





Moses and the Composition of the Pentateuch

How We Got the Bible

Winter Sessions 2025–26



General Observations

- God can use any means he wants to produce his authoritative word.



General Observations

- God can use any means he wants to produce his authoritative word.
- There is much about the composition of the Bible that we simply do not know.



General Observations

- God can use any means he wants to produce his authoritative word.
- There is much about the composition of the Bible that we simply do not know.
- Our trust in the Bible is a matter of lordship.



General Observations

- God can use any means he wants to produce his authoritative word.
- There is much about the composition of the Bible that we simply do not know.
- Our trust in the Bible is a matter of lordship.
- If what we believe about the Bible is true, then the things it says about its own authorship serve as anchor points for what we should believe.



Where Moses “Wrote” Something



Where Moses “Wrote” Something

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

Exodus 17:14



Where Moses “Wrote” Something

And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Exodus 24:4



¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

Exodus 32:15–16



Where Moses “Wrote” Something

Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the Lord, and these are their stages according to their starting places.

Numbers 33:2



Where Moses “Wrote” Something

Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.

Deuteronomy 31:9



Where Moses “Wrote” Something

So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel.

Deuteronomy 31:22



Where Moses “Wrote” Something

- Enmity with Amalek: Exodus 17:14
- The Book of the Covenant: Exodus 24:4
- The Wilderness Itinerary: Numbers 33:2
- Deuteronomy’s legal content, curses, and blessings:
Deuteronomy 31:9
- The Song of Moses: Deuteronomy 31:32



Additional Places Where Moses Receives Divine Revelation



Additional Places Where Moses Receives Divine Revelation

- The first-person account of Deuteronomy 1–4.



Additional Places Where Moses Receives Divine Revelation

- The first-person account of Deuteronomy 1–4.
- Introductory formulas in legal texts (e.g., the LORD said to Moses ...”)



Additional Places Where Moses Receives Divine Revelation

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent.



Additional Places Where Moses Receives Divine Revelation

⁹ When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. ¹¹ Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Exodus 33:7–11



New Testament Evidence

- Moses gave us the law.



New Testament Evidence

- Moses gave us the law.
- Something new: “Moses”/“law of Moses” = Torah/Pentateuch



New Testament Evidence

- Moses gave us the law.
- Something new: “Moses”/“law of Moses” = Torah/Pentateuch
- Two interesting passages



New Testament Evidence

But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Luke 20:37



New Testament Evidence

Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath

John 7:22



Questions





The Plausibility of Moses as Author/Source

The Plausibility of Moses as Author/Source

- Scribes



The Code of Hammurabi, ca. 1750 BC



The Plausibility of Moses as Author/Source

- Scribes
- The Egyptian “royal school” (*k3p*)



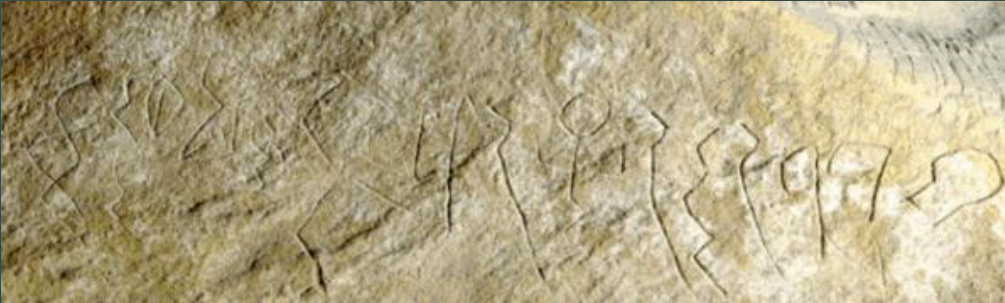
The Plausibility of Moses as Author/Source

- Scribes
- The Egyptian “royal school” (*k3p*)
- Biblical Hebrew, a Northwest Semitic, alphabetic language



The Plausibility of Moses as Author/Source

Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions



Wadi el-Hol

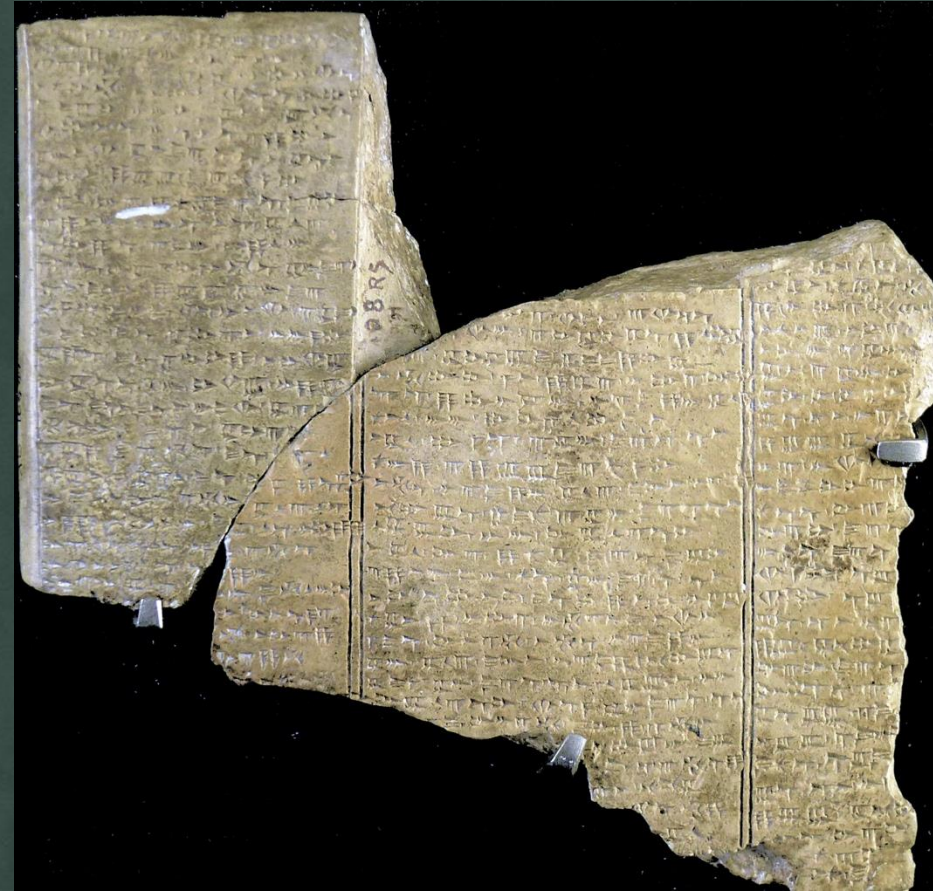


Serabit el-Khadem



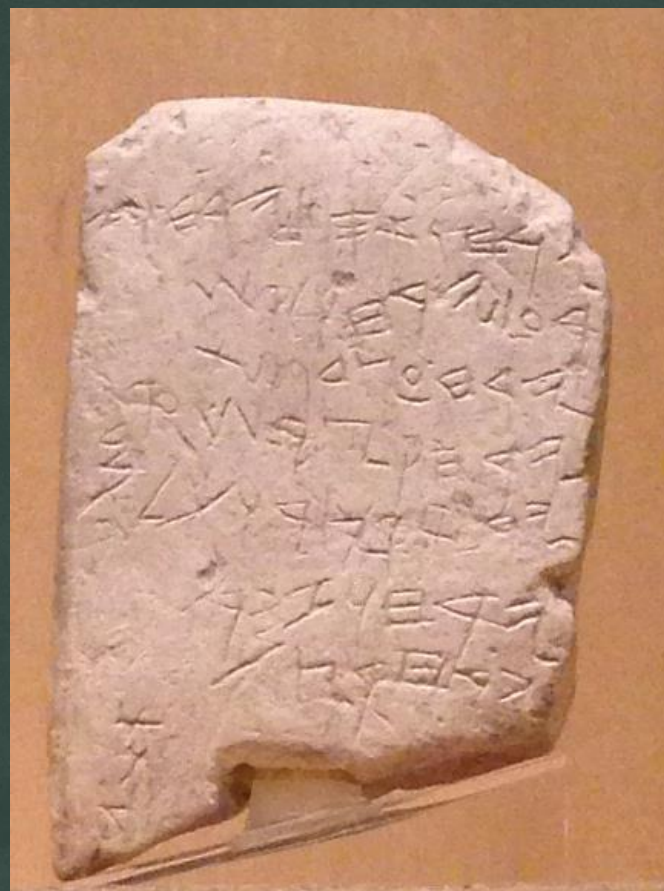
The Plausibility of Moses as Author/Source

Ugaritic Alphabetic Cuneiform



The Baal Cycle

Phoenician-Style Hebrew Letters

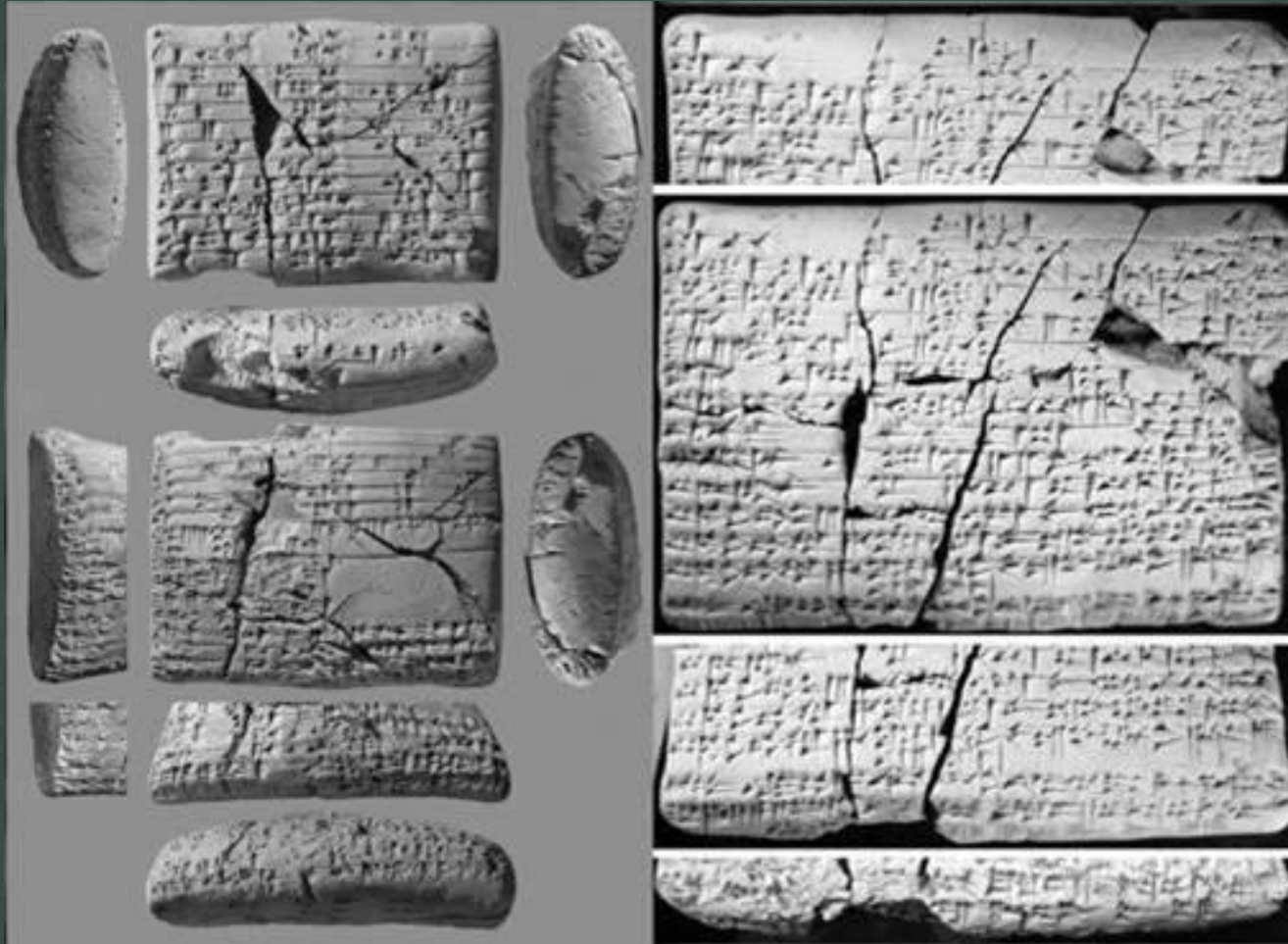


The Gezer Calendar



Updating the Hebrew Language

Amorite Akkadian Tablets





Scholarly Doubts about Moses



Scholarly Doubts about Moses

- Parts obviously written after Moses.



Scholarly Doubts about Moses

- Parts obviously written after Moses.
- Biblical criticism and the Documentary Hypothesis.



Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis

- J: The Yahwist (ca. 950 BC)



Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis

- J: The Yahwist (ca. 950 BC)
- E: The Elohist (ca. 850 BC)



Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis

- J: The Yahwist (ca. 950 BC)
- E: The Elohist (ca. 850 BC)
- D: Deuteronomy (ca. 620 BC)



Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis

- J: The Yahwist (ca. 950 BC)
- E: The Elohist (ca. 850 BC)
- D: Deuteronomy (ca. 620 BC)
- P: Priestly (ca. 570–450 BC)



Some Responses

- We should be concerned with the accuracy of the Bible, not its dates.
- There is very little consensus in the field.
- Dating the sources is fraught with problems.



Some Responses

- We should be concerned with the accuracy of the Bible, not its dates.



Some Responses

- We should be concerned with the accuracy of the Bible, not its dates.
- There is very little consensus in the field.



Some Responses

- We should be concerned with the accuracy of the Bible, not its dates.
- There is very little consensus in the field.
- Dating the sources is fraught with problems.



Some Responses

- We should be concerned with the accuracy of the Bible, not its dates.
- There is very little consensus in the field.
- Dating the sources is fraught with problems.
- The problem of diversity and unity.



Some Responses

- We should be concerned with the accuracy of the Bible, not its dates.
- There is very little consensus in the field.
- Dating the sources is fraught with problems.
- The problem of diversity and unity.
- Ignoring (stronger) evidence for earlier dating.



Questions