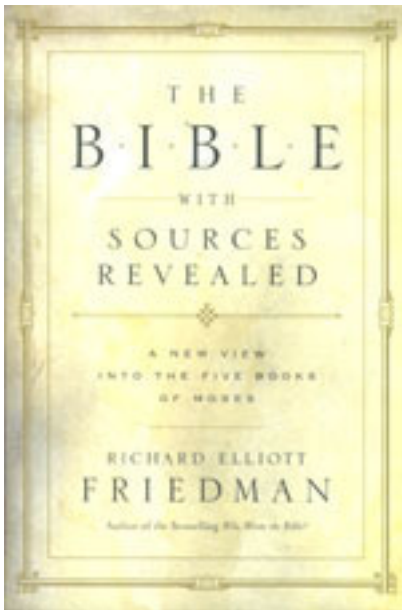


RBL 06/2006



**Friedman, Richard Elliott**

***The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses***

San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. Pp. 379, Hardcover, \$29.95, ISBN 0060530693.

Christoph Levin

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München  
Munich, Germany D-80799

With this volume, the author of the best-selling introduction *Who Wrote the Bible?* presents a translation of the Torah in which the sources and redactions are typographically indicated. Apart from a few personal idiosyncrasies, Friedman is a supporter of the Documentary Hypothesis in the form that emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century and that was the “customary” hypothesis in pentateuchal research until it was emphatically called in question (in English-language research, first by F. V. Winnett in 1965). Accordingly, Friedman distributes the text between the sources J, E, P, and D. To these are added the redactions: R<sup>JE</sup> (which fuses J and E into JE), R (which fused JE, P, and D), other independent texts, Gen 14 as a source of its own, Deuteronomy (Dtn), and two redactional layers within Deuteronomy: Dtr1 (from the time of Josiah), and Dtr2 (from exilic times).

The translation takes up almost the whole of the book (33–368). It is supplemented by a brief bibliography (369–79) that refers the reader to other works by Friedman and to select titles on pentateuchal research. Recent German-language exegesis is not taken into account, with the exception of E. Blum, R. Rendtorff (in English translation) and H. H. Schmid, and there is no discussion of even their positions. For Friedman, the Documentary Hypothesis is, essentially speaking, self-evident.

The book begins with a brief introduction in which the Documentary Hypothesis is justified with “seven main arguments” (1–31). These arguments are of varying force. (1) The assertion that the sources can be distinguished according to their position in the history of the Hebrew language is not supported by a single example. This is not by chance. (2) The list of terminology names a number of typical P phrases and D phrases and only four examples from J (8–10). This, too, is not fortuitous. (3) The “consistent content” refers to the revelation of the name for God and otherwise to the provisions for the cult, the cultic personnel, and the numerical system (10–12). Again, P prevails. (4) The narrative flow, on the other hand, is demonstrated mainly on the basis of the non-Priestly text, and from the fused stratum JE at that, not from the sources J and E themselves (13). This argument can also be read as a pointer to a certain weakness in the Documentary Hypothesis. (5) The well known tradition-history connections between the book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, between Ezekiel and the Priestly Code, between the book of Hosea and the Elohist, and between the sources for the books of Samuel (the “Court History”) and the Yahwist (14–18) are not dependent on the Documentary Hypothesis; they retain their validity even if other hypotheses are adopted. The direction of the dependence is not as certain as Friedman seems to think. For example, it can be shown that P was originally dependent on Ezekiel, not vice versa.

(6) With regard to the historical setting of J, Friedman cites the traditional arguments generally used in localizing this source in Judah. Surprisingly, he dates J as belonging to the period of the divided kingdom, thereby taking too little account of the fact that most of the stories about the patriarchs are set in the northern kingdom of Israel and that the tribes are there presented as a unity, which was no longer the case after Israel and Judah had separated (18ff.). Closer to the customary view is the dating of the Elohist, which is placed in the northern kingdom of Israel. What is strange is the proposal (21–24) that P should be dated as belonging to the period of Hezekiah (715–687 B.C.E.). Friedman ignores many cogent arguments according to which P did not precede Deuteronomy but succeeded it. On the other hand, as regards the connection between Deuteronomy and Josiah, he follows the generally accepted arguments (24–26). The same is true of the sequence JE–P (24–26ff.). About the relationship of the Elohist to Deuteronomism (which was an important question in earlier research), the reader learns nothing. The Deuteronomistic redaction is presented according to F M. Cross’s block model, simply as an undiscussed fact. Other solutions are not mentioned.

(7) No doubt the strongest argument for the Documentary Hypothesis is that of convergence (27–31), and I agree with Friedman “that this hypothesis best accounts for the fact that all this evidence of so many kinds comes together so consistently” (28). But this also is true only with some reservations. It is not without justice that the existence of the source E has been questioned by many scholars since W. Rudolph and P. Volz, *Der*

*Elohist als Erzähler: Ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?* (Giessen, 1933). It is basic for the understanding of biblical literary history that the Supplementary Hypothesis is the “normal hypothesis” (even within the Pentateuch) and that the Documentary Hypothesis (i.e., the fusion of *two* literary sources) is only a notable exception.

The subtitle calls the undertaking “a new look into the five books of Moses.” This is not in every respect correct. There were almost from the beginning several comparable presentations of the text differentiated according to sources. An early example was K. D. Ilgen’s *Urkunden des Jerusalemischen Tempelarchivs in ihrer Urgestalt* (Halle, 1798). Ilgen presented the sources in German translation, as E. Kautzsch and A. Socin also did later in *Die Genesis mit aeusserer Unterscheidung der Quellschriften übersetzt* (Freiburg, 1888). The English equivalent was W. E. Addis, *Documents of the Hexateuch* (London, 1892). Another possibility was the edition of the Hebrew text, as in E. Boehmer, *Liber Genesis Pentateuchicus* (Halle, 1860), or the volumes of the famous Polychrome Bible edited by P. Haupt, *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament: A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text Printed in Colors, with Notes* (Leipzig, 1894, 1896, 1900; the only books of the Pentateuch to appear here were *Genesis*, by C. J. Ball; *Leviticus*, by S. R. Driver and H. A. White; and *Numbers*, by J. A. Paterson.) O. Eißfeldt’s German *Hexateuch synopsis* (Leipzig, 1922) had a wide circulation. From a later period A. Campbell and M. O’Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis, 1993) deserves mention. In commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers, in so far as they include a translation, differentiation according to the sources of the Pentateuch is the rule.

The very authors who offer a version of the pentateuchal sources without a commentary are apt to overvalue the persuasive power of this presentation. The difficulties of the Documentary Hypothesis have seldom been more clearly demonstrated than by Eißfeldt’s *Hexateuch synopsis*. It could not have been better invented by the opponents of the hypothesis themselves.

Friedman calls his translation “the largest collection of evidence ever assembled in one place concerning this hypothesis” (i.e., the Documentary Hypothesis). This considerable claim can only relate to the fact that the compilation deviates from earlier work by now including the whole of Leviticus, the law-related parts of Numbers, and the whole of Deuteronomy. Admittedly, the evidential value of this expansion is limited, because a differentiation of sources does not in any case come into question in these texts or—as in the main section of the book of Deuteronomy—is related not to the Documentary Hypothesis but to the redaction history of the Deuteronomistic History.

An erroneous impression is even given when, for example, the whole of Leviticus is assigned without differentiation to the Priestly Code, with the exception of the commandment about booths, Lev 23:39–43, and the mention of the exile at the close of the curse in Lev 26:39–45, both of which are assigned to the redaction R for historical reasons, not literary ones. (The Holiness Code is only referred to in a footnote on p. 218, and then without presenting the reader with a definite opinion.) An over-simplification of this kind gives a false impression of the literary character of the sources. Earlier research never distinguished the sources in as undifferentiated a way as Friedman, and anyone who has eyes to see can perceive even on the basis of the English translation that the simple coherence that Friedman suggests through the typography does not in fact exist.

What is really “new” in Friedman are a number of decisions in which he deviates from the generally received view. On the one hand, these make the book interesting for the discussion, but on the other they are a problem. To take one example, Friedman assumes a separate source for Gen 5:1–28, 30–32; 7:6; 9:28–29; 11:10–26, 32a: the Book of Records. This hypothesis, which is based on Gen 5, can be found in earlier research as well. It is based on the deviating *toledot* formula in Gen 5:1 (*sefer toledot* instead of *toledot*), but Friedman does not define the Book of Records as a source within the framework of P (which would make sense) but as a source *parallel* to P that was only linked to the other sources by R. In this way he destroys a fundamental premise of the Documentary Hypothesis: the genealogical and chronological framework of P. The *toledot* formula usually counts as characteristic of P, but Friedman now assigns it to R (Gen 2:4a; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2a). It is supposed to have been taken over in imitation from the Book of Records. Only 36:9 is left to P, no reason for this being given. In the face of such arbitrary proceedings, academic teaching is better served by a “conventional” account such as those offered by Campbell and O’Brien.

The fact that Friedman has examined the share of R is undoubtedly useful. Earlier the customary procedure was to distribute the text between the sources without any remainder, and this was one of the contestable aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis. But Friedman still underestimates the share of the redaction, and above all he ignores the part of the text that was added only after the fusion of P and J and that can be designated through the siglum R<sup>S</sup> (= supplements to the final redaction). There are numerous texts in the Pentateuch to which the proven criteria of source differentiation cannot be applied, because they combine the characteristics of several sources. In such cases it is better to dispense with forced analyses and to accept that these passages already presuppose the redactional combination of the pentateuchal sources. According to my own impression, about a third of the text of the book of Genesis is later than the fusion between P and J (e.g., Gen 14; 15; 20–22\*; 34; 38; 46\*; 48; 49). In the books Exodus to Numbers, where earlier research already reckoned with extensive revision, the share may well be greater

still. We may remember the famous judgment of one of the fathers of the Documentary Hypothesis, A. Kuenen, in his *Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch* (London, 1886, 315): “The redaction of the Hexateuch, then, assumes the form of a continuous diaskeue or diorthosis, and the redactor becomes a collective body ... including the whole series of his more or less independent followers.” Anyone who wishes (and with justice!) to defend the Documentary Hypothesis can do so successfully only if he or she does not ignore the criticism leveled at it during past decades but integrates it.