**Terms and Definitions to Know**

* BCE=Before the Common Era
* CE=Common Era
* The Hebrew Bible

The Christian Foundational Writings/ CFW – grounded in TANAK

* Oral tradition
* Anthology—numerous genre: battle/victory hymns; fable; historical narrative; divine commands and statues; genealogies; short stories; wisdom books; devotional poetry; erotic poetry; prophetic oracles; apocalypse (a “revelation” or “unveiling” of the spirit world and/or future events--mystical visions)
* Silent spots
* Compilers; the original languages were Aramaic and Hebrew—major issues with

translation to English

* numerous traditions/repeated stories with varying perspectives: Genesis 1 and Genesis 2:4b and following; two stories of the Flood; two stories of Sarah/Abraham/Hagar/Isaac/Ishmael
* Format – chapters, books, verse numbers …all came much later
* Explanation of the term TANAK, Torah—law, teaching, or instruction—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy;

Nevi’im—the Prophets: divided into two subsections-the Former Prophets [Deuteronomistic History] Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel; 1&2 Kings; the Latter

Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Scroll of the Twelve (Amos, Hosea,

Micah, Joel, etc.)

Ketuvim – the Writings: Psalms; Job, Proverbs [Wisdom Books]; Festival Scrolls: Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther; Daniel [an apocalypse]; Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles [historical narratives]

* Challenges of monotheism in a polytheistic culture; syncretism; role of law and sacrifice/ritual/Temple
* Importance of the God dwelling among them—the ark, the temple, the detailed description of the ark
* Reading for “subject” not “object”—reading the text that “is there,” not what we have preconceived—reading in context not in isolation

**Purpose of Narrators:** is not to present a straightforward historical account

Rather the narrators are confessing faith in God; thus they select

and retell stories of the way God, Creator of heaven and earth,

chooses to involved in the lives of the Hebrew people

**Literary Versions:**

**J -- Jahwist or Yahwist:** The name scholars give the anonymous writer or compiler who produced the J document, the oldest stratum in the Pentateuch (c. 950-850 BCE); the writer regularly uses Yahweh as the name of God; in German Jahweh. J begins in Genesis 2: 4b with the Garden of Eden and appears intermittently through Numbers -- possibly beyond that. The style of J is vivid, concrete with an anthropomorphic view of God. (For example: God walking through the Garden of Eden, eating with Abraham at Mamre, or personally wrestling with Jacob) It includes an old Hebrew version of the Flood, the story of Abraham and Sarah and their descendants, the Israelite tribes' journey into Egypt and the Exodus from Egypt, the Mosaic Covenant (using the name Mount Sinai for the place where Moses got the 10 Commandments), and Israel's settlement in Canaan. J is thought to have been a resident Judea, the southern kingdom, and maybe was a member of the royal court circle. Speculations about J suggests that the Yahwist narrative was produced after the great changes occurring when Israel united under a centralized government in Jerusalem and specifically affirms the Davidic line, connecting with Yahweh's vow to make Abraham's progeny a great nation. Some critics think J could have been a woman; J is the first to compose a continuous narrative of Israel's origins. The J compilation incorporates ancient oral traditions about human prehistory and tales of the ancestral fathers and mothers.

**E -- Elohist**: The name given to the writer or compiler who produced the E document, second oldest tradition (850-800BCE); this writer uses "Elohim" or the plural form of divine powers for God. The style is more abstract, less picturesque than J's. God is also portrayed less anthropomorphically than in J. E uses the term "Horeb" for the mountain of the covenant. It begins with the story of Abraham and doesn't review the early human history; it was probably composed in the northern kingdom, Ephraim. Other differences from J, when speaking of the inhabitants of Palestine, E calls them Amorites (J had used Canaanites). J speaks of Moses' father-in-law as Ruel or Hobab, E calls him Jethro, priest of Midian. E is responsible for the burning bush passage (Exod. 3:15) signaling that this is the first time the people knew the name of God. E employs angels as go-betweens, making God more remote or transcendent. In the dream Jacob has at Bethel, E brings in the ladder, the celestial stairway. E uses sites in the northern kingdom, featuring the northern tribes, especially Ephraim.

**JE--**a combination of the traditions, the E material was probably added to J after 721 BCE when the northern kingdom, Israel, fell to the Assyrians. Maybe Israelites fleeing brought stories with them to Judah, and these were eventually incorporated into the J version. The resulting version has repetitions like the two versions of Sarah, Abraham's wife being captured by a foreign ruler, and the story of Abimelech and Rebecca (Isaac's wife) in Gen. 12: 10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11.

**D -- Deuteronomist:** (650-621, revised after 587 BCE) This reflects the literary style and attitudes of Josiah's reform (621 BCE); it insists that there should be only one sanctuary. This tradition is best reflected in Deuteronomy, but later the D compiler edits the histories of Joshua through 2 Kings. Chapters 12-28 of Deuteronomy are probably the "Book of the Law" that Josiah recovered during the repairs on the Jerusalem temple and helped to validate the religious reform Josiah promoted. The message of Deuteronomy was that obedience to God brought success in battle and economic abundance; disobedience brought disaster. Writings after Deuteronomy are affected by this same message that their nation's welfare was conditional upon the people's loyalty to God.

**P -- Priestly:** (550-400) This compiler emphasizes priestly concerns, legalistic and cultic aspects of religion. It tends to be a more dry, precise rationalistic style including such text as genealogies, lists, and censuses. This tradition derived from the priestly desire to preserve the Mosaic traditions during and after the Babylonian exile (following 587 BCE). Priestly writers wanted to collect, preserve and edit Israel's religious traditions at a time when this covenanted people's existence was threatened. The compilation of priestly heritage, including hundreds of laws and regulations governing worship was seen as a way to ensure Israel's unique religious purpose. Although largely concerned with ritual, purity laws, genealogies, and the details of cult sacrifices, P also includes significant additions to the JE narrative. P interwove the Flood story with J's version created an expanded and contradictory one. P's creation story includes the first Sabbath, a crucial priestly institution. P gives exhaustive details about the Ark of the Covenant. P changes the crossing of the great sea to emphasize Yahweh's parting of the waters and introduces Aaron as Moses' spokesman, giving Aaron a significant role in the establishment of the priestly line.

# Key Terms and Concepts

# (sources *The Bible as Literature*, 4th ed. by John Gabel, Charles Wheeler, Anthony York. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000; *Understanding the Bible*, 5th ed. by Stephen L. Harris. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 2000.

# The Bible as anthology not as a single book: -- a collection of writings produced by real people who lived in actual historical times; a set of selections from a library of religious and nationalistic writings produced over a span of some one thousand years. Among the types of writings in the Bible are poetry, short stories, genealogies, laws, letters, royal decrees, instructions for building, prayers, proverbs, wisdom, prophetic messages, historical narratives, tribal lists, archival data, ritual regulations, and other kinds of writings more difficult to classify

**Every piece of writing in the Bible expresses a *subject* not an *object***: By “subject” we refer to something “in here.” That is, in the author’s or teller’s consciousness; a conception of what the author wishes to express; the subject may have no reference to objective reality or it may have reference to something solid, tangible, and generally known, for example, Solomon’s Temple. In any case, the author has perceptions about the subject and these perceptions are always influenced by the author’s point of view. “Object” refers to that which exists externally to us and independently of us; sometimes objects are material, but they can be ideas, events, possibilities. Objects are “out there” and frequently have some kind of implied truth. The challenge for applying objective response to Biblical texts is that we have no knowledge of the objects represented in the Bible, other than what the author represents. Reading for “subject,” however, frees readers from literal, dead-end arguments. An example to concretize the notion of subject—looking at the first creation story, the *object* is entirely unknowable—it is about cosmic events no human witnesses. The *subject*, however, is a conception of how the universe was created.

**Authorship:** most Biblical works have a complex history of authorship; little is known about any author even though many books are given the name of an author, like Ruth or Esther or Job. Many of the books of the Bible are products of collaboration and a rare kind of collaboration, where the collaborators are separated by centuries, different locations, and have little or no knowledge of each other.

**Redactors:** persons who made up finished versions of the texts from the sources available to them; frequently as unknown as the authors of various Biblical books; redactors might have been working from alternative versions or incomplete versions; they added transitions or links, trying to produce final versions that could be preserved and copied. Sometimes redactors contributed material of their own to the texts. Without redactors, we wouldn’t have the Bible; they compiled and collected.

**El, Elohim (pl.):** A Semitic term for a divine being; in Canaanite religion, El was the high god, father of lesser deities. In the Hebrew Bible, El, when used as a name for the Israelite deity, typically occurs as part of a phrase, such as El Shaddai (God of the mountain), El Bethel (God of the House of God) or El Elyon (God Most High). In its plural form, the Hebrew generic term for deity applied to both their national God (Gen.1:1, 2:5, etc.) and foreign deities (Exod. 15:2, 11)

**YHWH (Yahweh):** Hebrew for “I Am”; translated to English: “the Lord”

**Adonai:** The Hebrew word for “Lord,” a title of honor and majesty applied to the Israelite Deity, particularly during the postexilic period, as a substitute for the personal name *Yahweh*, which was considered too sacred to pronounce.

## Terms for Your Notes

**(You fill in as we discuss these)**

1. **canon**
2. **theophany**
3. **covenant/ bilateral covenant**
4. **oracles**
5. **hesed**
6. **numinous**

**7.genealogy**

1. **silent spots**
2. **concept of exile**

**10. Lamech—father of Noah**

**Primeval History:** Genesis 1-11 focus on creation and stories – primarily oral tradition-- that predate the calling and forming of a specific people; from Genesis 12 onward the text conveys the call of Abraham and subsequent establishing of the people of Israel

**Itineraries:** accounts of the travel or movement of a person; for example, the journeys of Abraham or Jacob

**Cult Worship:** passages providing explanations of or descriptions about why specific sites became places of worship—sometimes a person is told to build an altar; other times, as with Jacob, the person indicates that the experience with the God is why he builds an altar