

LEARNING UNIT 4. Let us get down to business: the books of the Old Testament.

4.1. Introduction: History, memory, Identity

When we read the texts of the OT, we increasingly realize that Israel is the People of memory; the obligation to remember or to not forget or to keep something in the heart appears abundantly in the pages of the OT [Ex. 13,3; 20,8; Num. 15,39-40; Deut. 5,15; 7,18; 8,2.18; 9,7; etc.]. No wonder, then, that their sacred books are deeply rooted in history and in time. Even those books which cannot properly be regarded as historical are penetrated by a deep sense of history, which is one of the features of Israel. Memory, time, and history are deeply related in the whole of Israel's life. It is the command to remember certain significant historical events that happened in a concrete time and geographical frame which gave birth, eventually, to the writing of history [historiography]. This is the sequence that leads from the historical events to the writing of the stories that narrate those events forming what we know as Pentateuch or Torah:



Memory is the mediation between the historical events and historiography. Certainly, not all historical events are remembered and not everything that is remembered is written in a book. However, those historical facts that are significant for Israel are remembered and written down. This is important, because Israel remembers not out of historical curiosity or out of a desire to know its past, but because it has received a mandate to do so, and by remembering only those events that are significant, that is, those events in which God's active presence is manifested in favor of his people, it makes that remembered history a significant history. With Israel, history acquires a transcendent purpose, a 'telos' [end]. It is a theological history [interpreted history] because what is important is not the past 'per se' but the acting presence of God and the response of the people to that initiative of God, whether positive or negative.

From this experience of God's presence, which is at the same time God's self-revelation to the people through the different covenants, Abraham, Isaiah, Jacob and finally the Sinai; the identity of the people [as a especial people] emerges. Hence the need to remember those events, which are in themselves the presence of God among his people, in order to convey that events and that presence to those who were not present. History cannot be repeated, Israel can only cross the Red Sea once and God's covenant with the people at Sinai can only happen once. But, through memory, the Israelites of subsequent generations participate as actors in those same events.

I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before the Lord our God, but also with those who are not here with us today. [Deut. 29,14-15]

Through the memory of the event, the event [and therefore God] becomes present in the act of remembering [which is an actualization of the event] and they become witnesses of the events that are narrated. This participation in the events not only makes them witnesses but also part of the people who were eyewitnesses, making them direct participants in the Covenant. In this way, an identification with the witnesses of these significant events, mainly the passage of the Red Sea and the Covenant with God in the Sinai, is produced. And this identification produces a sense of belonging and therefore generates and strengthens the communal and individual identity of the members of the people of Israel.

The transmission of these events is a necessity and a commandment, a necessity because these events are the guarantee of the identity and unity of the people and a commandment because God has commanded them to remember and to not forget. Hence it can be said that Israel is the people of memory. From this double source - the need to communicate this memory to future generations to make them witnesses of the events and God's command - springs the writing of these significant remembered events [events that in the beginning would have been transmitted by word of mouth from parents to children, or from grandparents to grandchildren, or by the priests in the solemnities] and their embodiment in accounts, later grouped in books, which are later collected in the canon that composes the sacred writings of the people of Israel, the TaNaKh.

The process of composition of the canon is complicated and there are conflicting positions among specialists about the order of composition of the various sections and traditions that make up the canon. Certainly, the knowledge of the history of Israel helps us to situate some texts within certain temporal parameters, but we will see this as we advance through the different sections that make up the OT. The aim of this introduction was simply to highlight the importance of history for the Jewish people and how that perception of history as God's presence, as the place of the encounter with God, has shaped the kind of scriptures that make up the OT and the very religious experience of the people of Israel and has given them that deep root in history. A history whose purpose is not, as a famous 16th century Spanish poet said, "to stop the waters of oblivion", so that the great deeds of the ancients remain, but to include all generations in God's covenant with his people, so that they too may share in the salvation that God has granted them.

4.2. THE PENTATEUCH

4.2.1. A few lines about the name “Pentateuch”

The name “PENTATEUCH” comes from Greek *pente* and *teukhos*, which mean ‘case’, the case in which a papyrus roll was kept. Later it came to mean scroll, and thus the name ‘Pentateuch’ means literally ‘the work comprising five scrolls’. It was then transferred from Greek to Latin “PENTATEUCHUS” and from there to English “PENTATEUCH” (and the rest of the modern languages). Of course, the Jews use another name to refer to these first five books of the Hebrew Bible: The TORAH (the Law), the Law of Moses, the Book of the Law, or the Book of the Law of Moses. The books comprising the Pentateuch are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, these names come from the Greek version of the Pentateuch [Septuagint] in Hebrew the books are known by the word/s they start with: 1) bere'sit, 2) we'elleh semdt, 3) wayyiqra', 4) wayyedabber o bammidbar, 5) elleh haddebarl.

4.2.2. What does the Pentateuch tell?

The books conforming the Pentateuch are linked to each other and they offer us a continuous narrative that goes from the creation of the world in Genesis 1 to the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34. It is therefore a largely narrative work interspersed with extensive legal sections. They have a special place within the sacred scriptures of Israel, they are considered the most important and as already stated they were the first to be compiled and considered as sacred. As an interesting fact I will add the most important book for the Jews is perhaps the one that we, Christians, might consider as the least attractive and the one most generally neglected: Leviticus. In fact, there are authors who argue that the division into five scrolls is due to the fact that in this way Leviticus remains in the center of the Pentateuch, with Genesis and Exodus on one side and Numbers and Deuteronomy on the other. Thus, showing in a graphic way the central place that this book has in the life of the Hebrew people. The Torah forms the basis of Israel's life. The Pentateuch tells us about God's revelation in history and it is the account of how, why and for what purpose God chooses a people to make a covenant with it and set it apart for himself. It tells us how this people is constituted and the vicissitudes that this people goes through in its effort to be faithful to God. Its content can be divided as follows:

- History of the origins (Gen 1-11)
- The patriarchs (Gen 12-50)
- Oppression and liberation (Ex 1,1-15,21)
- First steps towards the Promised Land (Ex 15,22-18,27)
- On Mount Sinai (Ex 19 - Nm 10,10)
- From the Sinai to the plains of Moab (Nm 10,11-21,35)
- In the plains of Moab (Nm 22 - Dt 34)

4.2.2.1. History of the origins (Gen 1-11)

These chapters narrate God's creation of the world and of the human being, the origin of sin and the origin of human civilization. It tells the story of the flood, the Babelic confusion of languages and concludes with the entrance of Abraham on the scene.

4.2.2.2. *The patriarchs (Gen 12-50)*

This second part of the Pentateuch focuses on the traditions of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It tells the story of the wanderings of a group of nomadic shepherds whom God has called and made a double promise, that he would give them a descent "like the stars of heaven" and that he would give them the land of Canaan as their possession. This section and the book of Genesis concludes with the people entering Egypt because of the terrible famine in Canaan, with their settlement in Goshen, and with the deaths of Jacob and Joseph. The book of Genesis ends with Joseph's words of encouragement and hope to his brothers on his deathbed (Genesis 50,24). *"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die; but God will surely come to you, and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob'".* This journey to the Promised Land will be the subject of the next four books.

4.2.2.3. *Oppression and liberation (Ex 1,1-15,21)*

The book of Exodus begins with the arrival on the throne of a pharaoh who did not know Joseph. This, together with the great population growth of Jacob's descendants, frightened this pharaoh who subjected the Hebrews to harsh servitude. It follows a long period of hard oppression that ends when God hears the cry of the slave people and calls on Moses to free them from slavery. There is a confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh. God is with Moses and through the plagues he will lead the people to freedom. Freedom which is preceded by the first celebration of the Passover and which reaches its climax at the crossing of the Red Sea.

4.2.2.4. *4. First steps towards the Promised Land (Ex 15,22-18,27)*

This section tells the story of the journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai. It condenses in a few chapters the experience of the people, the thirst, the hunger, the feeling of being defenseless against potential enemies, the temptation to return to Egypt. We are drawn to a kind of vertigo in the face of the freedom and temptation caused by the peaceful security that the people possessed in Egypt, despite the servitude.

4.2.2.5. *On Mount Sinai (Ex 19 - Nm 10,10)*

On Mount Sinai the alliance takes place, and the Lord gives the people the rules that should govern their behavior. These laws affect all levels of the people's life, the religious level (theology and worship), the relations between the members of the community and that of Israel with other peoples. On Mount Sinai the Covenant takes place, and the Lord gives the people the rules that should govern their behavior. These laws affect all levels of the people's life, the religious level (theology and worship), the relations between the members of the community and the relations of Israel with other peoples. This legal section is very broad and covers almost all this section except for the narration of a couple of episodes full of drama and life: the stay of Moses at the top of Sinai with God and the episode of the golden calf.

4.2.2.6. *From the Sinai to the plains of Moab (Nm 10,11-21,35)*

This section tells us about the journey from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab. It is a narrative section in which a great number of difficult and conflictive situations appear: Aaron, Moses' brother, dies, the people are discouraged by the arrival of the first reports

about the Promised Land, there are riots among the people and some leaders rebel against Moses. In addition, hunger and thirst make themselves felt.

4.2.2.7. *In the plains of Moab (Nm 22 - Dt 34)*

This last section takes place in Moab and there the last events narrated by the Pentateuch take place and conclude with the death of Moses: the oracles of the pagan seer Balaam, the first conflicts with the pagan cults, the first occupations of territory in the Transjordan and the farewell speeches and the death of Moses. There is also in this section abundant legislative material but the most important from the theological point of view are the farewell discourses of Moses. In them, Moses summarizes the journey to Moab, tells them how God commanded him to leave Mount Sinai to continue his journey, and reminds them of some important moments in that journey (Deut. 1-4). Then he again reminds them of the Decalogue, an explanation of the Law and a series of exhortations (Deut. 5-11). This is followed by an extensive body of law commented on by Moses (Deut. 12-26). And the discourse closes with a series of blessings and curses (Deut. 27-28). This is followed by the last discourse of Moses in which he reminds the people of the exodus and the covenant (Deut. 29-30). The book and the Pentateuch end with Moses' last instructions, his song (Deut. 32,1-43), his blessings and his death (Deut. 31-34).

4.2.3. *How the Pentateuch came to exist*

[This section is undoubtedly the most dry and complex of the entire study. If you are not interested in the process of formation of the Pentateuch you can skip it since it will not have repercussions on the final objective of getting to know the texts and their theology better].

This is a complex issue and one on which much ink has been spilled. The volumes dedicated to it are many and very erudite, sometimes difficult to follow and to understand because they are more thought out for specialists than for the general public. The only point on which all the experts seem to agree is in denying the authorship of Moses, from there everything is open, and the most diverse theories abound. As, on the one hand, the aim of these pages is to provide an easy access to the Old Testament and, above all, to motivate its reading and, on the other hand, I am not an expert in this field, I will confine myself to pointing out the main lines of research, following a chronological criterion. Undoubtedly, anyone who is curious to know more about the vicissitudes of modern criticism of the Old Testament can find abundant material in bookstores and specialized libraries.

Literary criticism, as it is understood in the modern sense, of the OT does not begin until the eighteenth century. That is not to say that it was not studied earlier, but the methods and interest of exegetes were different, as were their technical tools. The Church Fathers did above all an allegorical reading of the OT, but they also used their philological training to establish the text in a rational way and solved some problems of textual criticism. For example, **Tertulian** in his polemic against Marcion tries to demonstrate the true meaning of Jacob's view of the ladder [Gen. 28; see [here](#)], contrasting some texts with others. **Eusebius of Caesarea** also uses the same scheme in another dispute over the creation account in Genesis and compares Genesis to the Phoenician creation

myths. And of course, we cannot forget St. **Jerome** who was also an excellent connoisseur of the Hebrew language. The fathers therefore began the critical work, but at the time they did not have sufficient knowledge of the Semitic world, its history, philology, literature and traditions. Moreover, their concerns were not ours and the OT interested them, especially from a theological point of view.

During the Middle Ages, exegesis was mainly allegorical and focused on ecclesiology. However, rationality was a determining factor for medieval theologians, especially from the 12th century onwards, which led to giving a relevant value to the letter of the text, i.e. to philology. Hence, there were theologians who began to learn Hebrew in order to make a philological study of the text that would allow a better understanding of its meaning. However, it was a Spanish Jew, **Aben Ezra de Toledo** [12th century], who first perceived the problems of literary criticism posed by the Pentateuch. Although in his [commentary](#) on the Pentateuch he did so in an enigmatic way [possibly to avoid being expelled from the Toledo Synagogue] that we had to wait until another Jew, also Sephardic [**Spinoza**], clarified the meaning of the words of Ben Ezra. Basically, Ezra denied the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch by showing a series of passages that certainly Moses could not have written. It was a Spanish bishop of the 15th century, **El Tostado**, who triggered the critical analysis of the Pentateuch by openly admitting that Moses could not have composed the Pentateuch, at least in its entirety, and that therefore there had to be other editors or writers besides Moses. From here on, everything revolves around the question of the Pentateuch's mosaic authorship.

But it was not until the 18th century that the foundations of an authentic critical theory of the Pentateuch began to be laid. The first work that seriously considers the composition of the Pentateuch was done by **Jean Astruc** who was not a biblical scholar but a French physician, professor of anatomy at the University of Toulouse and who became a physician and counselor to Louis XV. This man was not only interested in medicine, but also in theology, and in 1753 he published in Brussels his *Conjectures on the original memoirs that Moses seems to have used to compose the book of Genesis*. Astruc begins by studying the first three chapters of Genesis and is struck by the fact that God is called by two different names: Elohim and Yahweh. This leads him to think that the author, who for him is still Moses, had two documents before him, one of which used the name Elohim and the other the name Yahweh. He then tried to apply this theory to the whole of Genesis but did not get good results. Nevertheless, his efforts made it clear that this was an extraordinarily complex subject. And, from that moment on, the matter began to get tangled up.

Based on Astruc's work, Eichhorn in 1780 formulates what is known as the "**Old Documentary Hypothesis**": the idea that Genesis was composed by combining two identifiable sources, the **YAHWIST** ("**J**") and the **ELOHIST** ("**E**"). These sources have later been identified in the first four books of the Torah, and the number was later on expanded to three when Wilhelm de Wette identified the **DEUTERONOMIST** as an additional source found only in Deuteronomy ("**D**"). Later still the Elohist was split into Elohist and **PRIESTLY** ("**P**") sources, increasing the number to four. There is no need to



elaborate on that. Just add that since the beginning of the 19th century there was, especially in Germany, a tremendous effort to discover the process that had brought the Pentateuch to its present form.

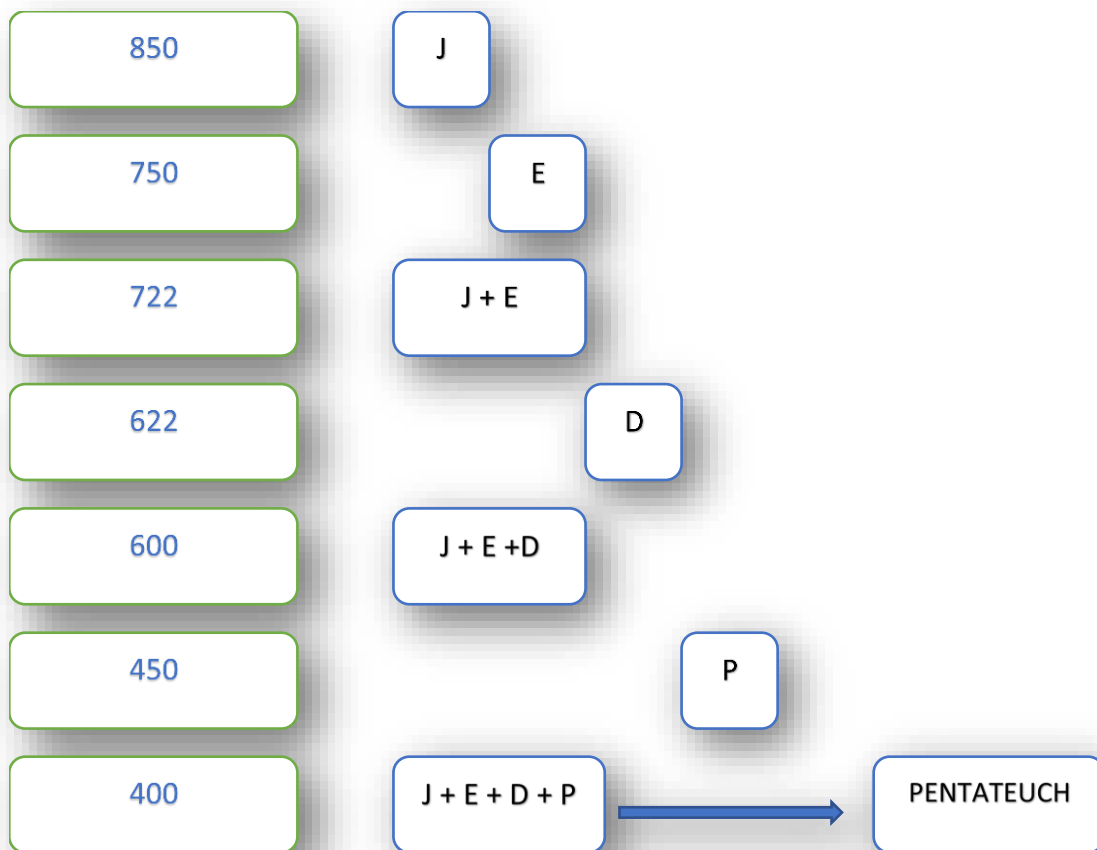
Two theories were in conflict with Eichhorn's theories, the so-called "**Fragmentary Hypothesis**" and "**Supplementary Hypothesis**". The fragmentary hypothesis argued that fragments of varying lengths, rather than continuous documents, lay behind the Torah; this approach accounted for the Torah's diversity but could not account for its structural consistency, particularly regarding chronology. The supplementary hypothesis was better able to explain this unity: it maintained that the Torah was made up of a central core document, the Elohist, supplemented by fragments taken from many sources. The supplementary approach was dominant by the early 1860s. This theory was seriously challenged by a book published by Hermann Hupfeld in 1853. Its main theses were: (1) that the so-called 'original core' contained some passages which were of later origin than the rest and represented a first stage of expansion of the core; and (2) that both these later passages and the passages which the Supplementary Hypothesis itself had distinguished from the core were not fragments picked up from all over the place but had been parts of large pre-existing narrative compositions which the compilers of the Pentateuch had drawn on as sources. Hupfeld's new ideas did not succeed in displacing the dominant Supplementary Hypothesis but they undermined the strength of their foundations.

But it will be **Wellhausen**, who, taking advantage of the discoveries of Astruc (1753), Eichhorn (1779), De Wette (1817), Hupfeld (1853); and his contemporaries Reuss (1879), Graf (1866) and Kuenen develops a unitary theory of the sources of the Pentateuch as well as their chronological dating. He published his findings in his work *Die Komposition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des A T* (The Composition of the Hexateuch and the historical books of the OT) in 1889

At this point a warning is necessary, Wellhausen does not speak of Pentateuch but of Hexateuch as he considers that the Pentateuch is lame without the book of Joshua, since it is in this book that the conquest of the land promised by God to Israel is narrated. Although this division has not been unanimously accepted by specialists, some others like the very influential Gerhard Von Rad follow him on this point and also speak of Hexateuch.

According to Wellhausen the first six books of the Bible would have been made up of four previous documents, the Yahwist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist and the Priestly. These four documents or sources are usually referred to by the initial of their German name: JEDP. The earliest of these documents is the **YAHWIST (J)**, written in the Kingdom of Juda around 850 BC. The **ELOHIST (E)** would be dated a century later in the Northern Kingdom. It would be in 722 when these two documents came into contact when Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians. The Israelites who fled to Juda would take with them their Elohist traditions that would end up merging with the Yahwist (J+E). About a century later dates the formation of the **DEUTERONOMIST** document (**D**) which soon after would be integrated with the other two (J + E + D). In the middle of the 5th century BC

the **PRIESTLY** document (**P**) would emerge. Finally, around the year 400 all these documents would have been compiled together giving origin to the Pentateuch



We could summarize his views in the following chart:

This theory was successful and ended up with many supporters. However, it must be said that there have always been great differences between them, to the extent that there are practically no two specialists who hold the same positions. The proponents of this theory not only differ in the dating of the documents but also in their extension and even on their purpose. Issues that are essential in themselves. In any case, this theory is the classic starting point among specialists.

With the work of **H. Gunkel** a new orientation emerges, the so-called History of Forms. Gunkel, studying the first chapter of Genesis, realized that, although its composition was

relatively recent, it contained very old materials. Thus, he concluded, it was necessary to discover within each of these four documents identified by Wellhausen (JEDP) the previous literary forms and to establish how they had been incorporated into the different documents. Therefore, for him, the main focus was not on the long units but on these basic units that made up the longer documents. These previous units [legends, stories, poems...] had to be carefully studied and an effort had to be made to determine the *SITZ IM LEBEN* [here, at last, appears the expression that from Gunkel onwards will become obligatory in biblical exegesis and that gives the translators so many headaches], that is, the "life setting", "the context" of the Israel that gave rise to each of these units. It was also necessary to determine the literary genres common to extra-biblical literature and the ultimate theological purpose of each minor unit [*GATTUNG*, this is another German word that became the common heritage of exegetes and that like the expression *Sitz im Leben* is often left in German, regardless of the language in which the author writes, since they have become technical terms of biblical science].

The next stage in the research would come from the studies of another German exegete, **Gerald von Rad**, whose works gave birth to the so-called "History of Tradition". G. von Rad abandoned the study of these minor units and set out to find the traditions underlying each of the Wellhausen JEDP documents. In his opinion, the origin of these traditions would be in the liturgical feasts with their ritual formulas and in their confessions of faith [in other words, their creeds]. For von Rad, confessions of faith in God's action in history would provide the basis for the four narrative threads that make up the Pentateuch.

Of course, Gunkel and von Rad have their schools, but they and their schools still accept the fundamental assumptions of Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis. In view of the harsh attacks that the documentary hypothesis has been receiving over the last thirty years, there have been some attempts to modify it without rejecting the essence of its approaches. The main one is the so-called, "*Complementary Hypothesis*" of **Peter Weimar**, among those who support this thesis we can mention **F. Langlamet**, **Félix García López**. I will not say anything about this theory. From this hypothesis arises that of successive re-readings, according to which the formation of the Pentateuch was carried out through successive editions and not through the addition of new documents. The main proponent of this theory is the Belgian exegete J. Vermeeylen. These different editions sought to provide answers to specific problems and situations.

All those hypotheses and theories mentioned so far are heirs to Wellhausen's works and somehow still rest on their foundations. But, as stated above, the acceptance of the documentary hypothesis was not universal and from the beginning it had harsh contradictors. And now we are going to take a quick look at the critics with Wellhausen's theory.

The *SCANDINAVIAN SCHOOL* [**J. Pedersen** (1931), **A. Bentzen** (1948), **E. Engnell** (1947)] and, to a lesser extent, **Mowinckell** opened up new perspectives for the study of the formation of the Pentateuch. They accused the Wellhausen school of relying too much on written texts, forgetting that for the peoples of antiquity, orality was a phenomenon

of greater importance than writing and that most knowledge and stories were transmitted orally from one generation to another for many centuries before being written down. They insist again and again that there is no point in relying on written documents that probably never existed.

The most influential author of the last decades is **R. Rendtorff** who, from 1975, would mark a new stage in the exegesis of the Pentateuch. According to him, if we set aside the Deuteronomy and the legal bodies, the Pentateuch is formed by a series of independent units that were later linked by means of connecting texts. According to his theory, in the Pentateuch, as we know it, there are five main themes, namely: the proto-history [Gen. 1-11], the history of the patriarchs [Gen. 12-50], the stories about Moses and the departure from Egypt [Ex. 1-14], the accounts of the revelation at Sinai [Ex. 19-24; 32-34], and the accounts of the journey through the desert and the conquest of the land [Ex. 16-18; Num. 11-20]. Rendtorff sees it as impossible to discover a common thread between these units, each one having its own theology and being independent of the others. Only later did they become linked by "bridge units" until they formed a logical narrative unit. It is not possible, therefore, to look for four sources with their own theological intention, each story had its own; therefore, the theory of the sources is pure fiction.

This trend is enthusiastically supported by other specialists, among whom **H.H. Schmid**, **J. Van Seters** and **Erhard Blum**, a disciple of Rendtorff who has developed his own theory based on the theory of his master, although occasionally separating himself from him. Erhard Blum ultimately sees the Pentateuch as the result of a covenant between the two dominant parties in the Second Temple Israel, the landlords of Juda on the one hand and the priests of Jerusalem on the other.

In more recent times, **R. Norman Whybray**, who was a professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the University of Hull, published a book that seeks to make a definitive break with Wellhausen's classical hypothesis and even with other attempts at explanation, ***The making of the Pentateuch. A Methodological Study***, Sheffield 1987. According to Whybray Rendtorff, Van Setters and Blum do not draw all the consequences of their approaches by defending two different and successive editions. For him, apart from a few additions, there is no reason why the first global version of the Pentateuch could not also be the definitive version, the work of a single historian. Of course, this historian as well as other historians of the Antiquity had at his disposal other sources that he used for his work.

A personal reflection to finish with:

After having exposed all this somehow confusing and complex panorama, my view is that the atomization of the Pentateuch has been taken too far, so that in the end it has been disintegrated into an endless number of fragments and units that hardly make sense. Sometimes a verse or a word is discussed, which, in my opinion, is meaningless. Such small units can be placed, practically, in any origin that suits any given theory. It is clear, for me, that there is an urgent need to leave the history of writing in the

background and focus on the message that the Pentateuch, as a literary unit, brings. What must be considered is the finished work, as it has come into our hands, because whether there has been one editor or many, one tradition or many, this text which we now have is the one which the last editor or editors considered to be the best. Today one can see the need for a coherent biblical theology, capable of embracing the various lines of thought, reflected in the books of the OT, within the unity that constitutes the Bible. The text we have and as we have is what we must reflect upon, both theologically and ecclesiologically. And this not because of a lack of scientific vocation or mental laziness, but because it is clearly impossible to know exactly what the process of writing the Pentateuch was, and how many writers or editors it had, and what oral traditions they knew or what documents they had in front of them. So, let us embrace what we have and let us make the most of it.

5.4. Unit 4

5.4.1. Against Marcion, Book III, chapter 23

When Jacob sees in his dream the steps of a ladder set upon the earth, and reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending thereon, and the Lord standing above, we shall without hesitation venture to suppose, that by this ladder the Lord has in judgment appointed that the way to heaven is shown to men, whereby some may attain to it, and others fall therefrom. For why, as soon as he awoke out of his sleep, and shook through a dread of the spot, does he fall to an interpretation of his dream? He exclaims, How terrible is this place! And then adds, This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven! Genesis 28:12-17 For he had seen Christ the Lord, the temple of God, and also the gate by whom heaven is entered. Now surely he would not have mentioned the gate of heaven, if heaven is not entered in the dispensation of the Creator. But there is now a gate provided by Christ, which admits and conducts to glory. Of this Amos says: He builds His ascensions into heaven; Amos 9:6 certainly not for Himself alone, but for His people also, who will be with Him. And You shall bind them about You, says he, like the adornment of a bride. Isaiah 49:18 Accordingly the Spirit, admiring such as soar up to the celestial realms by these ascensions, says, They fly, as if they were kites; they fly as clouds, and as young doves, unto me Isaiah 60:8 — that is, simply like a dove. For we shall, according to the apostle, be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord (even the Son of man, who shall come in the clouds, according to Daniel Daniel 7:13) and so shall we ever be with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 so long as He remains both on the earth and in heaven, who, against such as are thankless for both one promise and the other, calls the elements themselves to witness: Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth. Isaiah 1:2 Now, for my own part indeed, even though Scripture held out no hand of heavenly hope to me (as, in fact, it so often does), I should still possess a sufficient presumption of even this promise, in my present enjoyment of the earthly gift; and I should look out for something also of the heavenly, from Him who is the God of heaven as well as of earth. I should thus believe that the Christ who promises the higher blessings is (the Son) of Him who had also promised the lower ones; who had, moreover, afforded proofs of greater gifts by smaller ones; who had reserved for His Christ alone this revelation of a (perhaps) unheard of kingdom, so that, while the earthly glory was announced by His servants, the heavenly might have God Himself for its messenger. You, however, argue for another Christ, from the very circumstance that He proclaims a new kingdom. You ought first to bring forward some example of His beneficence, that I may have no good reason for doubting the credibility of the great promise, which you say ought to be hoped for; nay, it is before all things necessary that you should prove that a heaven belongs to Him, whom you declare to be a promiser of heavenly things. As it is, you invite us to dinner, but do not point out your house; you assert a kingdom, but show us no royal state. Can it be that your Christ promises a kingdom of heaven, without having a heaven; as He displayed Himself man, without having flesh? O what a phantom from first to last! O hollow pretence of a mighty promise!

5.4.2. The cryptic message of Ben Ezra de Toledo And Spinoza's explanation

"You will not understand its true meaning if you do not grasp: the secret of twelve; Moses wrote the law; then the Canaanites were in the land; on the mountain of the Lord it shall be provided; its bed was a bed of iron."

According to Spinoza, these enigmatic phrases underline some essential difficulties that oppose the traditional attribution of the Pentateuch to Moses: the Pentateuch was too long to have been written on the twelve stones of Deuteronomy 27:2-7 (cf. Joshua 8:35); Moses could not have said, in the past, that the Canaanites "were in the country", since they were still there at the time of the judges, long after their death; the mountain of the Lord (Gen. 22:14) seems to allude to the temple of Jerusalem, which will be built only under Solomon; finally, the tradition about the iron bed of Og, king of Basan, cannot emanate from Moses, contemporary of this king. Spinoza concluded that Ibn Ezra's reference to "the truth", and other such references scattered throughout Ibn Ezra's commentary in reference to seemingly anachronistic verses, as *"a clear indication that it was not Moses who wrote the Pentateuch but someone else who lived long after him, and that it was a different book that Moses wrote"*.