

Book Review: 'Who Wrote The Bible?' By Richard Elliot Friedman

By Dr. Niaz Ahmed

Is the Bible authentic? Surely, it is one of, if not the most influential book in our modern time. It has, and currently is being studied in depth not only as sacred text, but also as literature, and history. Richard Elliot Friedman, a renowned biblical scholar, and author of, "Who Wrote the Bible?" is a Harvard graduate, and currently the professor of Jewish studies at the University of Georgia. In his book, he focuses primarily on the author (or authors, as you will see later) of the five books of Moses (IE. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). This compilation is known as the Pentateuch (from Greek, meaning "five scrolls"), or as you may well know, the Torah (from Hebrew, meaning "instruction"). From the long course of biblical analysis throughout history, to the formation of the Documentary Hypothesis of Julius Wellhausen, and finally to his own analysis, Friedman thoroughly explains the source of the texts of the Five books of Moses, as well as its influence on the next 6 books of the Old Testament. Using both historical and archeological evidence, tied with linguistic analysis of the Bible text, he systematically identifies the individual authors of the four main source documents (J, E, P, and D), while challenging certain aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis. In lieu of such analyses, any religious scholar would question the sanctity of such a book (considered to be a holy scripture), in being the word of God.

Friedman starts with the history of biblical studies and the analysis of the Bible's foundation, which began with the long history of discriminatory action that even involved ex-communication of those who pursued such knowledge. Initial investigators had agreed with the old tradition of Moses as the original author, while still suggesting that a few lines may have been added here or there. Isaac ibn Yashush, a Jewish court Physician for a ruler during Muslim Spain, showed that a list of Edomite Kings in Genesis 36 actually named some kings who lived long after Moses, suggesting that this list was written by someone other than Moses (Friedman 18). He later became known as "Isaac the blunderer." The man who gave him this label was Abraham ibn Ezra, a 12th-century Rabbi, who exclaimed, "His book deserves to be burned," (referring to Isaac). Astonishingly, Ezra began having doubts as well, as Friedman explains:

"...ibn Ezra himself included several enigmatic comments in his own writings...He alluded to several biblical passages that appeared not to be from Moses' own hand: passages that referred to Moses in the third person, used terms that Moses would not have known, described places where Moses had never been, and used language that reflected another time and locale from those of Moses."
(19)

Through the next few centuries, several scholars followed in Ezra's footsteps, and proclaimed further that Moses was not the author of the Torah. In the 16th century, Andreas van Maes, a devoted Catholic, wrote a book in which he explained that Moses may have been the original author, but editors had inserted or changed phrases later on. This book was added to the Catholic index of prohibited books (20).

Eventually, a British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, became the first to announce that Moses did not write the majority of the original five books. Several scholars later, a French

convert to Protestantism, Richard Simon, claimed that the additions to the Mosaic Law were written by scribes who had collected and reviewed older texts. As Friedman explains,

“These scribes, according to Simon, were prophets, guided by the divine spirit, and so he regarded his work as a defense of the sanctity of the biblical text. His contemporaries, however, apparently were not ready for a work that said that any part of the Five Books was not Mosaic...Simon was expelled from his order....Of the thirteen hundred copies printed of his book, all but six were burned.”
(Friedman 21)

Simon, however, did have the right idea, in the sense that the writers had collected and had available certain source documents. This created the hypothesis that several source documents may have been combined over time by different authors, of those respective documents. One big piece of evidence was the concept of the doublet. A doublet is essentially a context of the same story appearing twice. There are numerous areas in the Bible which hold doublets. Two different stories of the creation of the world are mentioned. The covenant between God and Abraham is related twice, differently, as well as two different stories regarding Noah's ark, and more. Further analysis was undertaken of these doublets, especially in the linguistic sense, or the style of writing, and certain similarities in the text, i.e. references to certain places or things with the same specific names became apparent. In due time, it went from a two source hypothesis to a four source hypothesis (22).

With many centuries of collaboration, there was enough evidence that the five books of Moses had been put together using four different source documents which were then appropriately represented by alphabetic symbols. According to Friedman:

“The document that was associated with the divine name Yahweh/Jehovah was called J. The document that was identified as referring to the deity as God (in Hebrew, Elohim) was called E. The third document, by far the largest, included most of the legal sections and concentrated a great deal on matters having to do with priests, and so it was called P. And the source that was found only in the book of Deuteronomy was called D.” (Friedman 24)

Julius Wellhausen, who examined these four sources, developed a systematic construction of the development of these sources and through what stages of religion and history each source must have been written. Friedman continues,

“He examined the biblical stories and laws that appear in J and E, and he argued that they reflected the way of life of the nature/fertility stage of religion. He argued that the stories and laws of Deuteronomy (D) reflected the life of the spiritual/ethical stage. And he argued that P derived from the priestly/legal stage.....To this day, if you want to disagree, you disagree with Wellhausen.” (26)

This, in essence, was the Documentary hypothesis, aka, the Wellhausen hypothesis. This revolutionary idea finally drove the Catholic Church to become involved. In the 1940s, the Pope enjoined and encouraged scholars to pursue such knowledge about these biblical writers (27). This led to a decrease in the centuries of opposition to the biblical analysis of its authors. Friedman writes,

“At present...there is hardly a biblical scholar in the world actively working on the

problem who would claim that the Five Books of Moses were written by Moses....Scholars argue about the number of different authors who wrote any given biblical book.....Since Wellhausen's days there has been an archeological revolution, which has yielded important discoveries..." (28)

Throughout his analysis, Friedman begins by painting a picture of the biblical world, and then locating the biblical author respective to the period of time he reconstructs. His analysis is literary, with archeological evidence, and in no way involves evidence from the Bible as sacred text, but only as historical data. Never does he mention, or incline towards, the idea that the Bible is not the word of God, or that the sanctity of the text is, or could be, the true final revelation to Mankind. His examination is strictly in the educational understanding and focused identification of the authors of the Old Testament. Could it be that he is trying to relate to all readers, that is, involving even Richard Simon's idea that the writers were divinely guided? Perhaps it could be to minimize any offensive ideas to those faithful in the Bible. Regardless of his perceived intentions, it would be difficult for any religious scholar not to question the overdue acceptance of this type of analysis by even the Pope himself. What took so long? Why the centuries of uproar and opposition? What entitles a book to become considered a holy scripture or even to become the center-point of centuries of heated debate? Hazrat Mirza Bashirudin Mahmood Ahmad (ra), explains it very well in his book, "Introduction to the study of the Holy Quran", where he writes,

"A revealed book is superior to a man-made book because we can assume that the former will not lead us into error. God is sheer guidance. In a book revealed by Him, therefore, we may expect to find only light and truth, no darkness or error. If our conception of God does not imply such a trust in what He reveals, then that conception has no value. If communications from God also can err, then what ground have we for holding divine teaching superior to human teaching? Belief in a book entails belief that that book is free from error. It is possible, however, that a book originally revealed by God may come to suffer from human interference. If the contents of a book have suffered additions and subtractions at human hands, then that book can no longer serve as a guide."
(Ahmad 27)

Beginning with the first two source documents, J and E, the story starts in 12th century B.C., with the original 12 tribes of Israel. The land of Israel was made up of many peoples, of whom prior to the arrival of the Israelites, were dominated with paganism. Friedman mentions a 13th tribe of Levi, which was identified as the priestly group. He asserted that the priests were usually chosen from this Levi tribe, since it was hereditary. Around that time, essentially, the priests and so-called judges were the ones with power. The other type of leader, was the prophet, who, in Friedman's eyes,

"...were regarded as having been called by the deity to perform a special task with regard to the people. The task might be to encourage or to criticize....in the realm of politics, ethics, or ritual." (Friedman 36)

Eventually, the need presented for a leader to unify all tribes, and the first King of Israel was anointed: King Saul. Saul ends up having a falling-out with the priest-prophet Samuel, as he began to abuse his power as King. Samuel responded then by designating another king: Prophet David (as), from the tribe of Judah. Friedman describes David as,

“...a major figure in the Hebrew Bible, really the only one who comes close to the level of Moses in impact....The Davidic dynasty was in fact one of the longest-lasting ruling families of any country in the history of the world.” (39)

Saul had originally perceived David as a threat to his throne, and so they became rivals. Friedman writes, “When David received the support of the priests of Shiloh (Levites), Saul had them all massacred – except for one who escaped.” The Kingdom had split after Saul's death, where his son Ishbaal had ruled the northern country, while David ruled over the southern region. Ishbaal was then assassinated and David then regained control of the entire country. During David's (as) reign, he appointed two chief priests for each the north and the south, to help support the new unity. The northern priest appointed was Abiathar, who was the one priest who had escaped Saul's attack on the priests of Shiloh. The southern priest was Zadok, of the tribe of Judah, from the priests of Hebron. The priests of Shiloh claimed to be descendants of Prophet Moses (as), while the priests of Hebron claimed to be descendants of Prophet Aaron (as). This North/South distinction played an important role in the creation of J and E. David's son Solomon (as) became King after him, and ruled with great wisdom and prosperity. Friedman mentions another son of David, Adonijah, who actually had fought over the throne with Solomon. Adonijah had support from the Northern Mushite (supposed descendants of Moses) priest, while Solomon held support from the Southern Aaronid (supposed descendants of Aaron) priest. Obviously, with Solomon being given the throne, the tension had already begun between these two historically self-proclaimed priesthoods. Around 922 B.C., after Solomon's death, the North seceded from the South, leaving the lands Israel and Judah, respectively. And as each priest held the power, you can see the North was governed by the Mushite priests, and the South by the Aaronid priests. This would then lead to the reason for there being two very similar versions of the original Torah given to Moses, i.e. J and E. These two kingdoms reigning side by side, with the same historical religion, it would then make sense that each would create their own version, which would represent their views (40 – 48).

The discovery of the different sources was even more interesting. In Genesis 1 and 2, there are two different creation stories. This was analyzed by three investigators, who all realized that the first version always mentioned the creator as God – 35 times, while the second always referred to him as Yahweh – 11 times (Friedman 51). Furthermore, there is a distinction in the order of creation, as Friedman explains,

“In the first version, God creates plants first, then animals, then man and woman. In the second version, God creates man first. Then he creates plants. Then, so that the man should not be alone, God creates animals. And last, after the man does not find a satisfactory mate among the animals, God creates woman.” (51)

Eventually, within E, was discovered P (which we will get to later), and D was uncovered as a completely separate source (which we will also cover later on). The two different creation stories mentioned above are P and J, respectively.

Back to J and E, further analysis displayed the focus of each author in respect to their views on Moses (as) (North – Mushite Priest) and Aaron (as) (South – Aaronid Priest). For example, Joshua was known very well in version E as Moses' trusted second man, and essentially as a prophet after Moses, while in J there isn't much role for Joshua. Furthermore, the golden calf story is mentioned in E, but completely left out in J. Friedman relates concerning this story,

“The golden calf story reveals more about its author than probably any other story in J and E. In addition to all that it tells us about its author's background and about its author's skill in fashioning a story, it conveys how deep his anger was toward those who had displaced his group in Judah and in Israel. He could picture Aaron, ancestor of the Jerusalem priesthood, as committing heresy and dishonesty. He could picture the national symbols of Israelite religion as objects of idolatry. He could picture the nation who accepted these symbols as deserving a bloody purge. What he pictures Moses doing to the golden calf was what he himself might have liked to do to the calves of Dan and Beth-El: burn them with fire, grind them thin as dust.” (Friedman 76)

The golden calves at Dan and Beth-El, were placed, one in each city, by King Jeroboam of Israel after the kingdom split. The Levitical priests of Shiloh, at that time, were not recognized; in fact, Jeroboam did not place them in any priestly role. Their priestly status was awarded neither in the North or South, hence, the emotion within E. Moreover, in J it mentions that it was “God” who freed the Israelites from Egypt (Exod. 3:8), whereas in E, it proclaims Moses as helping free them from Egypt (Exod. 3:10). What’s interesting is the proximity of these two claims, within three verses.

J, in essence, contains less emphasis on Moses, and more on his patriarchs, while E displays more sympathetic development of Moses' personality. Friedman reveals,

“...for E, Moses has a significance far beyond what he has in J. In E, Moses is a turning point in history. E has much less than J about the world before Moses. E has no creation story, no flood story, and relatively less on the patriarchs. But E has more than J on Moses.” (83)

For E, as Friedman concludes, it becomes fairly evident for the author to have been a Levitical Priest from Shiloh (likely a male), with his emphasis on the prophet Moses. This author would have lived around the time Israel was separate from Judah, around 922 to 722 B.C. For J however, the answer is not as specific: Friedman inquires about the author of J,

“For him, something extremely important had happened before Moses. This writer was concerned with the ruling family of Judah, David's family. He therefore emphasized the significance of God's covenant with the patriarchs. It was tied to the city of Hebron, David's first capital....the revelation to Abraham was itself a turning point in history. It was not to be regarded as inferior to the revelation to Moses or the people at Sinai.” (83)

Friedman describes the author of J, as one who remembers the original covenants and revelations from God himself to the patriarch prophets. Hence, J uses the name Yahweh throughout. The J author may have well been related to the Judean court, possibly from a circle of men and women who would have such power to develop such a document (likely an advocate of the Davidic Royal House). This would give a higher chance of the J author being female, than E. Nonetheless, the J author would have lived from around the time of the Judean king Jehoram, until the fall of Judah, approximately 848 to 722 B. C. The important point is that J and E were both written before the Assyrian empire had invaded and destroyed Israel.

Relative to the other source documents, J and E are more similar to each other. Even

when their focus may be towards different views, they're style of writing are reasonably similar. Friedman writes, "...it has never been possible to separate them on stylistic grounds alone." He suggests the possibility of J being a Judean court account of sacred national traditions, therefore creating the desire amongst the northern Levites to produce their own national account. The bottom line is that they're not unrelated works, only different versions that have been eloquently blended with each other. In fact, in modern analysis these two source documents are now referred to as JE. It is assumed that the J and E difference would be evident to any analyzer. He concludes, "The uniting of the two works reflected the uniting (better: the reuniting) of the two communities after two hundred years of division."

From a religious point of view, what's important here is not that the writers are human beings, and not God, but the fact that the writers, or writer is not Moses, or any prophet for that matter, meaning the writers lack any association with divine revelation. How could God allow the existence of two different versions of a document considered to be his word, with contradicting views in both? Hazrat Mirza Bashirudin Ahmad explains concerning the Old Testament,

"In the Old Testament, to a very large extent, social ideas and ideals have been combined with material conceptions, and both centre around religion. But this attempt of the Old Testament can be described as a first attempt only and not a finally successful attempt..."

He continues later on,

"Moses gave to Israel both a religion and a civilization. But his teaching proved too rigid to answer to that variety of urges of which human nature is capable....Moses did not succeed in making good citizens out of the new generations of Israel...But while Israelite Teachers had tied man to a narrowly conceived teaching, Christian Teachers released man from all moral and religious obligations. Mosaic teaching restrained the mind of Israel from advancing beyond Moses' time, unless it was in the form of rebellion or hypocrisy." (Ahmad 26)

It seems that the priests of Israel contributed much to the rebellion and hypocrisy of the Kingdom of Israel and consequently the Hebrew Bible. In the Holy Quran, it is revealed,

"And, Surely, among them is a section who twist their tongues while reciting the book; that you may think it to be part of the Book; while it is not part of the Book. And they say, 'It is from Allah'; while it is not from Allah; and they utter a lie against Allah unknowingly." (Quran 3:79; Allah is the Arabic name for God)

Continuing with the analysis of D and P, the priestly involvement, or the lack of any prophetic involvement becomes clearer.

Shortly after the time of the split of the Kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian empire had gained great power. Around 722 B.C., Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, however Judah survived, while Jerusalem stood and remained the capital city. The Jews were exiled, mainly into Judah, and to the east (lost tribes of Israel). The Judean King at the time was King Hezekiah, who established both political and religious reform. The greatest change was centralization of the religion, of which one aspect was that animal sacrifices were allowed only at the main temple in Jerusalem. This meant that the priests present at the temple were the

only ones allowed to hold such rituals. King Hezekiah favored the Aaronid Priests, a significant move on his part, which will become evident later. Hezekiah's son Manasseh reversed all of his Father's doings, by decentralizing the religion, and even re-establishing some pagan customs. Manasseh's son followed in his footsteps, however, his grandson King Josiah, re-established centralization. King Josiah's sons and grandsons followed, and the family of David ended with Zedekiah, when the Babylonian empire invaded and burned Jerusalem in 587 B.C., thereby ending the Kingdom of Judah.

During this reign of Kings, in 622 B.C., a priest named Hilkiah apparently discovers a "scroll of the Torah" in the temple at Jerusalem. This is historically recognized as Deuteronomy. Most investigators question whether this was actually a discovery, or a charade. Several biblical scholars have labeled it as "pious fraud". Uncovering the author of Deuteronomy will reveal the reasons why.

Deuteronomy reveals itself to be very similar to the next six books of the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings. Martin Noth explains this compilation, with D as its foundation, as one continuous story from Moses to the destruction of Judah. He called this link the "Deuteronomistic History" (Friedman 104). Another scholar named Frank Moore Cross, uncovered that the D writer had often referred to certain stories with "...to this day..." Further analysis showed great emphasis on King Josiah, in fact there are two entire chapters on King Josiah where he is portrayed as the best among Kings; he is even perceived to hold greater status than King David. Friedman discloses,

"The person responsible for seven books of the Bible was someone from Josiah's reign. I found that this person deliberately designed his history of the people to culminate in Josiah. Josiah was not just good, and he was not just important. In this writer's picture, Josiah, in many ways, was someone to be compared to Moses himself." (111)

Friedman then continues to explain eight different points on the relationship and portrayed similarity between Moses and Josiah. Only a few need mentioning, as he relates,

"In Deuteronomy Moses tells the people, 'Love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.' Only one person in the Hebrew Bible is described as fulfilling this: Josiah...The book of the 'torah' is mentioned only in Deuteronomy, in Joshua, and then never again in the Hebrew Bible except in one story: Josiah...In Deuteronomy, Moses describes what he did to the golden calf that Aaron made. He burned it, he smashed it 'thin as dust,' and he cast the dust into a wadi (Deut. 9:21). In 2 Kings, Josiah goes to the altar and high place at Beth-El, the site of the golden calf that Jeroboam set up. Josiah burns the high place and smashes it 'thin as dust'." (112)

It was evident that the D writer had an interest in Prophet Moses. Moreover, the book appears to be written more in the interests of the priests, than the royal courtiers. It speaks with laws, specific to centralization, including animal sacrifices, as well as tithes, and offerings; and even requires the King to write his copy of any law in front of the Levites. It also declares the Levites to be the only legitimate priestly tribe. This would point to the likely probability that the author was a Levite priest from Shiloh. Bear in mind that E was also written by the same group of priests. This group had believed in the centralization of worship, because the city of Shiloh had once been the national religious center, in the days of Samuel. Now recall back that D was found in the central temple of Judah in 622 B.C. What was the

need for this scroll? Further discovering connected the Deuteronomistic historian to prophet Jeremiah, as Friedman analyzes,

“Jeremiah, the prophet who favored Josiah, and who was close to the people who discovered the 'torah', and who referred to Shiloh as the great central place of old, was a priest...but he never sacrifices – which is also consistent with the position of the priests of Shiloh...he is the only prophet to refer to Shiloh...he is also the only prophet to refer to Samuel, the priest-prophet-judge who was the greatest figure in Shiloh's history.” (126)

He continues by disclosing the similarity between the book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, that at several points, they're written in the same language. Friedman concludes about the D writer,

“And so he shaped his history of his people around the themes of 1) fidelity to Yahweh, 2) the Davidic covenant, 3) the centralization of religion at the Temple in Jerusalem, and 4) the 'torah'. And then he interpreted the major events of history in light of these factors. Why did the kingdom split? Because Solomon had forsaken Yahweh and his torah....Why did the northern kingdom of Israel fall? Because the people and their kings did not follow the torah. Why was there hope for the future? Because the 'torah' had been rediscovered under Josiah, and now it would be fulfilled as never before.” (135)

Friedman presents archeological evidence of the likelihood of the author/recorder or compiler of the Deuteronomistic History, not as Jeremiah, but closely linked with him, i.e. his scribe, Baruch son of Neriyah. Once again, the author is not a prophet, though closely related to one, yet still without the possibility of divine revelation. Note how Friedman refers to a prophet of God: “Because Solomon had forsaken Yahweh and his Torah”...Throughout his book, he speaks of prophets this way, in the sense that, no extra respect is displayed towards them. Is it because he himself has a misunderstanding of a true prophet of God, or is it because the Bible creates these misunderstandings? Hazrat Mirza Bashirrudin Ahmad sheds light on this subject, he writes,

“Jewish scholars who describe Prophets as thieves and robbers must have entered these things into the Book of Moses as a cover for their own sins. Their unholy interference with a Book of God made it necessary that God should reveal another book which should be free from the absurdities and falsehoods which had crept into the old.” (Ahmad 45)

He mentions the example in Genesis 19: 30-36, where Prophet Lot dwells in a mountain with his two daughters. During the night, the eldest daughter says to the other, “Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.” And they do so, according to this biblical story, one by one they lay with him, while he is unaware due to drinking wine. The story ends with, “Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.”

He continues,

“No comment is necessary on this terrible narrative. It offends our sense both of

the factual and the moral. But the present Torah does not hesitate to attribute this to a Prophet. From this we have to conclude that the Torah, as we know it today, is not the Torah revealed to Moses. It must have been composed later by Jewish scholars at a time when they had developed hatred for the sons, real or supposed, of Lot, Moab, and Ammon. The faith of these Jewish scholars had become so weak, their hearts had become so hardened that to defame Moab and Ammon they did not hesitate to attribute to Prophet Lot conduct which is reprehensible in the extreme and the attribution of which to any Prophet is entirely intolerable. Is the Christian and the Jewish world today prepared to hear such things attributed to the Prophets of God? If they are, it is only further evidence that we should have had a book which corrected the depraved mentality of our day.” (46)

In the Holy Quran, God responds,

“Woe, therefore, to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: ‘This is from Allah,’ that they may take for it a paltry price. Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.” (Quran 2:80)

Approximately 120 years after the fall of Israel, the empire of Babylonia gained control over the Assyrians. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor conquered and burned Jerusalem, and supposedly all of the scrolls/documents present at that time. The Jews are then exiled to Babylonia, Egypt, and elsewhere east (lost tribes of Israel). Roughly 50 years later, the Persian Empire conquered Babylonia, and the Israelites are allowed to return to their homeland of Israel and Judah. A second temple was built in Jerusalem, and the priesthood that were chosen to lead were the Aaronids, because the Mushite priests (descendants of Moses) were seen as pro-Babylonian. At this time, two governors were chosen by the Persian emperor to keep control of Jerusalem and Israel: Nahemiah and Ezra. Ezra had arrived in Jerusalem with a letter from the Persian emperor, and also in his hand, what he claimed to be the “Torah of Moses”.

P is the largest source of the three main source documents. It is roughly the size of the other three combined. Friedman explains mistakes made with the initial investigators. Professor Edward Reuss concluded that the P law was written later than any of the prophets, because none of the prophets refer to the P law. This was the first mistake. Karl Graf induced that JE came before D, and then P was written after. This was defended by the temple idea, where the tabernacle (tent that Moses built in desert to house the ark) was mentioned in E three times, J never, D never, and P >200 times. Graf claimed that the tabernacle was fiction, and that it represented the second temple that was built in Jerusalem during Persian rule. This was the second mistake according to Friedman. Julius Wellhausen claimed that the laws and stories of P assumed centralization. This was the third mistake. Further evidence was given by Wellhausen, in the sense that, several parts of P mentioned sacrifices or guilt offerings that were not mentioned in JE or D, and thus it was concluded that only the exiled Jews who would feel such guilt would mention these. Another related point, was the list of holidays involving atonement of sin (again not mentioned in JED), again relative to a guilt-filled community. Friedman claims this is wrong, and that P was not written last.

He explains that recent linguistic evidence has shown that P was written before the Babylonian exile, according to the biblical scholar Professor Ari Hurvitz. Shortly after, more investigators had uncovered similar findings. Regarding centralization, Friedman explains,

“P constantly commands that sacrifices and other religious ceremonies must take place at the Tabernacle – or the Tent of Meeting, as it is also known....If you do not come to the central place, you will be cut off...That hardly assumes centralization. It demands it.” (Friedman 171)

He continues by explaining that ‘the exiled Jews feeling guilty’ is not a proper reason for argument. In fact, he believes the author was more likely present around the first temple than the second. P mentions certain objects in the tabernacle, of which some objects were not present in the 2nd temple. What was the tabernacle? The tabernacle was actually the 1st temple; it was real and present until it burned down. P, therefore, must have been written before the 1st temple was destroyed, due to its emphasis on the tabernacle. According to Friedman, the author of P was likely an Aaronid priest. As is evident now, the rivalry between the famous two priesthoods (Mushite and Aaronid) is by far the most influential factor in much of the construction of the Hebrew bible. Recall the fall of Israel: the North falls, thereby joining with the South. E then combines with J, forming JE. Now JE contained a good amount on Prophet Moses (at least more on Moses than Aaron, when combined), thereby minimizing the status of Prophet Aaron. The Aaronid priests, who were at the time in power due to the ruling of King Hezekiah, couldn't bear such a scripture; hence, they take advantage of their power, and, in essence, write a 'torah' of their own. The P source focuses extraordinarily on Prophet Aaron, and his exceptional status. In fact, the word “prophet” is only mentioned once within P, and it refers to Aaron (Friedman 188).

The connection between P and JE is very peculiar. In 1964, a Norwegian investigator discovered that P followed JE in its doublets and stories. Recall, the story of creation in Genesis, P began with the heavens, while JE began with the earth. Another example is the story of The Rebellion in Numbers 16, where the P version justifies Aaron and the Aaronid priesthood only, while the JE version is much simpler, and of course justifies Moses. Essentially, P was written as an alternative to JE. In P, God is seen as just, while in JE, he is viewed as more merciful. The majority of the text in Chronicles is P, where it praises Solomon and Hezekiah, the two kings who did the most for the Aaronid priests. Other examples include the story of the water from the rock, where the Jews demand food and water from Moses. In the JE version, Moses simply helps them (Exod. 17:2-7), while in the P version, through some way he commits a sin, with Aaron standing by and suffering alongside Moses, due to Moses' sin (Num. 20:2-13). This again shows a diminished status of Moses, in the presence of Aaron. This is yet another example of the defaming of prophets in the Torah. If those faithful in the Hebrew Bible, truly believe the Torah to be written by Moses himself, how could the text include such accusations on him? Hazrat Mirza Bashirrudin Ahmad relates,

“It is possible also that the Prophets whose teachings are recorded in the Bible collected the word of God as it was received by them, but the records left by them could not endure the ravages of time, and when they became extinct the people who came after wrote them again from their memory, and in doing so entered many of their own thoughts and judgments into them.” (Ahmad 32)

As is obvious, the Aaronid priests only wanted to signify Prophet Aaron, and in doing so, defamed Prophet Moses. As Friedman relates, concerning the P author,

“This writer was not only eliminating items that he specifically rejected on

theological or political grounds. He was eliminating the long, anecdotal tales of the older text. To extract the P stories from genesis and then read them, one gets the impression of a writer who means to get down to business. And that means the age of Aaron... Besides this writer's changes and his silences, one more element of his work provides knowledge of him: his additions. Most obvious is his enormous emphasis on law. It overwhelms the rest in quantity: half of Exodus, half of Numbers, nearly all of Leviticus. But he also was capable of adding a character to a story, and, rarely, he even introduced an entirely new story with no parallel at all in JE." (Freidman 205)

The P writer was not happy with JE; however the D writer was, quoting JE left and right. There is also a story in P that D quotes nearly word for word, which would signify that the Deuteronomist knew about P. In fact, when comparing the possibility of Jeremiah as the author of D, it would make sense due to presence of several references to P in the book of Jeremiah. That is, if Jeremiah was himself the author of his own book. Assuming this, Jeremiah, or the D writer, knew the priestly laws, but didn't appreciate them; he referred to P as the "lying pen of scribes". In conclusion, the P stories and laws were present in Judah by the time of Jeremiah, and before the death of King Josiah, hence it was written somewhere between 722 B.C. and 609 B.C.

Now with four source documents present, how were they combined? There had to have been someone to combine them, and not just anyone, but someone very clever and intelligent. According to Friedman, the redactor was Ezra; he came to Judah with the "Torah of Moses" in his hand. For the compilation, P was used as the governing structure, where each book essentially began with the priestly texts, and Ezra added his own text similar to the typical language of P, wherever it was needed, mostly in the beginning and ends of books to create the continuity. In general, the flow results from a combination of P with JE, and then ending with D, and concluding with Moses farewell speech. The initial viewpoint had been that the redactor and P writer were one in the same person, however, Friedman disagrees, explaining that they were different people, yet both were Aaronid priests. He claims this compilation took place in the days of the 2nd temple, as he writes,

"The first time that we find the full Torah of Moses in Judah, it is in Ezra's possession... This does not prove that it absolutely had to be Ezra who fashioned the Five books of Moses. But he was in the right priestly family, in the right profession, in the right place, in the right time, with the authority, and with the first known copy of the book in his hand." (Friedman 224)

David Freedman referred to the first 11 books of the Bible (Genesis → 2 Kings) as "The First Bible", because Deuteronomy created the flow perfectly. Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Ahmad agrees concerning Ezra, as he relates,

"From the history of Israel we learn that in the time of Nebuchadnezzar the books of Israel were burnt and destroyed. They were rewritten by the Prophet Ezra, and of Ezra we read in Jewish literature: 'It was forgotten but Ezra restored it' (Suk. 20A, Jewish Encyclopedia Vol. 5, p. 322) And again: 'Ezra re-established the text of Pentateuch, introducing therein the Assyrian or square characters (Sanh. 21B, Jewish Encyclopedia Vol. 5, p. 322).'" (Ahmad 28)

He continues,

“The Torah as we know it today, therefore, is not the Torah which was revealed to Moses. It is the Torah which Ezra recorded from his memory, and about parts of which he himself was in doubt...Jewish scholars take the view that Ezra did not quite know whether a given person was son or grandson of another person. When this is the view held by Jewish and Christian scholars of Ezra's memory, how can ordinary Jews and Christians and other ordinary people be satisfied about the spiritual value of a book with as little authority as the Bible?”
(30)

With this much doubt, and human interference on a so-called holy scripture, how could one conclude this book to be a guide for all mankind, let alone the word of God. Richard Friedman eloquently and rationally uncovers the authors to the majority of the Old Testament, specifically the five books of Moses, using not only linguistic, but also historical and archeological evidence. His analysis is succinct and clear, as it is educational and non-religious, in the sense of providing evidence against these books being the word of God. To conclude, one could ask another question, as Hazrat Mirza Bashirrudin Ahmad relates,

“The question is, what spiritual benefit can accrue from such a book? What faith or trust can such a book inspire in its readers? If the claim had been that the Torah is a collection of statements made by many hundreds of thousands of Jewish writers, even then the book would have possessed some value. But we find that, on the one hand this book is offered as the very word of God, and that, on the other, it contains thousands of contradictions. This unwarranted claim on behalf of the Bible takes away even such value as it would have possessed, had no such claim been made on its behalf. Such a book cannot serve as a guide, and who can say that after such a book we did not need another?” (Ahmad 38)