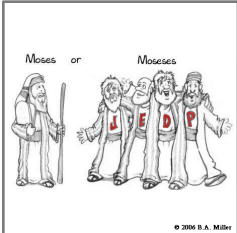


Class 3a  
**Crafting Our Texts:**  
 Literary Issues



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## Outline

- Fact & Fiction: The Nature of Biblical Literature
  - Modernist vs. fundamentalist views
  - A postmodern view
- Inspiration & Revelation
  - A fundamentalist view
  - A postmodern view
- Canon & Community: How Biblical Meaning is Made

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## Fact & Fiction

### The Nature of Biblical Literature

- Modernist vs. fundamentalist views

Modernist	Fundamentalist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bible is a product of its history</li> <li>• It reflects the situations and perspectives of its authors</li> <li>• Much of it is myth and poetry</li> <li>• For these reasons, there are contradictions and what we, in our context, would call errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bible is history or fact</li> <li>• It is the word of God and so lies outside history</li> <li>• Any contradictions are in <i>our</i> minds; the text is inerrant (without error)</li> </ul>

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## Fact & Fiction

### The Nature of Biblical Literature

- Modernist vs. fundamentalist views
  - Bible as fiction, but our histories are fact vs Bible as fact
- A postmodern view
  - The idea of facts outside of fiction or rhetoric—that is, outside of language—is an illusion of language itself.
    - (Loughlin, *Postmodern Scripture*, 312)
  - Biblical books are fictions
    - Faithfully rendering characters to render our own possible identities
    - Faithfully rendering the *truth* of events, though not necessarily all the *facts* of those events (truth here is *perceived meaning*)
  - Modernist histories of the Bible are “fiction” as well; they embed the perspectives of *their* authors

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## Inspiration & Revelation

- A fundamentalist view
  - The Bible is the Word of God, understood as God’s actual words
  - Divine dictation model
  - for some Orthodox Jews, Moses as scribe of Torah
- A postmodern view
  - The Bible is a thoroughly human product
  - Revelation and inspiration happen in every semiotic encounter with the text (author, scribe tradent, reader/hearer) – they are ongoing actions, not static deposits of words

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## Canon & Community

### How Biblical Meaning Is Made

- The individual or community names its experience
- They reshape the experience in light of later experience; this keeps the tradition alive
- At some point, they may determine which experiences to regard as most important (canon)
- They continue to interpret that canon
  - Sometimes within the books themselves
  - In the arrangement of the canon
  - In later readings of that canon

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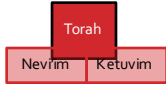
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### The Jewish Canon



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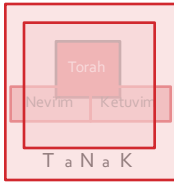
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### The Jewish Canon

Ongoing Interpretation



Mishnah

Talmuds  
Yerushalmi (Jerusalem)  
Bavli (Babylonian)

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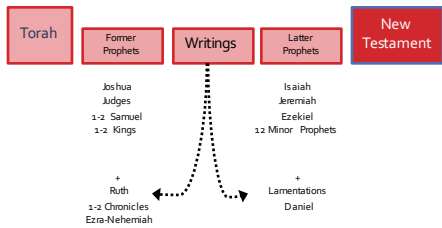
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### The Christian Canon

How Christians Change the Jewish Canon




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## The Christian Canon

### How Christians Change the Jewish Canon

Torah

Former Prophets

Writings

Latter Prophets

New Testament

<p>Joshua Judges 1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings Ruth 1-2 Chronicles Ezra-Nehemiah</p>	<p>Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel 12 Minor Prophets Lamentations Daniel</p>
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Principles of reorganization:

- chronological and linear arrangement of Torah and former prophets points to the fulfillment of Israel's history in Jesus
- prophets who "predict" Jesus are placed right before his story

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## Affordances of Written Texts

### Word-Play

Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." 19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one shall be called Woman  
for out of Man this one was taken."

זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי  
ובשר בשרי  
כי יקרא אשה  
כי מאיש לקחה זאת:

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## Affordances of Written Texts

- Repetition of scenes (type scenes/conventions)
- Withholding of motive (characterization)
- Subtle shifts in vocabulary
- Intertextuality (evocation of other literature)

*These add richness and nuance to the text*

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### How Scholars Study the Biblical Text

#### Historical Criticism

The Historical-critical approach to scripture seeks to determine

- the context in which particular biblical passages originated
- the way in which those passages developed, changed, and were transmitted, and
- their relationship to the intellectual and religious conditions of their times

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### How Scholars Study the Biblical Text

#### The Composition of Torah: The Documentary Hypothesis

- Evidence
  - The Torah tells the story from creation to the Exodus, bringing the Jews to the verge of the promised land by the end of Deuteronomy
  - But in the Torah, there are often multiple, contradicting versions of the same stories
- Hypothesis
  - 4 documents with different versions of shared stories were written at different times and were gradually merged to create the books of Torah (= Genesis through Deuteronomy)




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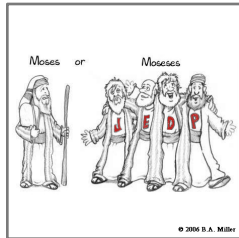
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### How Scholars Study the Biblical Text

#### The Composition of Torah: The Documentary Hypothesis




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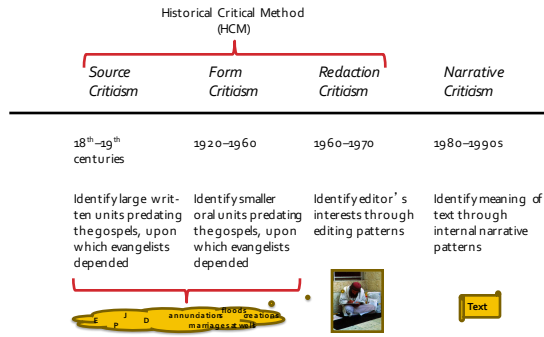
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# How Scholars Study the Biblical Text

## Historical Criticism



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