillars at all, that they did not exist, that they were purely imaginary. In view of this, my final conclusion that the documentary hypothesis is null and void is justified. If you wish to draw a heavy cart by means of a rope, and the rope you have is too frail for the task, it is certainly of help to twine two or three similar cords together, so that jointly they may be strong enough to draw the wagon; but if you have no real ropes but only figments of the imagination, even a thousand of them will not avail you to move the cart from

its place. The sum of nought plus nought plus nought *ad infinitum* is only nought.

But should you ask what kind of structure in biblical scholarship would be capable of taking the place of the documentary theory, which has not stood the test of our criticism, I must tell you, friends, that to answer this question requires an entire series of lectures, and the answer cannot therefore be given at the end of this lecture. Furthermore, the new edifice has not yet been completed, and it is not possible to describe something that is nonexistent. Nevertheless what I have stated so far already points to certain features in the design of the new building that I visualize.

I have, on several occasions, referred to the fact that there were undoubtedly current among the Israelites, before the Torah was written, numerous traditions relating to the beginning of the world's history and the earliest generations, to the fathers of the Hebrew nation and to what befell them.¹ Without doubt these traditions were far more extensive than those that were actually incorporated in the Torah. In Scripture itself we find a number of passing allusions to matters that are not specifically dealt with. We are told, for instance, at the end of the story of the Garden of Eden: *and at the east of the Garden of Eden He placed the cherubim, and the sword-flame which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life* (Gen. iii 24). Since “the cherubim” and “the sword-flame which turned every way” have the definite article, it is clear that the forefathers of Israel were familiar with them. So, too, the statement with regard to Enoch, *And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him* (v 24), refers to miraculous events, which are not detailed in the passage. Haran is described as *the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah* (xi 29), indicating that Milcah and Iscah were well-known, although Iscah is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible, and concerning Milcah we have only

a few genealogical notices. The following allusion brings out the point even more clearly: *he is Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the asses of Zibeon his father* (xxxvi 24). It would be easy to enlarge still further on the matter and to cite many more verses that testify to the existence of numerous sagas among the Israelites before the Torah came to be written; but those we have mentioned will suffice for the present. We would only add that the rabbinic sages were of the same opinion, for they tell us that, when the children of Israel were in bondage under Pharaoh, they possessed many scrolls in which they found pleasure Sabbath by Sabbath (Shemot Rabba v 22).

It is no daring conjecture, therefore, to suppose that a whole world of traditions was known to the Israelites in olden times, traditions that apparently differed in their origin, nature and characteristics. Some of them preserved memories of ancient events, and some belonged to the category of folklore; some were the product of the Israelite spirit and some contained elements that emanated from pagan culture; a number of them were handed down by the general populace and others were subjected to the close study of the exponents of the wisdom literature; there were stories that were given a poetic and consequently more fixed form, and others that were narrated in prose that was liable to suffer changes in the course of time; there were simple tales and complex, succinct and detailed, lucid and obscure, unpretentious and most sublime. From all this treasure, the Torah selected those traditions that appeared suited to its aims, and then proceeded to purify and refine them, to arrange and integrate them, to recast their style and phrasing, and generally to give them a new aspect of its own design, until they were welded into a unified whole.

Of the elements that were not accepted, some sank slowly into oblivion and were completely lost. But others continued to exist for generations, and although in the course of time their form changed considerably—they were elaborated or emasculated, and

much new material was grafted on them—nevertheless they were preserved in the Jewish national tradition till a late date. The stream of this tradition may be compared to a great and wide-spreading river that traverses vast distances; although in the course of its journey the river loses part of its water, which is absorbed by the ground or evaporates in the air because of the heat of the sun, and it is also increasingly augmented by the waters of the tributaries that pour into it, yet it carries with it, even after it has covered hundreds of miles, some of the waters that it held at the beginning when it first started to flow from its original source. In its upper course, among the high mountains, its waters formed themselves into a divine pool, wondrous and enchanting, in which the blue heavens are reflected: this is our Book of Genesis. In its lower reaches in the plain, it created other delightful pools, like the Book of Jubilees or Bereshith Zuta, and still lower down—Bereshith Rabba.

With the help of this theory we can find a solution to the problems connected with the narratives of the Torah. It also opens for us the way to the solution of the questions appertaining to its statutes. Obviously it is impossible for us now, at the last moment, to touch upon this type of problem, with which we have not dealt at all throughout our lectures. But this at least may be stated: the results of the new hypothesis relative to the pentateuchal stories will serve, in the same way as did the conclusions of the documentary theory concerning these narratives, as a basis and guide for research in the legal sphere.

To this we may add something else at this stage—be it only by way of a cursory reference, since we are nearing the end of this, the final lecture, and there is no time to elaborate—something with regard to the general character of the new edifice that is to be built in place of the old, collapsed structure, to wit, that in two principal aspects, in particular, the second building will differ from the first.

The first will be the tendency to recognize the unity of the Torah—a unity, in truth, that does not exclude, as you have heard, a multiplicity and variety of source materials, or even their reflection in the text before us; but a unity, nonetheless. The Jewish people is one throughout the world, despite the many differences between its members, who belong to various communities, places of abode and groupings; the same applies to books. Suffice it to mention, if I may revert again to the illustration I cited from Italian literature, the *Divina Commedia* of Dante Alighieri. Dante derived his material from the Christian tradition and Greek and Roman culture, from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and the works of the classical poets and thinkers, from contemporary science and popular folklore, from philosophical speculation and the concepts of the populace, from historical records and the living trends of his environment, from the antagonisms between the states and the strife among the factions, from the contemplation of nature and reflection on the mystery of God's existence. The multi-faceted character of the sources from which he drew his material is reflected in his poetry, which contains the dramatic and very graphic descriptions of the "Inferno" and the doctrinal discourses of the "Paradiso," and varies its style and phraseology from passage to passage with the change of subject, using, as occasion requires, harsh words or dulcet tones, sentences sharp as a double-edged sword and others that are sweeter than honey. Despite all this, the poet left on the whole of this variegated material the unmistakable impress of his wonderful spirit, and succeeded in transforming the chaos of the conglomeration of sources into a perfect, unique harmony, and in fusing all the separate elements into a homogeneous work of art. This is the peculiar attribute of great books that what they take from their sources receives in them a new form; it is integrated, knit together and unified as the author deems fit.* It is impossible

* "As the author deems fit." The Hebrew, which is quoted from Jer. xviii 4, literally means: *as it seemed good to the potter to do*.

for the scholar to solve the problem of their sources without paying heed to the added element, since apart from the material deriving from the sources, and transcending it, there exists something that no investigator can probe, the enigma of the soul of the writer and the mystery of the burgeoning of his literary work.

The second characteristic—in this respect, too, a few words will suffice, since I discussed the subject at length in an essay that I wrote in Hebrew seven years ago²—will be the determination of the relative chronology of the Pentateuch and the prophetic writings. The latter did not precede the Torah, as the generally accepted view of our day maintains, but *vice versa*. The precedence is not chronological only, as Yehezkel Kaufman supposes, taking the view that although the Pentateuch was written before the prophetic works, they “are two polarically different domains.” In my view they constitute rather a single sequence. The divergences between them are explicable on the basis of the difference in their content, aim and orientation. The laws and regulations of any association differ in character from the propaganda addresses of its leaders and the critical speeches that are delivered at the meetings of its members; nevertheless both are the product of the same spirit. So, too, one spirit moves the Torah and prophecy. Prophetic literature has its roots in the pentateuchal literature, from which it draws its sustenance. Even the oldest of the “literary prophets,” Amos and Hosea—the prophets of righteousness and love, respectively—at no time proclaim new ideals or concepts or beliefs, and this is true *a fortiori* of those who came after them. The prophets speak of their ideals and concepts and beliefs as of principles with which their listeners are already quite familiar. They rebuke their brethren for not acting according to these tenets, or for not understanding them properly, or for drawing wrong conclusions from them; and they teach them how to conduct themselves in accordance with these ideals, how to understand them, how to draw the necessary inferences from them; but they never claim to have created new

doctrines or laws. Moreover, it is manifest from their prophecies that no such thought occurred to them, nor was it possible for their audiences to have entertained such an idea. When we examine their speeches without any preconceived ideas, we see clearly that their words can be explained only on the premise that prophecy developed on the foundation of the Torah writings.

These, if I do not err, will be the principal features of the new edifice that the biblical scholars of our generation are called upon to erect.

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