

Readings for Who Wrote the Bible – April, 2016

A. traditional Jewish (and also Christian and Muslim) view on authorship of the Five Books of Moses

***http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_tora.htm

Briefly outlines conflicting opinions and then gives a fundamentalist Christian view on authorship of the Bible

***http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Written_Law.html Read “Origin and Pre-existence.” Also read the first part of Nature, reason and purpose up to the Saaidia Gaon

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/280329/jewish/How-and-When-Was-the-Torah-Written.htm

A chatty description of an (ultra)Orthodox Jewish view on authorship

B. The Documentary Hypothesis:

The academic approach to understanding authorship of the Bible dates back to two 19th century German scholars and is called the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis.

Richard Elliott Friedman is the “go to” author on this topic. We’ll be discussing Friedman at some length, so be sure to read the following article. When you click on the interactive section, you’ll see the biblical story of the flood (Genesis Chapters 8-10) in a color-coded presentation. This is a fascinating and graphic illustration of how different schools of authors contributed to the combined story.

*** <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bible/flood.html>

For even more information, you might want to read Friedman’s book Who Wrote the Bible, which you can find in paperback, as an e-book or at the library. You might also enjoy his website.

www.richardelliottfriedman.com

For opposition to the documentary hypothesis, check out these two sites. You will be surprised at how each of them reaches a conclusion that is the opposite of what you would have guessed.

1. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/09/24/the-documentary-hypothesis.aspx>
2. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidbokovoy/2014/01/the-death-of-the-documentary-hypothesis/>

C. Biblical Minimalism

The “minimalist” trend in biblical study began in the 1990s and is sometimes known as the Copenhagen School because two important figures, Niels Lemche and Thomas Thompson taught there. Simply put, “minimalists” don’t see themselves as a school, but base their platform on the premise that ancient Israel cannot be explained through the Bible, and that Israelite history is more or less a fiction. They are inclined to believe that the Bible was written much later, (6th – 2nd century BCE) from current sources rather than ancient underpinnings and they assert that since Israel “has little in the way of a historical background.....it is a highly ideological construct created by ancient scholars of Jewish tradition in order to legitimize their own religious community....” (Lemche).

Be aware that minimalist positions have frequently been used (or misused) by others in a political context.

***https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Minimalism

***https://www.academia.edu/4177313/Leading_writers_in_archaeology_relating_to_the_Bible

This list will show you the general viewpoint of leading writers (maximalist, moderate or minimalist) should you read them concerning biblical authorship. It is also a good overview.

<http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Minimalism.shtml> The University of Sheffield in England Sheffield is also a “minimalist” center. Davies defends his line of thought.

<http://www.livius.org/articles/theory/maximalists-and-minimalists/> Some conclusions have been contested by further archaeological study.