



Who Wrote Genesis?  
Does it Matter?  
St. John Lutheran Church

# Moses

- Traditional authorship is Moses
- Deuteronomy 31:9 — (NIV)
  - So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.
- Authorship Moses undisputed for 1800 years

# Multiple Sources

- 1753 French physician Jean Astruc
  - Some narratives use Yahweh for God
  - Some narratives use Elohim for God
- Concludes two sources for Genesis

# P, J, and E (and R)

- Priestly source
- Narrative sources J and E
- Some say there is an R (for redactor)
- Fourth source in the Pentateuch, D, for the author of Deuteronomy

# Four Sources for Hexateuch

- J for Yahwist 960-930 BC, traces Israel's history
- E for Elohist 850 BC written after the collapse of the united monarchy. History that starts with patriarchs, not creation
- D for Deuteronomist ~620 BC, Josiah? Not used in Genesis
- P for Priestly writer 550-450 BC. Written after the Babylonian exile?

# A Possible History

- 1) Oral assembly small narrative 1800-1200 BC
- 2) Smaller narratives into larger 1200-1000 BC
- 3) Writing of J 950 BC
- 4) Writing of E 850 BC
- 5) Redaction of J & E
- 6) Writing of P 550 BC, or later
- 7) Redaction 400 BC

# Why do we care about source theory?

- Some important stories told twice, why?
- Creation, call of Abraham,
- From Westermann: “Story of the flood is the only narrative where J and P are mingled together. It is both significant and understandable that only in Gen 6-9 did R shape one narrative out of the two that lay before him.”

# Not Everyone Agrees (of course)

- From Hamilton (an evangelical), 1990:
- Kikawada (1974, 1985)
  - Genesis 1-11 has a five part structure
  - Mirrors 5 part structure of the Atrahasis Epic
  - Five part structure of Gen 1-11 mirrors five part structure of Genesis as a whole.
  - Genesis 1-11 parallels later history of the Davidic monarchy: Adam & Eve parallel David & Bathsheba, Cain and Abel parallel Amnon and Absalom, Noah and the flood parallel the rebellion of Absalom, the Tower of Babel parallels Solomon and his temple.
- Kikawada provides evidence that Genesis 1-11 is “anything but a patchwork.”
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# Sven Tengstrom

- Hexateuch composed at or near Shechem, an epic work
- If the Hexateuch was composed during the united monarchy, why is Jerusalem rarely mentioned?
- Why is Shechem so prominent from Genesis 12:6 to Joshua 24:1?

# Radday & Shore

- 1985 computer based word-level linguistic analysis of Genesis.
- Evidence is that Genesis is a unity, not a composite work.

# Back to the Flood...

- Von Rad (1972)
  - J 7:1-5, 7, 16b, 8-10, 12, 17b, 22-23, 8:6a, 2b, 3a, 6b, 8-12, 13b, 20
  - P 6:9-22, 7:6, 11, 13-16a, 17a, 18-21, 24: 8:1-22, 3b, 4-5, 7, 13a, 15-19
- Does this help? If so, how?

# From Hamilton

- Flood story shifts back and forth the way it refers to the deity, sometimes Yahweh (Lord), sometimes in a more general way, Elohim.
- Those who perceive a doublet in Gen 6-9 appeal to this.
- There are other explanations;
  - Gen 6-9 uses more general Elohim unless there is a special reason for Yahweh
  - In places where deity is thematic, Yahweh is used. Examples:
    - Yahweh in Gen 6:5-8 where God is the thematic participant
    - Elohim in Gen 6:9-22, where Noah is the thematic participant

# From Hamilton Gen 7:6-16

- A major feature of epic literature is that it uses resumption and summarization
- Gen 7:6-16
  - Flood v. 6
  - Entry into the ark v. 7-9
  - Flood v. 10-12
  - Entry into the ark v. 13-16

# From Hamilton Gen 7:6-16

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. 7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. 8 Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, 9 two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. 10 And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, 14 they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. 15 They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. 16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in.