The Fundamental Question

An Investigation into the Historical Origins of the Bible

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SECTION 1

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.

George Orwell, 1949, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

This Section 1 summarises the conclusions reached in the biblical quest that is the subject of this book. It has been inserted here, at the beginning of the discussion, in order to provide the reader with a clear picture of where the analysis is headed and what the conclusions are.

This book is about the origins of the Bible. It seeks to answer the fundamental question of whether the major events in the Bible's first six books, the foundation documents of the entire Biblical Tradition, are a true account of real events, or not, by:

- Examining what the Bible says.
- Developing a biblical time setting for those events described in the Bible's early books that likely would have left a historical or archaeological imprint, such as the Exodus from Egypt and the Conquest of Canaan, roughly set in a literary time-frame between about 1450 and 1150 BC.
- Establishing a reasonably accurate historical framework for the entire Eastern Mediterranean and Near East over a much broader period than the literary setting of the Bible's early books in order to investigate a wide range of potential links between the biblical stories on the one hand, and the known history of the region on the other.
- Comparing the biblical account against the known history of the region over several alternative time ranges, particularly in the crucial period between 1550 and 1100 BC, to check for congruency.

Having determined that the Bible's first six books are not historically accurate, we then go on to propose a hypothesis about the historical origins of the Biblical Tradition.

1.1 Conclusions

The conclusions reached in this work are summarised as follows:

1. The stories in the Bible's first six books are mythical rather than factual.
2. There is no historical evidence for the existence of the biblical Patriarchs.
3. No match between the major events described in the Bible's first six books and the historical events in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern region exists for any period during the 2nd millennium BC. The major events described in the Bible's first six books, therefore, are not a true account of historical events.
4. The stories in the first six books of the Bible are a literary construction rather than a historical work. The biblical Israelites ("Israelites_{B}") described in the Bible's first six books have no direct historical counterpart. Any attempt to find these Israelites_{B}, as distinct from the historical Israelites ("Israelites_{H}"), in the archaeological or epigraphical record is likely to fail.
5. The Biblical Tradition began in the historical kingdom of Judah ("kingdom of Judah_{H}") and not in the historical kingdom of Israel ("kingdom of Israel_{H}").
6. The earliest written texts that later became the Bible (called the "Proto-Biblical Literature" in this work) were created in the kingdom of Judah_{H} in the period between about 700 and 600 BC. The composition date of these early biblical texts occurred after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel_{H} in 722 BC, several hundred years after the original settlement of the ancestors of the Israelites_{H} in the central hill country of the Southern Levant.
7. Although the reasons for the introduction of the theopolitical religious ideology implicit in the Bible's first five books (called "Monotheistic Yahwism" in this work) and the reasons for the creation of the associated Proto-Biblical Literature are not known with any certainty, by examining the biblical texts themselves and the historical period in which they were created, we have been able to develop a hypothesis to explain the origins of the Biblical Tradition.

1.2 Historical Framework

The following summary outlines the key historical events, as attested by the extra-biblical record, that occurred around the time that the Biblical Tradition came into being.

1. There were a historical Israelite people (as distinct from the literary depiction of the people of the same name in the Bible) who were the subjects of a historical Canaanite kingdom that was known variously by the names, "Israel," "the House of Omri," "the Land of Omri," and "Samaria." This kingdom of Israel_{H} existed in the Southern Levant between about 900 and 722 BC. The date of its emergence predated the emergence of the Biblical Tradition by about two hundred years.
2. The Israelites_{H} descended from an earlier group of rural and semi-nomadic Canaanite people (called "Proto-Israelites" in this work) who lived in the central hill country of the Southern Levant. These Proto-Israelites almost certainly included

the historical tribal group encountered in the Southern Levant by the Egyptian pharaoh, Merneptah, and referenced as the "People of Israel" on the Merneptah Stele, dated to about 1208 BC.

3. The Proto-Israelites began to settle the central hill country in significant numbers only after about 1150 BC, following the collapse of the Egyptian colonial presence in Canaan. Contrary to the Biblical Tradition, these historical Proto-Israelites were ethnically Canaanite.

4. Although Yahweh was probably the principal god of the kingdom of $Israel_H$ (or certainly one of its main deities), the $Israelites_H$ were generally polytheistic or henotheistic and, therefore, technically would be classified as pagans under the modern meaning of that word. The kingdom of $Israel_H$ was a pagan Canaanite state and not a monotheistic Yahwist nation based on Mosaic Law, as suggested in the Bible.

5. Towards the end of the 8th century BC, the kingdom of $Judah_H$ was a relatively small semi-autonomous polity in the Southern Levant, ruled by a king, Hezekiah. It had become a nation-state around 750 BC. In 730 BC, its population was about 25,000 and the population of its capital, Jerusalem, was about 1,000.

6. In the latter half of the 8th century BC, the Nubian (or Kushite) Dynasty invaded the politically fragmented land of Egypt from the South. These Nubian invaders conquered the whole of Egypt and set up the 25th Dynasty, which ruled Egypt from about 727 to 656 BC.

7. Around the same time as the Nubians were conquering Egypt, the Assyrian armies were invading the Levant from the Northeast. They destroyed the kingdom of $Israel_H$ in about 722 BC. This resulted in many of the former subjects of the kingdom of $Israel_H$ fleeing south, as refugees, to the small Southern Levantine kingdom of $Judah_H$. About 70,000 former $Israelites_H$, almost 45% of the country's population, resettled in the kingdom of $Judah_H$ and soon outnumbered the native historical Judahites ("$Judahites_H$").

1.3 Hypothesis

The key points of the theory developed in this work to account for the origins of the Bible (called the "Hypothesis") are summarised as follows:

1. Political necessity rather than divine providence was responsible for the origin of the Bible's core traditions.

2. The origins of Monotheistic Yahwism can be traced to a series of religious and political reforms introduced by Hezekiah, the ruler of the kingdom of $Judah_H$, towards the end of the 8th century BC, as he tried to forge a single nation out of:
    - His own Judahite subjects who had become a minority in their own land.
    - The refugees from Israel who had become the largest population group in his small kingdom.

- An elite group of Libyan-Egyptian immigrants, whom, it is hypothesised, were educated, wealthy, politically astute, from the priestly aristocracy, and possessed of military skills.

The need to promote national unity within the kingdom of $Judah_H$, as it braced itself for an impending invasion by Assyria, appears to have been the primary motivating factor for the series of reforms that led to the creation of the Biblical Tradition.

3. A core aspect of Hezekiah's reforms appears to have been to officially elevate one of the more prominent of the Southern Canaanite gods, Yahweh, whom, it is surmised, was also the principal god of the $Israelite_H$ refugees, to the status of supreme national deity of the kingdom of $Judah_H$. This key political decision, which appears to have occurred some time between about 725 and 700 BC, was also one of the single most important theological acts leading to the Biblical Tradition.

4. The Biblical Tradition encompassed more than just the spiritual beliefs of a new religion. It was also conceived as a national political ideology to unify the heterogeneous subjects of the small kingdom of $Judah_H$, which had to accommodate thousands of new immigrants at the same time as it was preparing for the possibility of an invasion by Assyria. The Biblical Tradition constituted a foundation myth that sought to integrate three potentially divisive ethnic distinctions under the umbrella of a single biblical ideal of unified national identity defined by the fusion of:
   - The **ancestral lineage** or heritage of the Southern Canaanite people, who had come to be known as Hebrews.
   - The **nationality** of the historical Judahite, Israelite, and hypothetical Libyan-Egyptian subjects of the kingdom of Judah, who, thereafter, began to regard themselves as having descended from a single, albeit mythical, people, the $Israelites_B$. These historical subjects of Judah embraced the name of the largest population group in the country for themselves, namely, Israel.
   - The **religion** of the people, centered on the worship of one supreme national god, Yahweh.

5. The Proto-Biblical Literature constituted the political and religious foundation documents of the new 7^{th} century BC theocratic state, the kingdom of $Judah_H$. These documents, which embodied Judah's constitution or "Law," its religion, the supposed origins of its people and their legendary history, and the other foundation myths of the embryonic nation, represent the origins of the Biblical Tradition. Over several centuries, the collection of early written texts that constituted the Proto-Biblical Literature, after much rewording, editing, and consolidation, eventually became the Bible's first books.

6. The three most significant historical events that catalysed the birth of the Biblical Tradition occurred in the 8th century BC. These events are outlined as follows:

   6.1 The invasion of Egypt from the South, in the latter half of the 8th century BC, at a time during which the country was politically fragmented by the Nubian (or Kushite) Dynasty, set into motion a train of events that eventually led to the hypothetical migration of a group of Egyptians of Libyan descent, including one particular tribal group, the Maasha (or Meshwesh), from the eastern Nile Delta area, to the Southern Levant.

   This emigrating group probably included many priests of the supreme Egyptian god, Amun. The High Priests of Amun, who had previously formed a hereditary-based religious elite that had wielded considerable economic and political power over Egypt since the 16th century BC from its religious center at Thebes, were displaced from their privileged position in the latter part of the 8th century BC.

   6.2 The Assyrian invasion of the Southern Levant destroyed the kingdom of $Israel_H$ in about 722 BC. Many of its former subjects fled south, as refugees, to the small Southern Levantine kingdom of Judah.

   6.3 In the late 8th century BC, the king of Judah, Hezekiah (ca. 726 – 697 BC), attempted to strengthen his country against an impending Assyrian attack by uniting the various population groups in his country under the umbrella of a monotheistic form of Yahwism, which became a state-sponsored religion dedicated to the god, Yahweh, whom Hezekiah officially endorsed as the supreme national deity.

7. The core group, around which the religious ideology of the Biblical Tradition was based, came from Egypt. The key elements of this part of the Hypothesis are summarised as follows:

   7.1 In the late 8th century BC, a group of Libyan-Egyptians who had lived in Egypt for centuries and who were generally known as the Libu or Livu (and also as the *Levata*, *Luwata*, *Lwatae*, *Rebw*, or *Rebu*), which, it is suggested, was rendered as *Livu* (*Luvi* or *Lewi*) in Hebrew, migrated from their home in the eastern Nile Delta to the Southern Levant. A significant tribe within this hypothetical Libyan-Egyptian emigrating group was the Maasha (rendered in English as the Meshwesh, or simply by the abbreviated form, the Ma). Although some of the circumstances of these hypothetical immigrants are different from the events in the biblical account of the Exodus (such as the historical time setting for their departure from Egypt and their ethnic background), it is suggested that the underlying theme of the biblical Exodus, namely, that a group of migrants moved from the eastern Nile Delta carrying the seeds of a new religion to their adopted home in the Southern Levant, was based on such a hypothetical migration (or possibly several smaller but similar migrations in the same general time-frame).

7.2 The biblical figure of Moses was based on a hypothetical historical leader who lived in the 8th century BC (whom we have called "Maasha$_h$" in this work). It is suggested that the person who led the main group of Libyan-Egyptian immigrants to the Southern Levant was named after his tribe of origin, namely, the Maasha, whence, it is further suggested, the name of the biblical figure, Moses (or *Moshe* in Hebrew), was derived. This leader of the Hypothetical Exodus ("Exodus$_h$") would have been of Libyan-Egyptian extraction, rather than Hebrew as suggested in the Bible.

7.3 The historical nucleus of the Levitical priesthood was drawn from the Libyan-Egyptian high priests of Amun. This further implies that:

- A significant number of the former priestly caste serving the Egyptian supreme god, Amun, at Thebes, many of whom shared the same Libyan ancestry as the Libu (or Livu) in the Nile Delta, and their families, were included in the emigrating group.
- The biblical name, Levi, was derived from the Hebrew form, *Livu* (or *Luvi*, or *Lewi*), of the name of the Libu (or Livu) group from Egypt.
- The model for theopolitical control, including the principle of religious tithing, which had been successfully employed for centuries in Egypt by the High Priests of Amun, was used as the template for the structure of the Levitical priesthood in the kingdom of Judah.

7.4 The notional date for the migration of the main body of Libyan-Egyptian immigrants to the Southern Levant from Egypt was around 725 BC $\pm$ 25 years. This is the hypothetical date of the event which served as the inspiration for the biblical Exodus (the "Exodus$_h$ Date").

8. The population of the kingdom of Judah$_H$ in 701 BC, around the time of the emergence of the Biblical Tradition, is estimated to have been approximately 120,000 people, broken down as follows:

- Native Judahites$_H$ ~ 25%
- Israelite$_H$ Refugees ~ 67%
- Libyan-Egyptian Immigrants ~ 8%

Total: 100%

This composite mix of people comprised the historical people who gave rise to the Biblical Tradition and assumed the mantle as the inheritors of the biblical Covenant with Yahweh. To avoid confusion with other related terms in this work, we refer to the historical people who subscribed to the religious beliefs contained in the Bible's early books, as the "People$_H$ of the Biblical Tradition." This mixed group of Judahites$_H$ are the closest historical counterpart to the legendary people known in the Bible's first six books as the Israelites. In the Bible's first six books, these people are called, Sons (sons) of Israel, or Israelites, rather than Judahites, because the historical Israelite refugees, who had sought refuge in the kingdom of Judah$_H$

in the late 8th century BC, comprised the majority of that kingdom's population when the Biblical Tradition of a single people came into being.

9. The political structure that allowed the Biblical Tradition to emerge can be attributed to a conjectured agreement, in about 725 BC, between Hezekiah, the ruler of the kingdom of $Judah_H$ and the priests of Amun, led by the Hypothetical Moses, $Maasha_h$, that allowed the Libyan-Egyptian immigrants to settle peacefully in the kingdom of $Judah_H$. This conjectured agreement also allowed the Libyan-Egyptian priests in the hypothetical emigrating group (the "$Exodus_h$ Group") to work jointly with the king and local aristocracy to establish a new state-sponsored monotheistic religion controlled by a new priestly caste, who became known as the Levites.

10. A fundamental tenet of the new religion was that the people to whom it applied (namely, the subjects of the kingdom of $Judah_H$), and only them, had been chosen by their national god, Yahweh, to be governed by a divine agreement, the biblical Covenant, pursuant to which Yahweh would protect them from their enemies and bestow his favours upon them, provided they followed the terms and conditions of the Covenant.

11. The Proto-Biblical Literature, which was written between about 700 and 600 BC, arose as a natural consequence of the need to support the introduction of Monotheistic Yahwism to the kingdom of Judah and to promote Yahweh as the country's national god. Written texts were required to document, disseminate, and preserve the core traditions and beliefs of the new ideology in a consistent way. The original reason for writing these early biblical texts is traceable back to the same need for political unity that resulted in Monotheistic Yahwism becoming the state religion of the kingdom of $Judah_H$.

12. The underlying motive of the biblical authors in blending several different themes together in the way they did, was to fabricate a series of authoritative literary texts in order to create a unifying foundation myth, with which each of the formerly distinct ethnic groups in the kingdom of $Judah_H$ could identify. Two of the main themes that were combined in this way were:
    - The Hebrew mythology of the Southern Levant containing the creation and Patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis; and
    - The Egyptian tradition, including Mosaic Law, in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

    The Proto-Biblical Literature was structured in such a way that it made it easy for the people to gradually submerge their diverse backgrounds and former beliefs into a much broader vision of a single people with a shared, albeit mythical, past, who, according to the biblical texts, were guided by a supreme national deity, Yahweh, who had selected the people of $Judah_H$ (the majority of whom had come from the former kingdom of $Israel_H$) as his "Chosen People."

13. It is suggested that the early biblical authors created this new mythical identity in order to provide the various factions within Judahite society with a reconstituted sense of self and a new ethnic consciousness based on a glorious past, to which all the subjects of Judah could relate and, over time, eventually embrace as their own. When viewed against the historical backdrop, the themes reflected in the Bible's first six books suggest that, over a period of time, the various biblical authors and editors, probably with the support of, and direction from, the king and the priestly aristocracy, crafted the series of biblical stories in the particular way in which they did, in order to:

    13.1 Create and promulgate a new set of laws, which later became known as Mosaic Law, which served as a de facto constitution of the new Yahwistic state of Judah. To this day, the first five books of the Bible are still known as the Law.

    13.2 Define a special status for a priestly elite, the Levites, in order to:

    - Justify a societal structure that created a central and hereditary role for a new theopolitical religious aristocracy, the Levitical priesthood, with the high priests based at the Temple in Jerusalem and branches of the elite priestly class spread throughout the country.
    - Structure the Levitical priesthood in a way that allowed it to operate as a separate branch of government, with the power to collect taxes and administer the law.

    13.3 Use the biblical texts to affirm and promote the fear of Yahweh as a basis for establishing religious and political control over the people by:

    - Maintaining a climate of religious fear.
    - Providing legitimacy for the ongoing hereditary role of the priestly elite.
    - Enhancing the power of the priesthood by:
        - Providing an essentially unchallengeable (and unalterable) legal basis for the power of the priestly class.
        - Establishing religious justification for invoking the death penalty for numerous theological and secular offences, including disobeying a priest of Yahweh.
        - Justifying the imposition of a religious tax (or royalty), the tithe, on the population.

    13.4 Confirm the hierarchical political structure within the kingdom of $Judah_H$ by using the written authority of the biblical texts to:

    - Establish the legitimacy and primacy of the $Judahite_H$ royal blood line (the "House of David").
    - Satisfy the aspirations of the $Judahite_H$ elite by providing biblical endorsement for making Jerusalem the capital city and centralising all religious worship there.
    - Appeal to the $Israelite_H$ refugees in $Judah_H$ and their descendents by:
        - Creating a major legendary role for the Israelites in the biblical saga.

- Calling all the biblical people of Judah "Sons of Israel" or "Israelites."
- Establishing the basis for reclaiming the lost territories of the former kingdom of $Israel_H$, which had been destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC, through the biblical story that the land had been given to them by Yahweh.

13.5 Create the ideological basis for a theocratic Yahwist state that was:

- Governed by Mosaic Law which was the supreme law of the land.
- Ruled by a hereditary monarch and a separate, parallel branch of government comprised of a hereditary theopolitical oligarchy, the Levitical priesthood.
- Aligned in its political and religious objectives.

14. Between about 725 and 600 BC, in parallel with the gradual religious conversion of the subjects of the kingdom of Judah to the new religion, the Yahwist theology itself underwent an evolution, progressing from a doctrine in which Yahweh was considered the supreme national deity among other gods, to a clear doctrine in which he was the one and only god. We can date the final stage in the development of Monotheistic Yahwism to the time of Josiah's reforms around 622 BC.

15. The practical implementation of the new religion fell short of the reformers' original intentions. It took over a hundred years following the introduction of Hezekiah's reforms for Monotheistic Yahwism to take firm root in the kingdom of Judah. Monotheistic Yahwism only really became securely established, albeit not universally accepted, following the reforms of King Josiah.

16. By about 600 BC, the proto-biblical texts constituted a set of core foundation documents that defined the people, their mythical history, their ethnicity, their laws, their nationality, and their religion. The Biblical Tradition encapsulated in the Proto-Biblical Literature included the epic sagas about the origins of the people, their early, albeit largely mythical migration from Egypt, a written formulation of the religious doctrine of Monotheistic Yahwism, the nation's literature, and later, its poetry. This broadly-based tradition would have enabled each one of the various population groups, who together constituted the nation of Judah, to identify with one or more of the stories in a way that enabled each one of them to embrace a combined, shared, and heroic account, albeit mythological, of their legendary origins. These hetereogeneous $Judahites_H$ had, by this stage, become the $People_H$ of the Biblical Tradition.

17. The relationship between the biblical account and the known history is shown conceptually in Figure 1.1 below. The historical time-frame, during which the kingdoms of $Israel_H$ and $Judah_H$ were in existence, 900 to 722 BC and 750 to 586 BC, respectively, is shown on the foreground plane labelled as the "Known History." As can be seen, the Proto-Biblical Literature was created in the period between about 700 and 600 BC. The biblical construction is projected on to the

Relationship Between The Biblical Account And Known History

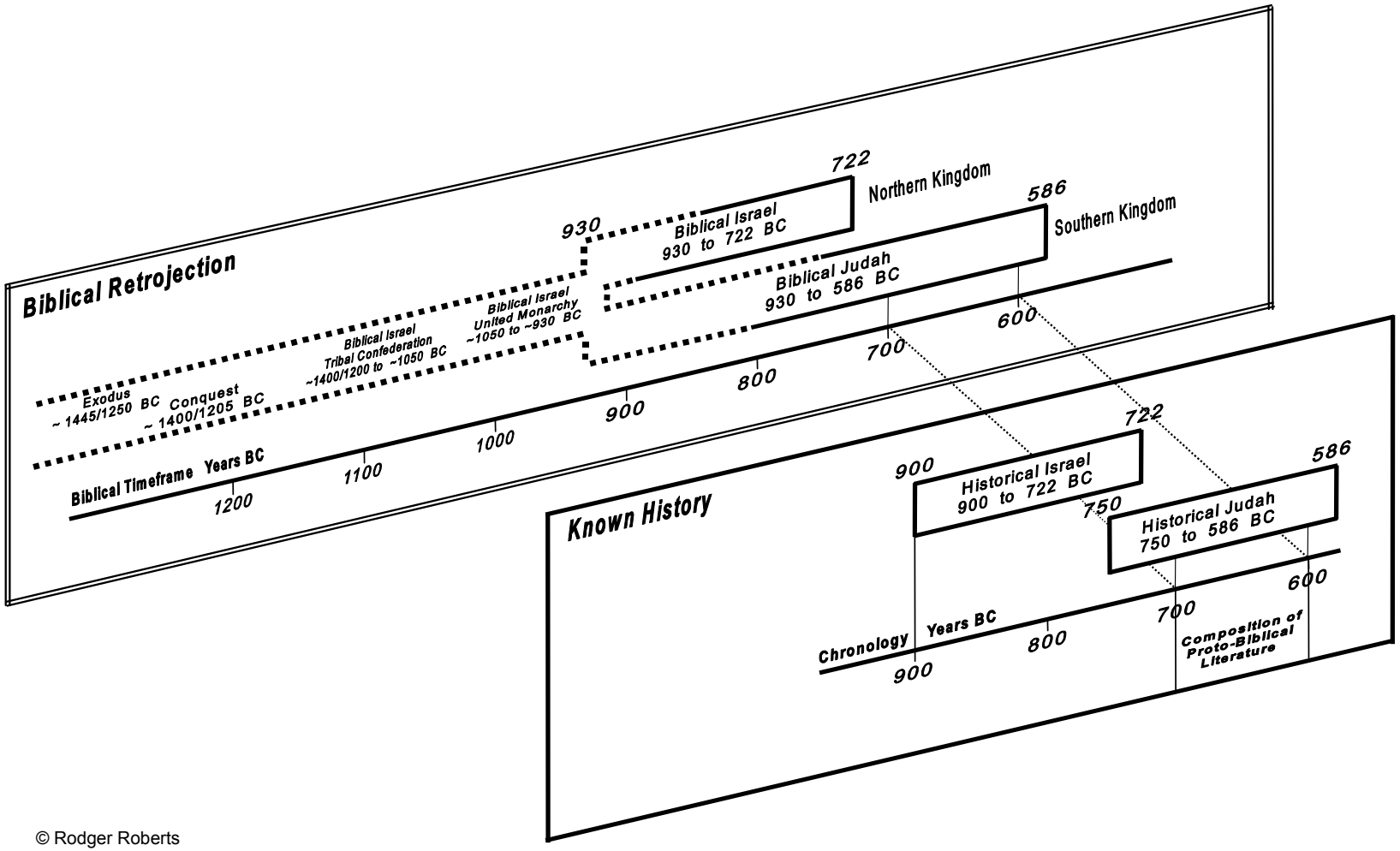

Figure 1.1

background plane labelled as the "Biblical Retrojection," with the mythical aspects indicated by the dotted lines. The biblical description in the books of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, of the reigns of the Judahite kings in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, including Hezekiah and Josiah, begins to match the historical record in the period between about 700 and 600 BC. The biblical account and the historical record coincide around 586 BC or so, when the Babylonians destroyed the kingdom of $Judah_H$ and deported many of its ruling elite to Babylon. In summary, the biblical account is anchored firmly in the history of the kingdom of $Judah_H$ in the 7th century BC, from which point the legendary biblical account is projected backwards in time to a mythical past set in the 2nd millennium BC.

18. We are now in a position to provide the answer to another fundamental question about the origins of the Bible and that is, "Who were the historical people after whom the biblical Israelites were modelled?" As discussed above, the historical People of the Biblical Tradition were the subjects of the kingdom of $Judah_H$ in the 7th century BC. The $Judahites_H$ at that time were comprised of three main groups, the Libyan-Egyptian immigrants, the $Israelite_H$ refugees (who descended from an earlier Canaanite people, whom we have called the Proto-Israelites) and the indigenous Judahite clans who had previously created the tiny kingdom of $Judah_H$ around 750 BC. These heterogeneous $Judahites_H$ were the people who created and developed the Biblical Tradition. In conclusion, the 7th century BC $Judahites_H$ were the closest historical counterpart to the mythical $Israelites_B$ of the Bible. The historical lineage of the $People_H$ of the Biblical Tradition is graphically depicted in Figure 1.2 below.

19. Figure 1.2 below also provides us with a graphical explanation of what became of the $Israelites_H$ following the Assyrian conquest around 722 BC. In 730 BC, the population of the kingdom of $Israel_H$ is estimated to have been approximately 160,000, about the same as it had been in 800 BC. Following the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC, the kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the population was dispersed, roughly as follows:

    - Refugees to the kingdom of $Judah_H$ 70,000 (44%)
    - Deportees to Assyria 40,000 (25%)
    - Estimated fatalities during the Assyrian invasion 16,000 (10%)
    - Remaining inhabitants (many of whom became the ancestors of the Samaritans): 34,000 (21%)

    This historical dispersion of the subjects of the kingdom of $Israel_H$ provided the historical basis for the subsequent myths about the fabled "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel."

In conclusion, this is the Hypothesis that is put forth as the explanation for the historical origins of the Bible.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE PEOPLE$_H$ OF THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

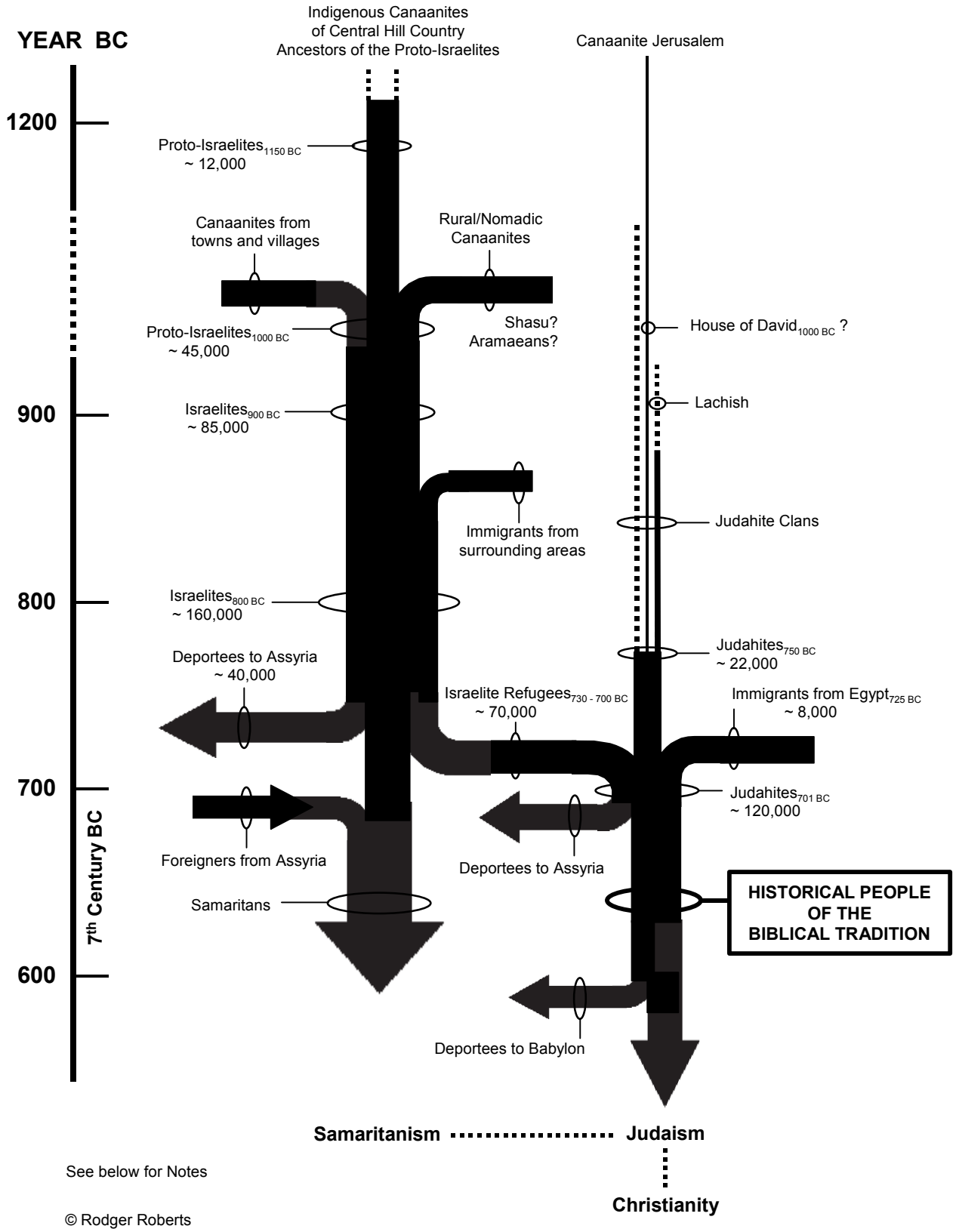

Figure 1.2

Notes on Figure 1.2

Year BC	Historical Event	Section References in this Book
1208	Pharaoh Merneptah of Egypt encounters the People (or Tribe) of Israel in the vicinity of Galilee.	5.7.4
1200	The principality of Jerusalem is a small urban Canaanite polity, dating back to the early 2nd millennium BC.	5.7.10
1150	Egypt vacates its Colony of Canaan in the Southern Levant. The population of the indigenous Canaanite inhabitants of the central hill country at this time is around 12,000.	5.7.9
1150	The indigenous Canaanites in the central hill country are joined by other groups from the Southern Levant including: • Rural and nomadic Canaanites • Other nomadic groups from the eastern regions who may have included the Shasu and some Aramaeans • Canaanites who left the lowland towns and villages to eke out a living in the central highlands.	5.7.9.2 5.7.9.3 5.7.9.4
1000		
1000	The Proto-Israelites number about 45,000.	5.7.9.4
1000	An urbanisation process occurs in the central hill country, with many small settlements being abandoned as the people migrate to the larger towns and cities.	5.7.9.5
900		
900	The kingdom of $Israel_H$ is established. It has a population of about 85,000.	5.5.7.5.1
884	Omri (ca. 884 – 873 BC) becomes king of $Israel_H$, transfers his capital to Samaria, builds the country into a strong regional power, and establishes a dynasty.	5.5.7.5.1
750	The kingdom of $Judah_H$ (with a population about 22,000) is established, with Jerusalem (with a population around 1,000) as its capital.	5.5.7.5.2
726	Hezekiah (ca. 726 – 697 BC) becomes king of $Judah_H$ and sets about unifying and strengthening his country against the impending threat from Assyria. He implements a series of structural reforms.	8.5.3.1
725	The Hypothetical Exodus of Libyan-Egyptian emigrants from Egypt to the kingdom of $Judah_H$ occurs.	9.9
722	The kingdom of $Israel_H$ is destroyed by Assyria, resulting in a large influx of $Israelite_H$ refugees from $Israel_H$ into the tiny kingdom of $Judah_H$.	5.5.7.5.1
701	Following the influx of the $Israelite_H$ refugees and the immigrants from Egypt, by 701 BC, just before the invasion of the country by Assyria, the population of the kingdom of $Judah_H$ has swollen to about 120,000. The main groups are: • Native $Judahites_H$ ~ 25% • $Israelite_H$ Refugees ~ 67% • Libyan-Egyptian Immigrants ~ 8%	9.12.2
622	King Josiah of $Judah_H$ implements religious reforms during his reign.	8.5.3.2
700	The $Judahites_H$ of the kingdom of $Judah_H$ of the 7th century BC become the $People_H$ of the Biblical Tradition.	9.13
600		
586	The kingdom of $Judah_H$ is destroyed by the Babylonian Empire. Many of its leading citizens are deported to Babylon.	5.5.7.5.2

To enable the reader to gain a broad overview of the major themes addressed in this book, a list of key figures is provided after the Table of Contents on page xvii above. This list identifies several diagrams and tables to introduce the subject, provide a visual overview of the themes discussed, and present the major findings in a convenient graphical form. To review the Hypothesis in detail and to see how it compares with other theories about the origins of the Bible, the reader may wish to jump ahead to Sections 9 and 10.1.

1.4 Possible Objections To Hypothesis

Possible objections to this Hypothesis are that:

- From a factual perspective, its core assumptions, although plausible and generally consistent with the historical record, currently remain unproven.
- From a fundamentalist viewpoint, it decouples the historical kingdom of Israel from the Biblical Tradition by:
  - Suggesting, albeit in line with the historical evidence, that the ancient historical kingdom of Israel was a polytheistic Canaanite state.
  - Postulating that $Maasha_h$ (or Moses) only arrived in the Southern Levant around the time of the destruction of the historical kingdom of Israel, suggesting that the ancient historical kingdom of Israel did not result from an Exodus from Egypt, was not founded by Moses, nor was it based on Mosaic Law.
  - Proposing that the link between the historical kingdom of Israel and the Biblical Tradition only occurred through the Israelite refugees who had fled to the kingdom of Judah.
- It suggests, contrary to traditional biblical beliefs, that:
  - The people participating in the historical event, on which the biblical Exodus was based, were Libyan-Egyptians and not Hebrews.
  - $Maasha_h$ (or Moses) was not a Hebrew but a Libyan-Egyptian from the Maasha (or Meshwesh) people of the eastern Nile Delta.
  - The Levite priestly elite and the biblical tribe of Levi descended from:
    - The Libyan-Egyptian priests of the House of Amun at Thebes; and
    - The Libu (or Livu) and Meshwesh peoples of the eastern Nile Delta area.

The detailed reasoning behind these conclusions and the historical basis for the Hypothesis are now discussed in the sections that follow. The flow diagram in Figure 2.3 presents an overview of how the book is organised and shows how the argument is developed.