

HOW TANAKH EVOLVED

- **AUTHORSHIP III**
 - **CANONIZATION**
 - **MASORETIC TEXT**
 - **INTERPRETATION (TRANSLATIONS & COMMENTARIES)**
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TORAH

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

PROPHETS

(early)

Joshua
Judges
Samuel (1-2)
Kings (1-2)

(later)

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
Minor Prophets

WRITINGS

(major)

Psalms
Proverbs
Job

(minor)

Song of Songs
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther

Daniel
Ezra (Nehemiah)
Chronicles (1-2)

Moses ✓	His own book; the Portion (<i>parashah</i>) of Balaam; Job
Joshua ✓	His own book; ² eight verses in the Torah
Samuel	His own book; Judges; Ruth
David	Psalms
Jeremiah	His own book; Kings; Lamentations
Hezekiah et. al.	Isaiah; Proverbs; Song of Songs; Ecclesiastes
Men of the Great Assembly	Ezekiel; Twelve (“Minor”) Prophets; Daniel; the Scroll of Esther
Ezra	His own book; Chronicles up to his time
Nehemiah	The balance of Chronicles

JOSHUA WROTE HIS BOOK

[AND EIGHT VERSE IN THE TORAH]

[You say that] Joshua wrote his book.

But is it not written, “And Joshua son of Nun the servant of the Lord died?”

— It was completed by Eleazar.

But it is also written in it, “And Eleazar the son of Aaron died?”

— Phineas finished it.

(Baba Batra 15a)

אברבנאל יהושע הקדמה

אמר בהקמת האבנים בתוך הירדן (שם ד' ט') ויהיו שם עד היום הזה, ואמר בענין המילה ויקרא את שם המקום ההוא גלגל עד היום הזה, ואמר בעכנ (שם ז' כ"ו) על כן קרא למקום ההוא עמק עכור עד היום הזה, ובגבעונים נאמר (שם ט' כ"ז) ויתנם יהושע ביום ההוא חוטבי עצים ושואבי מים לעדה ולמזבח ה' עד היום הזה, ואמר (שם י"ד י"ד) על כן היה חברון לכלב בן יפונה הקניזי לנחלה עד היום הזה, ובנחלת בני יהודה אמר (שם ט"ו ס"ב) ואת היבوسی יושבי ירושלם לא יוכלו בני יהודה להורישם וישב היבوسی את בני יהודה בירושלם עד היום הזה, וכן נאמר בנחלת אפרים (שם ט"ז י') וישב הכנעני בקרב אפרים עד היום הזה ויהי למס עובד. ואם יהושע כתב כל זה איך יאמר בהם עד היום הזה?

והנה הכתיבה היתה סמוכה לעשיית הדברים ההמה, וכח מאמר "עד היום הזה" יורה בהכרח שנכתב זמן רב אחרי שקרו הדברים.

If Joshua wrote all these, how could he say to this very day? He wrote soon after these events, while "to this very day" necessarily implies a considerable time after the events transpired.

SAMUEL WROTE HIS BOOK AND JUDGES AND RUTH

[You say that] Samuel wrote the book that bears his name.
But is it not written in it, “Now Samuel was dead?”
— It was completed by Gad the seer and Nathan the
prophet.

(Baba Batra 15a)

THE DOCTRINE OF POSTERITY

נבואה שהוצרכה לדורות נכתבה,
ושלא הוצרכה לא נכתבה.

A prophecy (possibly: prophetic mission) that was required for posterity was recorded, and one that was not required was not recorded.

***DAVID WROTE THE PSALMS
BY MEANS OF (על ידי) TEN ELDERS**

Psalms 72:20

כָּלוּ תַפְלוֹת דָּוִד בֶּן-יֵשׁוּ:

“End of the prayers of David son of Jesse.”

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיז עמוד א

תניא: היה רבי מאיר אומר:

כל תושבחות האמורות בספר תהלים - כלן דוד אמרן,

שנאמר "כלו תפלות דוד בן ישי"; אל תיקרי כָּלוּ אלא כָּל אֱלוֹ:

Rabbi Meir said: All the praises recited in the Book of Psalms were recited by David... Do not read "David's prayers ended" (*kalu*), rather "All these" (*kol eilu*) [are David's prayers].

Seven of the “ten elders” have their names listed in various invocations to individual psalms, while the remaining three are identifiable only through midrashic tradition.

- Adam is credited with Psalm 92 (“A song for the Sabbath day”);
- Melchizedek with Psalm 110;23 and
- Abraham is identified as “Ethan the Ezrahite,” whose name appears in Psalm 89 (“I shall forever sing of God’s graces”).

Se`adyah Gaon, who attributed the entire book to David, noted that all those seven “co-authors” mentioned by name (Eitan, Heiman, Yedutun, Asaf and the three sons of Korach) were Levites—as was Moses (Ps. 90:1). His conclusion: David authored the psalms and then delivered them to the Levites to be sung.



*JEREMIAH WROTE HIS OWN BOOK AND KINGS --- AND LAMENTATIONS

(a) His Own Book

The prophet himself figures prominently and consistently throughout the Book of Jeremiah. He also notes explicitly that he gave frequent dictation to his scribe, Baruch ben Neriah (see 32:12–14; 36:4ff.).

(b) Kings

The Book of Kings, like the Book of Judges, requires an author/compiler who post-dated the era it describes. Since Kings concludes with the destruction of the First Temple and the beginning of the Babylonian Exile, Jeremiah was in a unique position, being both beyond the era and yet close enough to have had access to the records, written and oral, on which the book is based. The written records, we suggest, were the chronicles kept by the kings of Judea and of the Northern Kingdom (see e.g. I Kings 14:19, 29). Jeremiah may have obtained access to these during the reign of King Josiah, when the prophet's prestige and credibility were at their highest.



(c) Lamentations

One case for Jeremiah's authorship of Lamentations was made by Rashi (1040–1105), who relied upon Jeremiah's own book. There (36:4 ff.), Jeremiah reports that he wrote a scroll that King Jehoiakim tore up, and afterward he rewrote it, adding an additional portion of equal size (verse 32).

Rashi saw this as an exact description of the Book of Lamentations, which, he proposes, originally consisted of three single alphabetic chapters (1, 2, and 4) and was supplemented later by the triple-alphabetic Chapter 3.

“PROPHETS” (נביאים) AND “WRITINGS” (כתובים): WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

At this juncture, it will pay to note a singular feature of authorship that is shared by two of the authors we have already discussed, Samuel and Jeremiah.

Each of them—and no other author—is credited with three works of authorship/compilation, comprising one book that is a collected history (Judges and Kings), one that focuses on the author’s personal mission (Samuel and Jeremiah), and one that was later assigned to the category of [General] “Writings” (Ruth and Lamentations).

*HEZEKIAH AND HIS ENTOURAGE WROTE ISAIAH, PROVERBS, SONG OF SONGS, & ~~ECCLESIASTES~~

- **Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes**

• “גַּם אֱלֹה מִשְׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה אֲשֶׁר הָעֵתִיקוּ אַנְשֵׁי חֲזִקְיָה מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה:”

“These too are proverbs of Solomon that the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, transcribed” (Proverbs 25:1).

In 1 Kings 5:12, we are informed that Solomon “spoke three thousand proverbs and composed 1,005 songs.” Solomon may have been an aphorist and a composer, but, apparently, he was not a redactor. No similar testimony exists regarding Ecclesiastes, but the shared authorship of that book and Proverbs suggests that they underwent similar redaction.

(a) Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah poses a slightly different problem. While Proverbs 25:1 clearly warrants the book's attribution to Hezekiah—and, by logical extension, that of the other two traditionally Solomonic works—there is no comparable verse in Isaiah. Indeed, why could Isaiah not have redacted his own book?

It would appear that the *baraita's* reference to Hezekiah and his entourage, particularly in the light of the aforementioned “men of Hezekiah, King of Judah”, must be understood as an editorial board established by Hezekiah and bearing his name, which continued to function even after his death.



*THE MEN OF THE GRAND ASSEMBLY WROTE EZEKIEL, TWELVE-PROPHETS, DANIEL, & THE SCROLL OF ESTHER

Two questions arise apropos of the *baraita*'s statement regarding the Men of the Great Assembly.

First, who were these men? Second, what is particular to the books of Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther that makes these men their likeliest authors or editors?

Rashi (Baba Batra 15a) asked, rhetorically: “Why couldn’t Ezekiel have written his own book?”

Three of the four (Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther) originate in the period of the Babylonian Exile, while the fourth (the Twelve Prophets) is an anthology that spans a sizeable portion of the First Temple period but concludes with the Return to Zion and the establishment of the Second Commonwealth (the traditional dating of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

Why were books of similarly small size, such as four of the five *Megillot* (Scrolls), not collected? Indeed, Ruth consists of only four chapters and Lamentations just five, compared with fourteen chapters each for Hosea and Zechariah.



*EZRA WROTE HIS OWN BOOK & THE GENEALOGY OF CHRONICLES UP TO HIS TIME

Both the Book of Ezra and the major portion of the Book of Chronicles are patently the work of an author/redactor who postdated the end of the Babylonian Captivity and the Return to Zion, while also having access to the records of earlier events.

Ezra is the prime candidate for such a position. Indeed, largely due to his historical positioning, Ezra—known as Ezra the Scribe (*ha-sofehr*)—occupies a place of particular importance among the authors and editors of the Tanakh. One Talmudic source (Sanhedrin 21b) even goes so far as to compare him to Moses:

ראוי היה עזרא שתינתן תורה על ידו לישראל, אילמלא קדמו משה.

“Ezra was worthy that the Torah be given through him had Moses not preceded him.”



EDITORIAL DISCRETION IN TANAKH: THE EVIDENCE OF SENNACHERIB'S INVASION

2 KINGS 18:13

ISAIAH 36:1

2 CHRONICLES 32:1

וּבְאַרְבַּע עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ חֲזַקְיָהוּ,
עָלָה סִנְחַרִּיב מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר עַל כָּל עָרֵי
יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת וַיִּתְּפָשֶׂם.

Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and **took them.**

וַיְהִי בְאַרְבַּע עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ
חֲזַקְיָהוּ, עָלָה סִנְחַרִּיב מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר
עַל כָּל עָרֵי יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת
וַיִּתְּפָשֶׂם.

Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and **took them.**

אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים וְהַאֲמַת הָאֱלֹהִים בָּא
סִנְחַרִּיב מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר, וַיָּבֹא בִיהוּדָה,
וַיַּחֲזֵן עַל הָעָרִים הַבְּצֻרוֹת, וַיֹּאמֶר
לְבַקְעַם אֵלָיו.

After these things, and this faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fortified cities, and **thought to make a breach therein for himself.**