connected with the Hebrew OT. Stripping away all Qur’anic terminology, Wansbrough speaks instead of *Haggadic exegesis, Halakhic exegesis,* and *Deutungbedürfnisse.* Everyone also refers to the canonization of the Qur’an, and the codices of Ibn Mas‘ūd. The vast majority of Muslims live in total ignorance of this jargon. While the hypotheses of Jeffery, Goldziher and others have been dealt with and dismissed, we have yet to fully gauge the motives behind such efforts. A sketch of early Judeo-Christian history, coupled with the histories of the Old and New Testaments, will facilitate a more thorough awareness of these scholars’ mindset and lead to a detailed consideration of Western objectives regarding the Qur’an.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

EARLY HISTORY OF JUDAISM: A BRIEF LOOK

Israel was in the thought of God before the creation of the Universe (Gen. R. 1:4) that heaven and earth were only created through the merit of Israel. As the world could not exist without the winds, so is it impossible for the world to exist without Israel.\(^1\)

In examining the Scriptures it is best to proceed chronologically, beginning with the religious and political history of Judaism. The traditional Jewish accounts may well shock some, for this is a history peppered with idolatry and pagan ritual despite the best intervention of the Israelite prophets, like a story of moths drawn incessantly to a flame no matter how many times they are swatted away. By recounting the following episodes from the Old Testament (OT), my objective is to show that neither the prophets nor their advocacy of the Oneness of God were favorably regarded by the earliest Jews. This will segue into a brief history of the kings of Israel and Judah and their idolatrous lives. From this chapter the reader will leave with a taste of the circumstances under which the OT, laboring for many centuries, emerged bruised and battered and with no hope of being faithfully preserved.\(^3\)

1. Jewish History Prior to Establishing the Kingdom

Birth of Ishmael and Isaac, sons of Abraham

1. Now Sarai Abram’s wife bore him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.
2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from beasts: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.


\(^2\) The reader must take into account that the majority of historical incidents mentioned in this chapter have either a direct bearing on the OT, or show how unfavorable the prevalent religious and moral practices were to the OT’s intact survival. My purpose is not to provide a comprehensive history of the Israelites, for the interested reader can easily find references that detail their military excursions, political allegiances etc.

\(^3\) This is how the name appears in Genesis, with ‘Abram’ changing to ‘Abraham’ upon his conversation with God.
3 And Sarai Abram’s wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.
15 And Hagar bore Abram a son: and Abram called his son’s name, which Hagar bore, Ishmael. 4
15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.
16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.
17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?
18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!
19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. 5

Jacob deceives his father
After years of childlessness Isaac’s wife, Rebekah, bore twin sons. Esau was born first from the womb and was cherished by his father, while she remained partial to Jacob. One day Esau returned from a hunting trip faint from hunger and begged Jacob for some red lentil soup, which he refused to offer him until he had relinquished his rights as the firstborn. 6 On a future occasion Rebekah and Jacob conspired together to trick Isaac through an elaborate ruse involving fake hair; mistaking Jacob’s hand for Esau’s, Isaac blessed him instead of his elder brother by saying, “Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren.” 7

Father-in-law cheats son-in-law
When Esau threatened revenge because of the stolen blessing, Rebekah sent Jacob away to her brother Laban in Haran that he might marry his cousin, the beautiful Rachel. On arriving Jacob became enraptured with her and eagerly sought her hand, 8 but was first asked to work seven years for her father before his matrimonial dreams could be realized. Seven years later he did marry, but after spending the wedding night with his bride, enveloped in darkness, he was horrified to discover the next morning that his father-in-law had substituted for Rachel her plainer sister Leah.

A week later he was properly married to Rachel, but only after undertaking to work for his uncle another seven years. When Jacob finally left, his entourage included two wives, two concubines, eleven sons and one daughter. 9 In leaving Laban’s house Rachel had stolen her father’s household gods and Laban, pursuing and catching up with them, furiously searched the tents; but Rachel had quickly concealed the gods in a saddlebag upon which she sat and he returned empty-handed. 10 So this distinguished lineage, though already in custody of God’s Covenant, prized their household gods most particularly.

Jacob wrestles with God
24 Afterwards, Jacob went back and spent the rest of the night alone. A man came and fought with Jacob until just before daybreak.
25 When the man saw that he could not win, he struck Jacob on the hip and threw it out of joint.
26 They kept on wrestling until the man said, “Let go of me! It’s almost daylight.” “You can’t go until you bless me,” Jacob replied.
27 Then the man asked, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered.
28 The man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have wrestled with God and with men, and you have won. That’s why your name will be Israel.” 11

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4 Genesis Ch. 16. King James Version (KJV).
5 KJV. Genesis Ch. 17. For a discussion on the corruption and interpolation in Gen. Ch.17, refer to pp. 292 - 97.
6 Josephus, pp. 82-83.
7 Genesis 25:29-34.
8 Genesis 27:1-29.
10 Genesis Ch. 31.
11 Genesis 31:19-35.
12 Contemporary English Version (CEV), Genesis 32:24-28. In Hebrew one meaning of “Israel” is “a man who wrestles with God” (see the footnote for Genesis 32:28).
to be His apostle, to return to his birthplace and deliver the Israelites from bondage.\textsuperscript{21}

The Lord ‘advises’ Israelites to steal their neighbor’s jewels
Having entreated Pharaoh to release the Israelites with no ostensible success, Moses and Aaron then stood witness to a kaleidoscope of plagues which ravaged Egypt. “And the Lord said unto Moses, yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt. Afterwards he will let you go hence….. Speaks now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.”\textsuperscript{22}

The Israelites obeyed Moses and sought from their Egyptian neighbors trinkets of gold, silver and other valuables, and God softened their neighbors’ hearts such that they gave them whatever the Israelites desired. “In this way they carried away the wealth of the Egyptians when they left Egypt.”\textsuperscript{23} This passage, which legitimizes the taking of other’s wares, implies that all such valuables are the rightful property of God’s chosen people alone. In fact Deuteronomy 33:2,

\textit{indicates that the Almighty offered the Torah to the Gentile nations also, but since they refused to accept it. He withdrew His ‘shining’ legal protection from them, and transferred their property rights to Israel, who observed His Law. A passage of Habakkuk is quoted as confirming this claim.}\textsuperscript{24}

**Number of Israelites at the Exodus estimated at 2,000,000**
Moses and Aaron, one year after the Exodus, counted the total number of men who were at least twenty years old and of fighting strength. Their tally yielded 603,550 Israelites.\textsuperscript{25} The Levite tribe was not included in this figure, and neither were females of all ages, old men, and any young men under twenty. Allowing for these groups as well we can infer that — according to the OT — the total number taking part in the Exodus probably exceeded two million Jews. I will leave it to the imaginative reader to surmise how a tribe of seventy people, freshly arriving in Egypt, were able to multiply in excess of two million within a mere 215 years, especially when their male newborns were being systematically killed for the previous eight decades. Such is the OT as it rests in our hands today.

\textsuperscript{21} Exodus Ch.1:4.
\textsuperscript{22} Exodus 11:1-2.
\textsuperscript{23} CEV, Exodus 12:36.
\textsuperscript{24} The Jewish Encyclopedia, Article ‘Genocide’, vol. 5, p. 620. Contrast this with Prophet Muhammad’s conduct towards the very members of Qurash who plotted his assassination, and his request to ‘All to stay behind and return all the valuables they had entrusted him with. See p. 30.
\textsuperscript{25} Numbers 1:20-46.
The stone tablets and the golden calf
Moses ascended the mount and supplicated there for forty days. “At the end of that time God gave him "two tables of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."26

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.
2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.
3 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf; and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
4 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.27

This is the classic tale of ingratitude in the OT, the tale of the Israelite’s disloyalty towards the One Who had only recently put an end to their shackles and parted the sea for their escape. On the verge of punishing them for their insubordination, the Almighty at the last moment "repented of the evil which He thought to do unto his people."28 This notion too, of God repenting like some common sinner, is yet another of the OT’s unfathomable images.

Wandering in the wilderness
In the wilderness the Jews frequently tried to stone Moses. At the same time Aaron and Miriam spoke out against their brother, their jealousy of him reaching its pinnacle.

The Lord was angry at this attack, and Miriam was stricken with leprosy. Moses prayed that she be forgiven, and she recovered after seven days of isolation in the desert outside the camp. Oddly enough Aaron was not punished—perhaps because of his priestly role.29

Levite Korah also instigated a revolt and spoke out “against Moses and Aaron, together with Dathan and Abiram and two hundred and fifty leaders.”30

Towards the close of these wanderings Moses assembled the congregation near the Jordanian boundary and delivered a detailed proclamation, giving them the Laws and the constitution of the government.31

Moses told these priests and leaders: Each year the Israelites must come together to celebrate the Festival of Shelters at the place where the Lord chooses to be worshiped. You must read these laws and teachings to the people at the festival every seventh year, the year when loans do not need to be repaid. Everyone must come—men, women, children, and even the foreigners who live in your towns. And each new generation will listen and learn to worship the Lord their God with fear and trembling and to do exactly what is said in God’s Law.32

There is no evidence that this practice of quoting the laws every seventh year took place, partly due to the turbulent political circumstances which soon engulfed the Israelites.33 Also, as we shall see in the next chapter, all the books ascribed to Moses were in fact written several hundred years later.

Only a short while afterwards Moses passed away, as had most of the generation that fled across the sea four decades earlier. With Joshua inheriting leadership, he resumed the march towards Canaan and led them across the Jordan River to victories over Jericho and other towns.34

The Time of the Judges—the Ark falls into enemy hands (c. 1200-1020 B.C.)
The elders of Israel decreed that the Ark35 be removed from the temple of Shiloh, to lead the Israelite army in its assault on the Philistines. But the Ark fell into enemy hands and soon most of the Israelite cities, including the temple of Shiloh, were reduced to ruins.36

30 Numbers 16:3.
31 Josephus, Antiq., Book 4, Ch.8, p. 114 to the end of the chapter. The speech concludes on p. 123.
32 CTV, Deuteronomy 31:10-13, p. 237.
33 See p. 266.
35 According to Deuteronomy 31:1-5, the Ark contained the second pair of stone tablets on which God had again chiseled the Ten Commandments—"It has been suggested that the original Ark was a box containing sacred stones in which the Decalogue was conceived to dwell" [Dictionary of the Bible, p. 55].
36 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 434.
2. Jewish History After Establishing the Kingdom

Saul's reign (c. 1020-1000 B.C.)

Given that the Israelites' hereditary government had proved ineffectual in resisting the Philistines, the prophet Samuel assisted in establishing a hereditary monarchy. Saul became its first beneficiary, ascending to the throne despite Samuel's possible misgivings.37

David's reign (c. 1000-962 B.C.)

Though expelled from Saul's court David had always demonstrated remarkable qualities of leadership and, when Saul fell at Gilboa, David declared himself king.38

Bathsheba's story is worth recounting: David once spied an exquisite woman bathing in the moonlight. After inquiry he learned her to be Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, a Hittite officer on active service at the front. David discreetly sent for her and made love to her, through which she became pregnant. To avoid an impending scandal he recalled her husband from the front at Bathsheba's request, that he might go to his wife. But as Uriah spent his leave with friends instead of going to her, David plotted to have him killed in the battlefield. This being done, he soon married her. The child she bore did not survive, but later she bore him a second son, Solomon, and was instrumental in appointing him king.39

Solomon's reign (c. 962-931 B.C.)

Solomon's lavish lifestyle was a drastic departure from his father's simple ways and, according to biblical legend, he was not content with marrying the daughters of his tributaries for he filled his harem with other women besides. The claim made in 1 Kings 11:3, that he possessed 700 wives and 300 concubines, is likely an exaggeration though.40 He built the Temple in Jerusalem on a massive scale,41 dedicating it to the singular worship of

Early History of Judaism: A Brief Look

Yahweh.42 Simultaneously though he erected pagan shrines for his numerous heathen wives; "he himself, moreover, is said to have been influenced by his wives to pay some tokens of respect to their gods, while he remained essentially a Yahwist".43

i. The Divided Kingdoms

Following his death, Solomon's realm was splintered into the twin states of Judah and Israel.

When the kingdom was divided... [the] empire came to an end. The time of her political glory had been less than a century, and her empire disappeared, never to return. The nation, being divided and its parts often warring with one another, could not easily become again a power of importance.44

A. Kings of Israel

Here I will briefly point out some of the kings of Israel, and offer the reader a taste of the political and religious anarchy which seized that country.

1. Jeroboam I, son of Solomon (931-910 B.C.)

The first king of Israel after the splitting of the monarchy. As people were discontent with Solomon's taxation policies, he had started plotting against him through encouragement from the priest Ahijah. Caught and condemned to death by his own father, he fled to Egypt and there received political asylum. Solomon's other son, Rehoboam, ascended to the throne on his father's death, and at this point the northern tribes decided to secede and establish the separate kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam happily abandoning his life in exile to become its first ruler.45

Conscious of religion's central role in his nation, Jeroboam feared that his subjects might travel to the southern kingdom of Judah to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem, at Solomon's 'temple. To curb this possibility he had to weaken their sights away from the Temple, so he "revived the traditional sanctuaries at Bethel near his southern border and Dan in the extreme north, and set up golden calves in them, as Aaron had done in the desert".46

37 ibid, p. 434.
38 2 Samuel 2:4.
39 Who's Bible, pp. 65-66, 93. Islam denounces this tale as a brazen lie. S.J. McKenzie, a professor of the Hebrew Bible at Rhodes College in Memph, Tennessee, claims that David was a tyrannical Middle Eastern despdt who ascended to the throne through a campaign of terror, violence and mass murder. He was never a shepherd, McKenzie continues, and almost certainly had no part to play in God's death. [Jonathan Thompson, "Biblic's King David exposed as despdt who did not kill God'sh", 'The Independent', London, 19 Nov, 2000]. Again these allegations run counter to what Islam preaches.
41 1 Kings, Chapters 5-8.
42 The Hebrew term for God.
43 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 410. Islam rejects these allegations.
44 ibid, p. 436.
45 Who's Who, p. 205.
46 ibid, p. 206.
2. Nadab to Jehoram (910-841 B.C.)

Nadab was succeeded by his son, Jeroboam I (910-891 B.C.), who attempted to establish a dynasty. However, his rule was short-lived due to his assassination by another son of Nadab, Rehoboam (890-870 B.C.).

3. Jehu (841-814 B.C.)

Jehoash’s reign was marked by the murder of Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, after whom his dynasty was named. His rule was marked by political stability and economic prosperity.


Although Jehoash (814-796 B.C.) was a good king, his son Jehoahaz (796-793 B.C.) was weak and unable to resist the Assyrian invasion. The kingdom was divided into two parts, north and south.

B. Kings of Judah

Like Israel, this country too was gripped by anarchy and idolatry. Some of the details in this section will provide an important framework for the next chapter and its discussion of the OT’s preservation.

1. Rehoboam, son of King Solomon, to Abijah (931-911 B.C.)

The first king of Judah and the successor to Solomon’s throne, Rehoboam had eighteen wives, sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. Biblical scholars have painted the religious conditions of his time in dark colors, and the OT states that the people also built themselves high places and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land, and they did according to all abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.

His son Abijah, ruling three years only, followed in his ways.

2. Asa to Jehoshaphat (911-848 B.C.)

Asa (911-870 B.C.) is praised in the Bible for his piety.

He stamped out idolatrous practices and restored the Temple in Jerusalem as the center of worship. It was decreed that unbelievers would be put to death. Asa even stripped of her dignities his grandmother Maacah, ... who had fashioned an obscene idol connected with the cult of the Phoenician fertility goddess Asherah.

He sent Temple treasure to Benhadad of Damascus, to persuade him to invade Israel and thus relieve the pressure on Judah. His son Jehoshaphat (870-848 B.C.) continued Asa’s reforms and destroyed many of the local hill-shrines.

3. Jehoram to Ahaz (848-716 B.C.)

This period, covering the reign of eight kings, saw a return to idolatry and moral degeneracy. Jehoram (848-840 B.C.) constructed high...
places in the mountains of Judah and compelled the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication,62 while his son Ahaziah introduced Baal as one of the gods of Judah.63 Similarly, Amaziah (796-781 B.C.) set up the gods of Seir as his own gods, prostrating before them.64 His successor Uzziah put much effort into developing the kingdom,65 but with Ahaz (756-716 B.C.) Judah declined rapidly. Ahaz "indulged in pagan cults and revived the primitive customs of child sacrifice,"66 going so far as to sacrifice his own son as a means of invoking Yahweh's favor.67 Eventually, as a token of his submission to Assyrian rule, he was compelled to replace the worship of Yahweh in Solomon's Temple with that of Assyrian deities.68

4. Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.)
Succeeding his father Ahaz at the age of 25, he proved himself to be one of Judah's most prominent rulers and carried out the following reforms:
- He destroyed the brazen serpent that Moses had made, which had been an object of worship in the Temple.69
- He cleansed the country sanctuaries from idolatry and cut down the groves used for pagan rituals of promiscuity.70

5. Manasseh to Amon (687-640 B.C.)
Manasseh (687-642 B.C.) reacted against his father's reforms by reinstating the altars which Hezekiah had abolished, establishing new altars for Baal and worshipping the host of heavens and serving them. His son Amon continued these practices.71

Succeeded his father at the age of eight. In his eighteenth year as king the high priest Hilkiah showed Shapham, the royal scribe, a 'Book of the Law' which he had unearthed in the Temple during its renovation. It was read to Josiah and he became greatly agitated at how the religious practices of his time had gone astray.72 Calling a public assembly in the Temple, he ordered that the entire Book be read to all those present before setting out on a program of sweeping reforms.

The Temple was purged of all heathen altars and cult objects, particularly those belonging to the Assyrian worship of the sun, the moon and the stars. The practice of child sacrifice ... was stopped 'that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.' [2 Kg 23:10] The idolatrous priests were killed, the pagan house of male prostitutes was pulled down, and the local shrines outside Jerusalem were destroyed and defiled by burning human bones on them.73

7. Jehoahaz to Mattaniah (609-587 B.C.)
During this turbulent period Judah faced mounting pressure, first from the Egyptians and then the Babylonians. The latter were led by King Nebuchadnezzar, who took Judah's royal household captive to Babylon and left none behind but the poorest of the land.74 Mattaniah (598-587 B.C.), the last ruler of Judah, was himself appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as a puppet king after nine years of subservience he unwisely revolted through Egyptian encouragement, precipitating a Babylonian attack.75

ii. The Destruction of the First Temple (586 B.C.)
and the Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.)
The people of Judah were in no position to resist the Babylonian assault. Pressing their siege of Jerusalem until the city surrendered in August 586 B.C., the invading army tore down the city walls and destroyed the Temple.

Perhaps fifty thousand Judahites, including women and children, had been transported to Babylonia in two deportations of Nebuchadnezzar. These, with the exception of a few political leaders, were sent into colonies, in which they were permitted to have houses of their own, to visit one another freely, and to engage in business [Jer 29:5ff].76

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62 KJV 2 Ch 21:11 (see also 21:13). In the CEV however the reference to fornication is omitted. See pp. 328-329.
63 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 17.
64 2 Chronicles 25:14.
66 Who's Who, p. 44.
67 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 16.
68 ibid., p. 16.
69 2 Kg 18:4.
73 ibid., p. 243.
74 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 242; Who's Who, pp. 188-190. See also 2 Kings 24:14.
The History of the Qur’anic Text

iii. The Restoration of Jerusalem and the Founding of the Second Temple (515 B.C.)

A generation after the Exile, Babylon fell under Persian control. Jews were permitted to return to their homeland and a small number accepted the offer, establishing the Second Temple in Jerusalem by 515 B.C. 77 It was during these Second Temple times that the prophet Ezra first began his ceremonial reading of the Torah publicly (c. 449 B.C.). More of a religious than a political figure, he became the founder of legal Judaism and remained highly influential in Jewish thought throughout the ensuing centuries. 78

in. The Hellenistic Rule (333-168 B.C.), the Maccabean Revolt (168-135 B.C.) and the Destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.)

With Alexander the Great’s successful conquest of Palestine in 331 B.C., the Jews soon assimilated into Hellenistic culture.

One curious aspect of this era of Hellenistic assimilation appears in the fact that one high priest, Onias III, deposed by the Seleucid authorities, went to Egypt and established at Leontopolis in the name of Heliodorus a distinct temple to Yahweh, which existed there for a hundred years. 79

Antiochus IV, King of Syria, was particularly zealous in imposing Greek fashions and Greek religion on this conquered realm. Becoming suspicious of Jewish loyalty he commanded, in 168 B.C., that altars to Zeus he erected throughout the land, and especially within the Temple at Jerusalem. Although fear of the Syrian army secured widespread obedience to this decree, Judas Maccabaeus, a warrior, revolted and was able to defeat Antiochus’ generals in several successive battles, raging from 165-160 B.C. He cleansed the Temple from Syrian influences and established a dynasty which survived until 63 B.C., though he himself was killed in 160 B.C. 80 The Maccabean dynasty ended with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, and just over one century later, in 70 C.E., Roman troops destroyed the Second Temple. “The second destruction proved final.” 81

Here are some of the dates that Neusner provides as cornerstones of Jewish achievement, in the centuries following the Second Temple’s demise: 82

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 80-110</td>
<td>Gamaliel heads academy at Yavneh</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Final canonization of Hebrew Scriptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promulgation of Order of Prayer by rabbis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Akiba leads rabbinical movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132-135</td>
<td>Bar Kokhba leads messianic war against Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southern Palestine devastated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 220</td>
<td>Babylonist academy founded at Sura by Rab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 250</td>
<td>Pact between Jews and Persian king, Shapur I: Jews to keep state law; Persians to permit Jews to govern synagogues, live by own religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 300</td>
<td>Closure of the Tosefta, corpus of supplementary material in exegesis and amplification of the Mishnah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 330</td>
<td>Pumbedisa school headed by Abbaye, then Raba, lays foundation of Babylonian Talmud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 400</td>
<td>Talmud of the land of Israel completed as a systematic commentary on four of the Mishnah’s six divisions, in particular Agriculture, Seasons, Women, and Damages (omitted: Holy Things and Purities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 400</td>
<td>Rab Ashi begins to shape Babylonian Talmud, which is completed by 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>630-640</td>
<td>Moslem conquest of Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 700</td>
<td>Saboraim complete the final editing of Babylonian Talmud as a systematic commentary on four of the Mishnah’s six divisions (excluded: Agriculture and Purities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table reveals that the complete loss of political power compelled Jews to begin an era of literary activity, with the establishment of various academies culminating in the compilation of the Mishnah, Jerusalem Talmud and the Talmud Babliyona. In fact this last acquired its final shape in Islamic Iraq c. 700 C.E. or perhaps even later (since all dates aside from the Muslim conquest are approximate), maturing under the strong influence of Islamic fiqh which had taken hold in Iraq six decades earlier.

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78 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 441. See also Nehemiah Ch. 8.
79 ibid, p. 442.
80 ibid, pp. 603-4.
3. Conclusion

The annals of Judaism do not encourage faith in the OT's text. Most of the rulers were idolaters who sought by various means to turn their subjects away from God, while the very progenitors of Israel were hardly any better, dealing treacherously with their kith and kin. Moses, the greatest Israelite prophet, had to contend with a nation tremendously ungrateful to the Lord and to him; after the presentation of numerous miracles, the plagues and the parting of the sea, he had only to leave for forty days before the Israelites set up their infamous golden calf. Such an attitude casts serious doubt on the Jews' preservation of Moses' teachings during his own lifetime, let alone in later eras. The text itself was lost more than once, each time for centuries while the kings and their subjects reverted to outright paganism. Let us now shift our focus, and examine the extent to which the Jewish Scriptures were preserved.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS CORRUPTION

In heaven God and the angels study Torah just as rabbis do on earth. God does phylacteries like a Jew and prays in the rabbinic mode. He carries out the acts of compassion Judaism ethics call for. He guides the affairs of the world according to the rules of Torah, just as the rabbi in his court does. One exegesis of the creation legend taught that God had looked into the Torah and created the world from it.

It is customary that when a human being builds a palace, he does not build it according to his own wisdom, but according to the wisdom of a craftsman. And the craftsman does not build according to his own wisdom, rather he has plans and records in order to know how to make rooms and corridors. 'The Holy One, blessed be He, did the same. He looked into the Torah and created the world.'

1. History of the Old Testament

The previous chapter afforded a glimpse of the historical circumstances which subverted any efforts to safeguard the OT. In this section I will provide a history of the text itself. The extensive quotes I utilize here and in other chapters, concerning the histories of the OT and NT, are purely from the Judeo-Christian camp. Contrary to the outdated notion that Easterners cannot represent themselves and must be represented, I will let these scholars represent themselves and have their say before I bring forward my own arguments regarding their views.

In Hebrew the OT consists of three parts: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings, and these are reckoned as twenty-four books. The received text of the Hebrew OT is called the Massoretic text (MT).

1 Jacob Neusner, The Way of Torah, p. 81. For Neusner, this is the central myth underlying classical Judaism. But myth does not necessarily mean something untrue; he quotes Strong's definition, that myth is "the essential structure of reality that manifests in particular moments that are remembered and repeated from generation to generation". [Ibid, p. 42.]


3 Dictionary of the Bible, p. 972. For a definition of the Massoreh refer to p. 275.