



Discovering the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures

Winter 2021, Lecture 1

Sheldon Greaves, Ph.D.

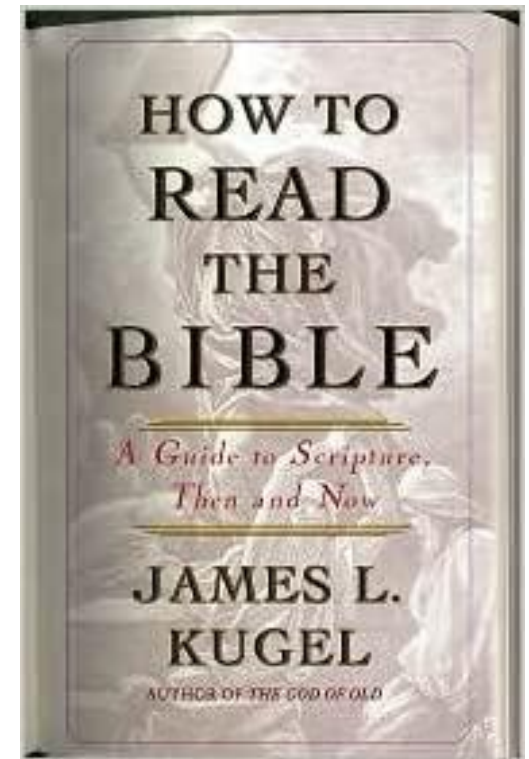
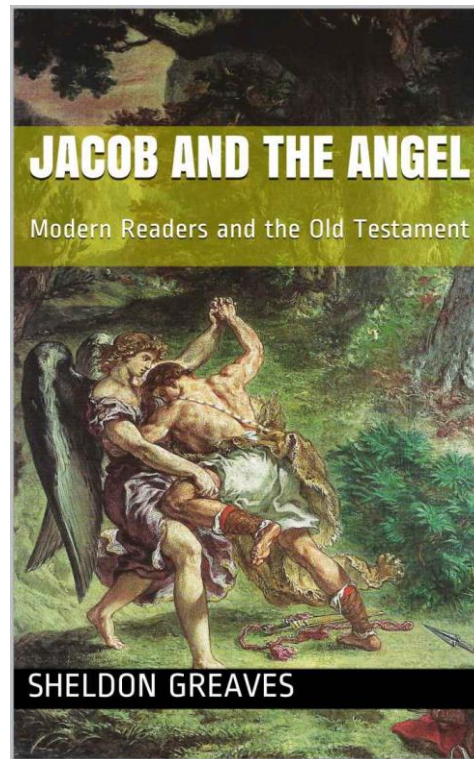
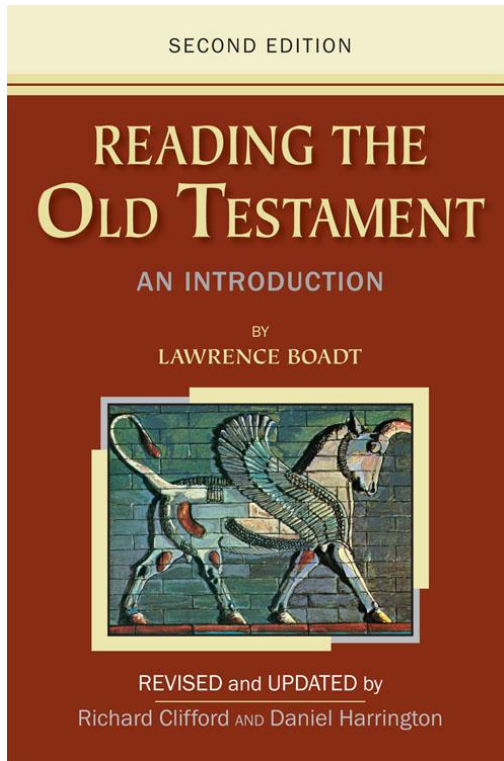
DISCOVERING THE OLD TESTAMENT

WITH SHELDON GREAVES, PH.D.



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Recommended Texts:



Plus the Bible of your choice.

Warning: Weirdness Ahead

- The Old Testament comes out of a very different world
- It reflects a mindset very much unlike that of the modern world
- What you learned in Sunday School may not be adequate preparation for what's really there
- Don't cling too tightly to expectations.





Canaan/Israel



The Ancient Mindset

- Words, names have power
- Gods and demons caused most of what happened in the world
- “Cause and effect” as we understand it was not part of their thinking.

Ancient Mindset, cont...

- Ritual and magic, properly performed, was effective of itself
- The power of the gods came from a magical substrate that anyone with the proper skill and knowledge could access
- Gods were not all--powerful. A human sufficiently competent in magic could compel the gods to obey him or her.

Syncretism

Official religion vs. popular religion. The Old Testament contains elements of both.

“Utterance of
‘Amaryaw.
Say to my lord,
Is it well with you?
I bless you by
Yahweh...
And by his/its (?)
‘asherah.
May
He bless and keep you
And be with my lord.”

Kuntillet Ajrud Inscription



What the Old Testament is *not*:

- Contemporary with events described
- A “systematic theology” or doctrinal exposition
- Internally consistent
- Historical in the modern sense
 - History is used to make a point

The OT is “Incomplete”

- The OT makes reference to a number of books that are lost to us:
 - The Book of Jasher
 - The Book of the Wars of the Lord
 - The Book of Shemaiah the Prophet
 - The Book of Iddo the Seer
 - The Acts of Solomon
 - The Annals of King David
 - The Book of Nathan the Prophet

What the OT is Not (cont.)

- An “evangelical” document designed to win converts
- A “finished guide to living”
- A static text
 - It is a text at the center of an evolving tradition

Tradition: Serpent = Satan?

- Serpent in the Garden is almost universally assumed to be Satan.
- First textual reference linking the two is in *The Wisdom of Solomon*, c. 200 BCE or later.



Not Always to be Taken Literally



What the Old Testament *is*:

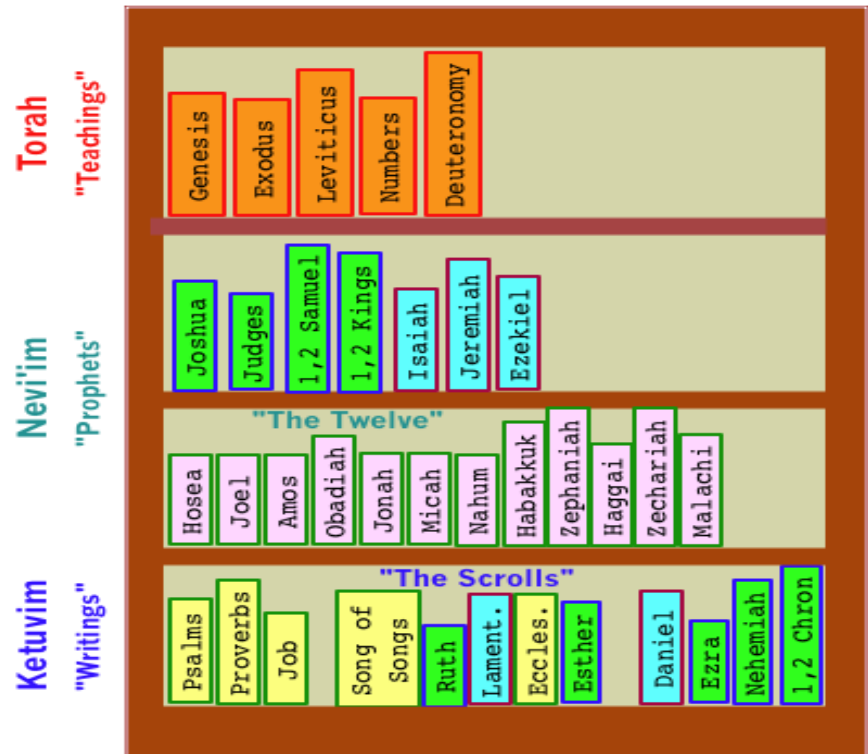
- It is an attempt to understand the failure of Israel to keep God's law and covenant.
- A means to prevent a similar failure in the future.



Organization of the Hebrew Scriptures

- Torah/Law
- Nevi'im/Prophets
- Ketuvim/Writings

Hebrew Scriptures
--The Tanakh: The Jewish Canon--



KEY

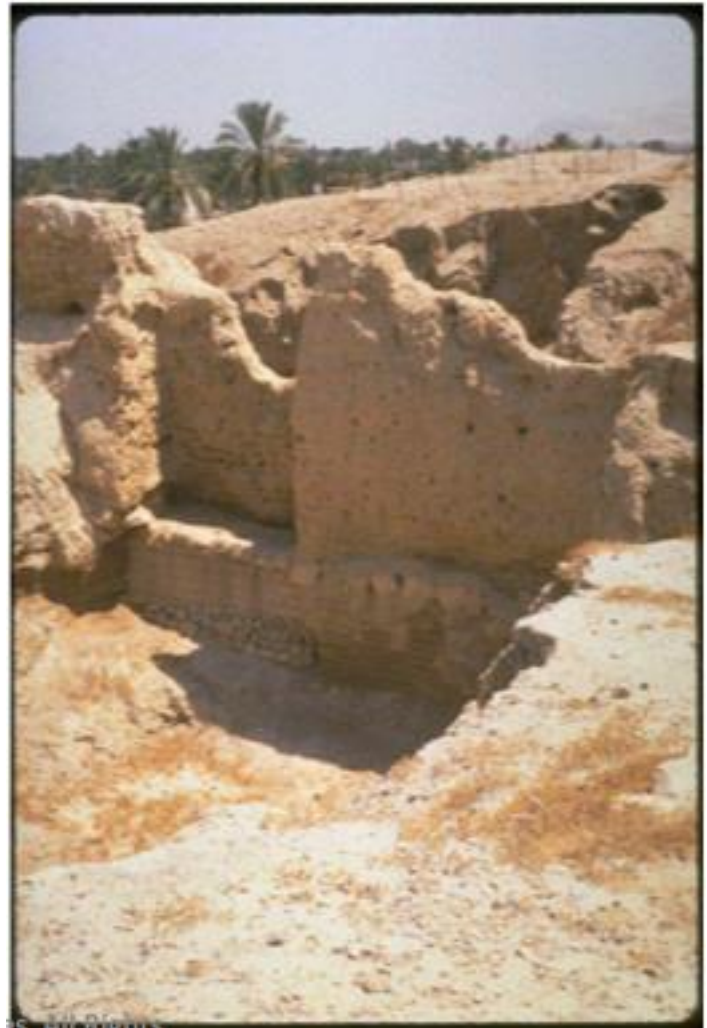
Classification of these books in the Christian canons.

- = Pentateuch
- = the Prophets
- = the Wisdom Books
- = the Major Prophets
- = the Minor Prophets



The City of Jericho

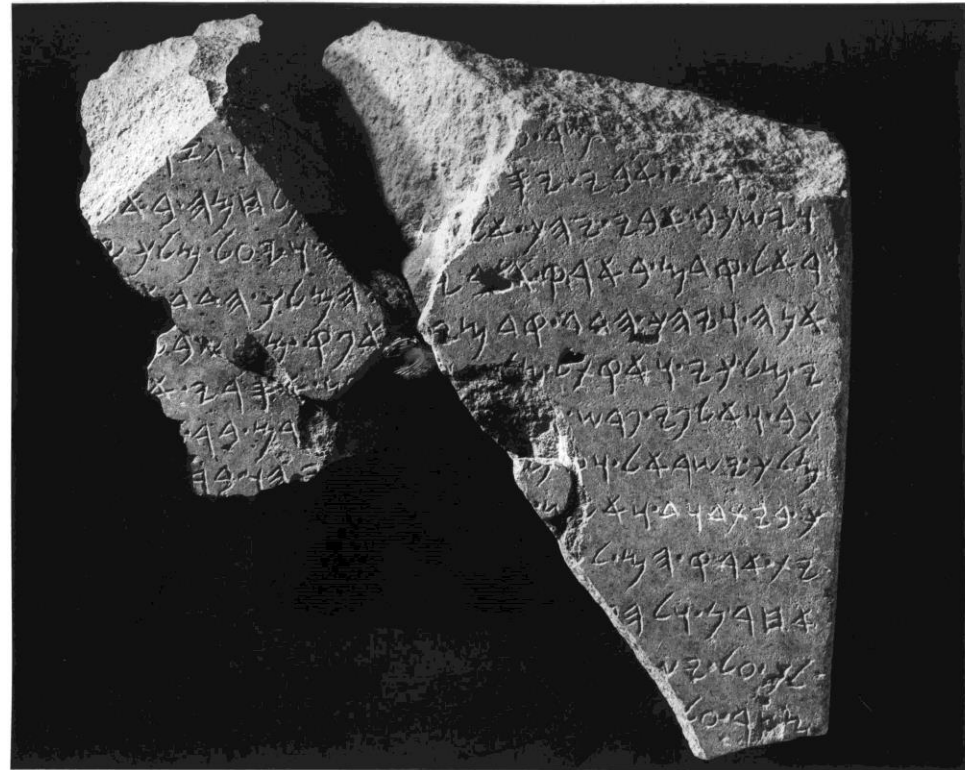
Uninhabited during
the time of the Conquest



Tel Dan Inscription

Discovered in
1993--1994 at Tel Dan
in Northern Israel.

First clear
reference to the
“House of David.”





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Myths as “Models”

“Myths” are stories that convey certain truths about the world, and do so in a way that invites inquiry. They are models that can describe complex situations and personalities.



Jewish and Masoretic Rules for Copying Scripture

- Must be written on the skins of clean animals
- Must be prepared for synagogue use by a Jew only
- Must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals
- Each skin must contain an exact number of columns, which must be equal throughout the entire manuscript
- The length of each column must be between 48 and 60 lines
- The breadth of each column must consist of 30 letters
- The ink must be black only and prepared according to a special recipe that was used only for the copying of scripture
- The original used to make the copy must be authentic and it must not be deviated from by the copyist and the scribe must say each word aloud as he wrote it

Copyists' Rules, continued...

- No word or letter could ever be written from memory, the scribe must always look first at the original before writing his copy
- No word must ever touch another
- Before copying, the scribe must wash his whole body
- The scribe must only write the name of God with a pen newly dipped into the ink
- Each time the scribe came across the Hebrew word for God, he had to wipe his pen clean.
- Should a king address the scribe while writing that name he must take no notice of him.
- If a sheet of parchment had one mistake on it, the sheet was condemned. If there were three mistakes found on any page, the whole manuscript was condemned.
- Every word and every letter was counted. If a letter or a word was omitted, the manuscript was condemned.

The following note is found at the end of a Masoretic Torah manuscript:

Total verses in the Torah:

5,845

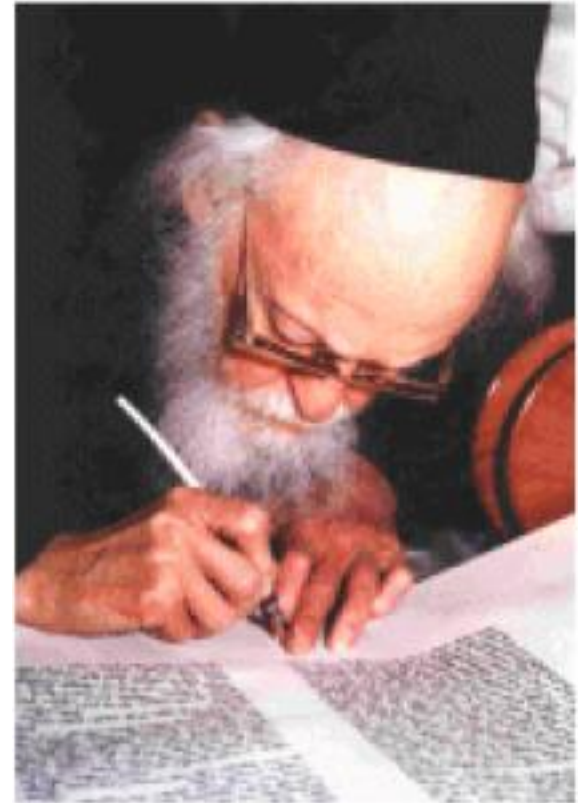
All the Sedarim of the Torah:

167

Total number of words in the
Torah: 97,856

Total number of letters in the
Torah:

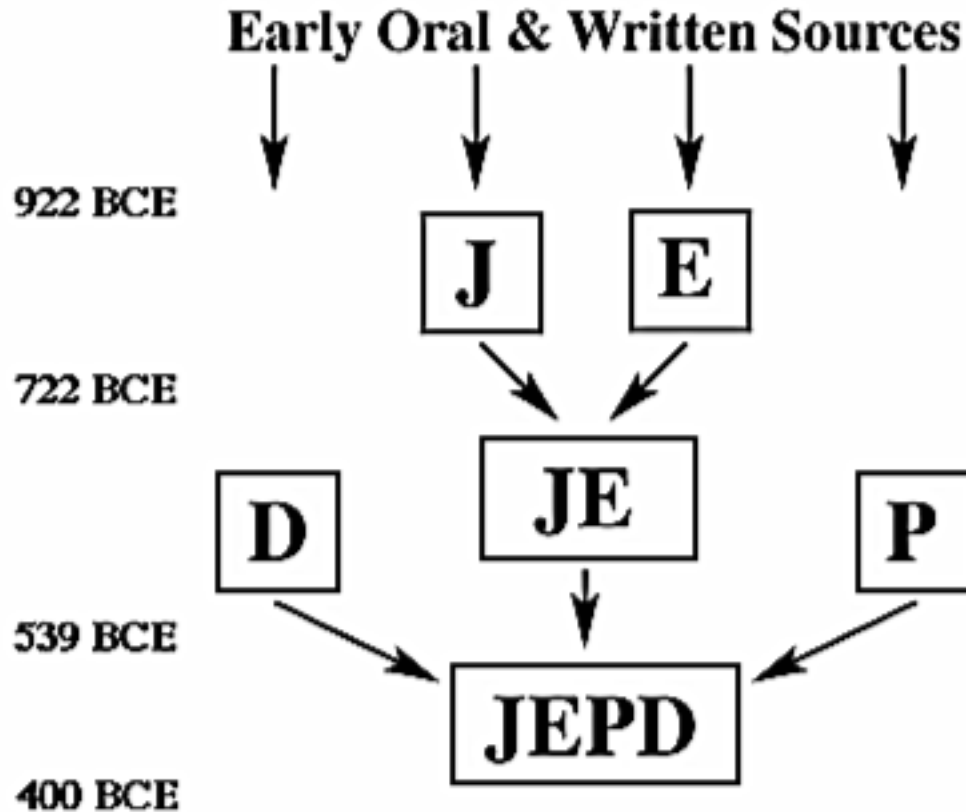
400,945



Textual Witnesses

- Masoretic Hebrew Tradition
 - Earliest texts from 1000 to 1100 CE
- Greek Septuagint
 - Early translation from Hebrew; c. 200 BCE onward
- Samaritan Pentateuch
 - Hebrew
- Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Hebrew, 100 BCE to 70 CE

The Documentary Hypothesis



Covenants of Interest

- Abraham (Genesis 17)
- Sinai/Moses (Exodus 19--24)
- David (2 Samuel 7)

Abraham's Covenant

- Great nation, numerous progeny, a blessing to all humanity
- Royal descendants
- The “all the land of Canaan” as an eternal possession
- Unconditional; no mention of loss of covenant



Covenant of David

- David's son (Solomon) will build the Temple
- Throne of Israel (Jerusalem) established forever
- Solomon will keep the throne, despite his sins
- David's dynasty, throne, and kingdom to last forever.



Covenant of Sinai

- Israelites to be God's chosen people
- Israel to be a "holy nation"
- Stipulations: Law/Decalogue
- Covenant reformulated as a suzerainty treaty.



Treaty/Covenant Forms

- Preamble
- Historical Prologue
- Stipulations/Demands
- Disposition of the Text
- Witnesses
- Blessings and Curses

A Treaty Between Hittite King Mursilis and Duppi--Tessub of Amurru

Preamble

“These are the words of the Sun Mursillis, the great king, the king of Hatti--land, the valiant, the favorite of the storm--god, the son of Suppiluliumas, the great king.”

Treaty Hittite King Mursilis and Duppi-- Tessub of Amurru, continued...

Historical Prologue

“Aziras, your grandfather, and Du--Teshub, your father remained loyal to me as their lord... Since your father had mentioned to me your name with great praise, I sought after you... and put you in the place of your father.”

Treaty Hittite King Mursilis and Duppi-- Tessub of Amurru, continued...

Stipulations

“If anyone utters a word unfriendly to the king or the Hatti--land before you... you shall not withhold his name from the king.”

Treaty Hittite King Mursilis and Duppi-- Tessub of Amurru, continued...

Deposit of Treaty and Public Readings

“A duplicate of this treaty has been deposited before the sun--goddess of Arinna ... in the Mitanni land, a duplicate has been deposited before Teshub... At regular intervals they shall read it in the presence of the king of the Mitanni land and in the presence of the sons of the Hurri land.”

Treaty Hittite King Mursilis and Duppi-- Tessub of Amurru, continued...

List of Witnesses

“We have called the gods to be present, to listen, and to serve as witnesses: the sun--goddess Arinna... the sun--god the lord of heaven, the storm--god, the lord of the Hatti--land... the mountains, the rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, heaven and earth, the winds and clouds.”

Treaty Hittite King Mursilis and Duppi-- Tessub of Amurru, continued...

Blessings and Curses

“Should Duppi--teshub not honor these words of the treaty and oath, may these gods of the oath destroy Duppi--Teshub together with his person, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his land...But if he honors these words... may these gods of the oath protect him with his person, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, and his country.”

Exercise: Find the Treaty!

- Read Joshua, Chapter 24
- Can you find the components of a treaty--covenant pattern?

The Great Crisis: Destruction and Exile

- Fall of Jerusalem in 597 BCE
- Loss of the Holy City and Kingdom
- God did not fight for his people
- Loss of Promised land, destruction of the Temple
- Israel's defining covenants lay in ruins.

