

THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE

of their kind of the Israelites moving in a westerly direction reverting to the J¹ narrative which he followed with some minor elaboration, up to the departure of the tribes from Kadesh for the conquest of Palestine. At this point, since he was making basic to his history a tradition familiar among the Joseph tribes, of an entry into the land near Jericho, he was compelled to abandon the J¹ account of a movement northward from Kadesh. Instead, he told of the people proceeding to the east of the Jordan. There, after the king of Moab had tried in vain to persuade the seer Balaam to curse Israel—J² is here incorporating into the national tradition a legend, probably of pre-Israelite origin, which had been taken over by the east-Jordan tribes—Moses died and Joshua succeeded him. Under his leadership the Jordan was crossed and the country conquered.

In writing this account of the conquest, J² made use of various local traditions which may well have been preserved, as Martin Noth³⁷ suggests, in the sanctuary at Gilgal. He then reverted once more to the J¹ narrative, and told of the conquest of the south, continuing with the account (considerably elaborated) of the judges, of the rise of the monarchy, of the Davidic kingdom and its disruption, ending his history with I Kings 12:19.

This is the narrative from which, with some minor additions, the J material in the Hexateuch is derived. Written for a definite purpose—to preserve the spiritual unity of Israel from the dangers which threatened it consequent upon the disruption of the kingdom—it resulted from and reflects the political events of the eleventh and tenth centuries. It may accordingly be dated³⁸ about the year 900, one hundred years later than the J¹ document upon which it is largely based.

X. The Tradition of the E Document

The E document begins with the story of Abraham. In the sequence of the events which it records through the patriarchal period, the Exodus, and the Conquest, it is much the same as J², a fact which indicates that it is in some way dependent upon that document. There are, however, certain significant differences of representation. (a) The name Yahweh (the Lord) does not occur in the stories of the patriarchs. Instead E uses Elohim (God). According to four the name Yahweh was unknown until it was revealed to Moses (Exod. 3:14-15). (b) Hebron is never mentioned and Abraham is

³⁷ *Das Buch Exodus* (Göttingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1935), paragraph 100 (Moses' Death), p. 11.

³⁸ The date usually assigned is 850 B.C. See, however, G. A. R. Hunt, *The Bible and the Monks*, pp. 127-128; and G. A. R. Hunt, *The Bible and the Monks*, pp. 127-128.

represented as having his home in Beer-sheba. It may be noted that J² had connected Abraham with this place, though at the same time preserving in a modified form the J¹ tradition which had associated him exclusively with Hebron. (c) The scene of the covenant between the Lord and Israel is not Mount Sinai, which is never mentioned, but Mount Horeb. Nor is it possible to hold that Horeb is merely another name for Sinai, for the implication of the E narrative is that it was situated much nearer to Egypt.³⁹ (d) Kadesh is never mentioned and the work of Moses is associated exclusively with Horeb. (e) The crossing of the Jordan was made not at Jericho, as J² had represented, but at Adamah,⁴⁰ at the junction of the Jabbok and the Jordan. (f) Following the crossing of the Jordan the Israelites went straight to Shechem, where, in accordance with a command given by Moses before his death (Deut. 11:29-30; 27:28; note "on the day when ye shall pass over the Jordan," in 27:2), the covenant with the Lord was renewed (Josh. 8:30-35). It should be noted that neither of the passages here cited is in its original form.⁴¹ Both were tampered with because the Samaritans were appealing to them in support of their claim that Shechem, not Jerusalem, was the central sanctuary referred to in the Deuteronomistic Code (e.g., Deut. 12:5). (g) The conquest of Palestine thus began not at Jericho, but at Shechem—though E says nothing of any fighting at Shechem—and so was a movement from north to south. (h) There are even greater differences in the material now preserved in Judges, and especially in Samson, particularly in the account of the rise of the monarchy. The document seems to continue through the books of Kings.⁴² If, however, it first appeared about 700, as is suggested below, the material following II Kings 17 must be from a second hand.

There can be little doubt that the group whose tradition forms the basis of the E document was of another origin than the group upon whose tradition J² had drawn in his elaboration of J¹. For the one, the holy mount was Horeb; for the other, Sinai. Up to a point, therefore, their history had been different. But in Palestine the Horeb group had come to know the southern tradition of the patriarchs, of Moses, and of the Exodus. This they had gradu-

³⁹ August von Gall, *Alttestamentliche Kultur* (Göttingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1898), pp. 4-22. See also Simpson, *Early Traditions of Israel*, p. 111.

⁴⁰ See Adam C. Welch, *Deuteronomy, the Framework to the Code* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 115-12. Also Simpson, *op. cit.*, pp. 287, 297, 316, 318.

⁴¹ See Martin Noth, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarvölker*, p. 107; and Martin Noth, *Die Entstehung des Hexateuchs*, p. 24-67.

⁴² See H. Gressmann, *Das Buch der Könige*.

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ally made their own as they had come to have their part in the patriarchal relationship with the Lord into which Israel had been taken. The result of this fusion of the southern tradition with their own remembered history would be a tradition, preserved at some point in the north—probably Shechem, in view of the unique position accorded to that sanctuary in E—which differed markedly both in form and content from the tradition created by J² and which, it may be assumed, had become (so to speak) the official history of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim.

XI. The Purpose of E

It seems unlikely that this new and composite tradition would, before it was committed to writing, have followed the J² order of events as closely as the E document does. That document would thus seem to have been written by one who had only recently come into contact with the earlier narrative, and had believed it to be inaccurate. Certainly it did not present the national tradition as he was familiar with it. He therefore undertook the task of recasting it to bring it into closer agreement with the tradition of Shechem. At the same time, he utilized the opportunity thus offered to soften some of the anthropomorphisms of J, and to remove certain tales which the conscience of the people, as it had developed over a period of some two centuries, now found to be morally objectionable (cf. J²'s treatment of J¹ in this respect).

It can scarcely be supposed that the author was motivated purely by an abstract concern for historical accuracy. Such an interest would have been impossible in his age and environment. He was, rather, dealing with a crisis in the life of the nation, and it seems probable that this was the fall of the northern kingdom.

The fact is sometimes overlooked that the destruction of the state, disastrous as it was, released the religious leaders of the north from certain responsibilities which had been growing more and more intolerable, and left them free to reconstitute the community on a religious basis—free to begin the transformation of North Israel into a church. Conscious of their common heritage, they will have at least attempted a rapprochement with the leaders in the south. How far they succeeded must remain doubtful. The priesthood of Jerusalem—the officials of an "established church"—may not, at the moment, have been particularly interested. It may indeed have been their intransigent refusal to meet the northerners halfway that led to the writing of the E document with its disregard of Kadesh and Hebron, and its attribution

to Jacob of an importance both political and religious,⁴³ equal to that of Abraham.

The E document that appears to have been written about the year 700⁴⁴ and to be the result of, and to reflect, the political events of the eighth century.

XII. The Conflation of J and E

When Jerusalem fell in 586, the religious leaders of the south found themselves in much the same position, and were confronted with much the same problems, as the northerners had been in 722. Once more a rapprochement was attempted; this time, it would seem, with greater success. The existence of two mutually contradictory histories of the nation was an obstacle to the desired unity between the north and the south, so the two documents, J and E, were conflated in such a way as to preserve the salient features of each. On the whole, however, the point of view of J predominated. This new document, JE, became the "official" history of Israel.

XIII. The Origin and Purpose of Deuteronomy

The opinion that Deuteronomy in whole or in part is identical with the book of the Law found in the temple in the reign of Josiah (II Kings 22:8) was first advanced by Jerome, and again by Thomas Hobbes in the *Leviathan* some twelve hundred years later.⁴⁵ In the course of the nineteenth century, however, this identification became almost an axiom of Hexateuchal criticism. It has, nevertheless, been called into question in the past twenty-five years by Adam C. Welch,⁴⁶ Theodor Oestricher,⁴⁷ Gustav Holscher,⁴⁸ and others.

There can be no doubt that the redactor who put the account of Josiah's reformation (II Kings 22:3-23:25) into its final form intended to, and did, convey the impression that it was a carrying out of the provisions of Deuteronomy. Holscher⁴⁹ has shown, however, that this account is not a unity, but is an elaboration of a

⁴³ See Esseg, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ The date usually assigned to E is 750. But the historical situation at that time seems to have held nothing which would account for the writing of a document departing so markedly and deliberately from the J tradition. Holscher (*Das Buch der Könige*, pp. 295-6), it may be noted, believes that it was written during the Exile.

⁴⁵ See J. Edwin Carpenter and George Harwood, *The Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902), pp. 35, 36.

⁴⁶ *The Code of Deuteronomy* (London: Oliver Clarke & Co., 1921).

⁴⁷ *Das deuteronomische Grundgesetz*, Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925.

⁴⁸ *Komposition und Aufbau des Deuteronomiums*, Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XI (1922), 141-256.

⁴⁹ *Das Buch der Könige*, pp. 296-7.