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PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP

Case Studies Comparing Biblical Characters and Figures from American History

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Abstract

In this comparison of biblical leaders and leaders from American history, I explore the foundations of the United States and the Jewish tradition. This study analyzes the concept of leadership and provides a new lens on the study of leadership in the context of liberal forms of government at the heart of the American political system and the society envisioned by the Torah. While I have come up with twelve different case studies and leadership lessons, this study at present includes two cases.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In his *Lives of Greeks and Romans*, the Roman historian Plutarch compares significant leaders from Greek history and Roman history. He contrasts the lives of two individuals in each section, telling a few significant stories from their lives that highlight their virtues and their flaws, presenting the reader with an opportunity to analyze and compare the leadership traits of two allegedly similar figures. He outlines his task as a historian in the introduction to Alexander: "It is my task to dwell upon those actions which illuminate the inner workings of the soul, and by this means to create a portrait of each man's life."[1] Plutarch gives readers a brief biography of the selected figure before focusing on particular decisions in which these people transformed into leaders worthy of inclusion in the annals of western history. At the conclusion of each of these comparisons, Plutarch provides a leadership lesson derived from the pair. In studying the great orators Demosthenes and Cicero, for example, Plutarch shares wisdom on oratory that any reader could take to heart: "It is necessary, indeed, for a political leader to be an able speaker; but it is an ignoble thing for any man to admire and relish the glory of his own eloquence."[2] After studying two orators, Plutarch gives the reader a soliloquy on oration. Plutarch's study became a model for leadership analysis and provided future generations of enlightenment thinkers ideas on how certain leaders navigated democratic and republican forms of government in a different era.

This study, modeled on Plutarch's work, applies his method to figures from American history and the Bible[3]. Like Plutarch, the biographies of the individual characters will focus on particular elements of their lives that shed light on their personal development as leaders. These moments of leadership present an opportunity to learn about core issues at the heart of the Jewish

[1] Plutarch, *Age of Alexander*, 252.
[2] Plutarch, *Lives*, 978.
[3] Throughout this project, I will refer to the Bible and the Tanakh. The Tanakh is the Hebrew word for the Bible, made up of three parts: Torah (the Pentateuch), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings).

tradition and the United States' political system. Certain leaders were transcendent because they navigated the challenges of their time with shrewd skills, leaving behind valuable lessons for future leaders. While the lessons of the Bible and American history apply to the political arena most clearly, they provide examples for leaders to grow in any field: business, athletics, academia, religion, and even personal settings such as meaningful relationships and parenting.

In the process of selecting individuals to compare, I have intentionally picked lesser-known biblical figures. The most familiar biblical characters -- Abraham, Moses, David -- are widely known in modern culture and society. Most people are familiar with at least some of their leadership skills and the critical events that shaped their lives. By focusing on lesser known characters, I hope to present the reader with two opportunities: to develop an understanding of figures in the Bible with whom they might be less familiar and to recognize that leadership can take many different forms. This also applies to the figures from American history. While the Americans selected are probably more familiar to the reader, the perspective of leadership may provide a new understanding of their stories. In some cases, information about the figures selected have even dropped from the present zeitgeist. With one exception, I have included only those figures who operated in the distant past. It takes decades, if not centuries, to be able to properly assess the action of an individual leader and the impact he or she had. If this study had been drafted in the 1970s, President Lyndon Johnson might have been treated as a warmonger who sent tens of thousands of young American men to their deaths while traumatizing countless others. Fifty years later, Johnson might be characterized as the hero who, as a result of deft navigation of Congress and the American public, finally brought civil rights legislation to the United States. As a result, I have avoided selecting figures from before the mid-20th century.

The pairs share more than a leadership lesson. Each of the individuals selected are connected to one another in their relationship to the tradition, in some critical aspects of their character, or in the manner of their successes and failures. Some characters shared professions, like the military men Joshua and Grant. Others emerged at a similar time in their society's development, like the prophets Hosea and Frederick Douglass, who challenged the ills of an existent society, or like Samuel and George Washington who created new systems of government through their own work. The bonds between these two characters extends beyond the leadership lessons associated with them.

These are the following pairs and the associated leadership lessons:

1. **Joshua and Ulysses S. Grant: A Study on the Challenge of Succession**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Know your predecessor, but be yourself"
2. **Ezra and James Madison: A Study on Crafting Foundational Documents**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Be the most prepared person in the room"
3. **Hosea and Frederick Douglass: A Study on Surviving Society's Great Evil**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Share your pain to shift hearts"
4. **Jeremiah and Woodrow Wilson: A Study on Transformational Leadership**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Think outside the box to create fundamental change"
5. **Samuel and George Washington: A Study on Relinquishing Power**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Put aside your ego"
6. **Deborah and John Adams: A Study on Convening**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Know your strengths, delegate your weaknesses"
7. **The Psalmist and Bruce Springsteen: A Study on Storytelling**
    - Leadership Lesson: "The value of articulating *your* vision"

8. **Gideon and Henry Clay: A Study on Compromise**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Know when it is time to fight"
9. **Ahab and Robert E. Lee: A Study on idolatry**
    - Leadership Lesson: "The perils of rigid thinking"
10. **Yonatan and Eleanor Roosevelt: A study on being near the seat of power**
    - Leadership lesson: "Exercise influence from the sidelines"
11. **Ruth and Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A Study on fighting for the oppressed**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Small actions have big ripple effects"
12. **Torah and Constitution: A Study on Legal Systems**
    - Leadership Lesson: "Enable fundamental change -- you don't know what the future holds"

Before embarking on these studies, it is worth exploring the sources of the information for each of these characters. For the American leaders, this information is widely accessible. Many of them wrote their own books, copious journals and letters throughout their lives that have been preserved. I have come across these individuals in various capacities as a student of American history, deeply ingrained in my own quest to answer a fundamental question: "What does it mean to be an American." Each character has contributed in their own way (sometimes counter-productively) to the tapestry that makes the United States of America the beacon of democracy and liberalism[4] that it is today.

[4] Throughout this study, I will use the word liberalism. Unfortunately, this word has come to be associated with the American left and has become a "dirty word" in American politics. I am using this word in the context of the enlightenment concept which views liberty and equality before the law as the fundamental starting point of modern, democratic-republican societies. In this case, liberalism has two meanings. First, liberalism believes in the primacy of the rights of the individual to have liberty and equality before the law. Differences between individuals on class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and others cannot be used to provide different levels of treatment before the legal system. Each person must have their own capacity to thrive within a society and must be provided with an equal opportunity to succeed. Second, liberalism is rooted on the premise that society can contain multiple viewpoints. Two individuals can have vastly different views for political programs to achieve the goals of ensuring

Information about biblical characters is more complicated and difficult to come by. There are many different approaches one can take to studying the Bible: historical, religious, pedagogical, or ethical. If this were a study using the historical method, the first challenge when assessing the biblical characters would be whether or not they existed. There is no evidence outside the biblical record to confirm that Joshua, Samuel, Deborah or Ruth existed. In the historical understanding, these characters and texts may have been written long after the individuals were purported to have lived and authors may have constructed their stories in different generations for particular political points. (For more information about the process of the creation and redaction of the Torah and Bible more generally, see the sections, "Ezra and Madison," "Ruth and Ruth Bader Ginsburg," and "Torah and Constitution.") For characters that we know existed, like Jeremiah or Ezra, the historical approach might question whether they actually did what the bible says they did. That approach would be insufficient for this study, as we would fail to grasp the heart of what the Bible is trying to teach the reader in presenting these individuals in the canonized form that we have received. It would be impossible to derive leadership lessons if the study were bogged down by fundamental questions of whether these characters existed in the first place.

This study will rely primarily on the techniques of literary analysis of the Bible as the principal means of analyzing the texts. The scholar most associated with applying literary theories to the Bible is perhaps Robert Alter.[5] He wrote in 1975, "By serious literary analysis, I mean the

liberty and equality before the law. As long as their programs do not seek to undermine the entire system of liberalism or cause harm to other people, there must be room for toleration of differences. This is best understood in the "liberal" concept of religion: that individuals have capacity to make their own decisions regarding religious law and their understanding of God with compulsion from other individuals or institutions. In liberal religion, the individual is the source of spirituality and religious belief and it cannot be forced upon them by some ecclesiastical authority. Liberal religion can be guided by a tradition or holy texts, but the individual derives their religious authority and commitment from the self.

[5]Throughout this study, I will be using the Robert Alter translation of the Bible. Alter's translation seeks to preserve some of the literary style of the biblical language by incorporating that into English, making the translation more useful for a study that uses literary methods in analyzing the leadership of biblical characters.

manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, narrative viewpoints, compositional units, and much else."[6] A literary approach recognizes that the Bible included many different authors over many centuries. These authors each had different perspectives, writing styles, syntax and diction, and political objectives in telling these stories. As these stories were canonized over the centuries, various individuals were involved in a process of redaction. (I make the case below that Ezra is the final redactor of the Torah.) The final redaction, then, created a work of literature that does not belong in the same category as any other ancient near eastern literary form, whether it be Greek history and philosophy or Babylonian epic. For people reading the Bible 2,500 years after its final redaction, we can understand it as a distinct literary unit and treat it as such, whether or not it provides information about events that actually happened.

Accordingly, the biblical characters in this study will be take wholly as they are presented in the Bible. When the Torah refers to Joshua as Moses' servant, a youth, and military general, we will use those different appearances and titles to create an understanding of his character and his leadership style, despite the fact that these could have been different traditions about the same individual. Additionally, the Jewish tradition has developed an extensive literature of rabbinic commentary on the individuals. These appear in works like the Talmud, the corpus of Midrashic literature, and different Torah commentaries. Some of the ideas presented in the rabbinic literature will also be used to develop an understanding of the characters at hand as the ways in which the Jewish tradition has understood these characters and, in some cases, ascribed particular roles for them. This will help supplement some of the gaps in the biblical accounts.

[6] Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," *Commentary Magazine*.

This study will include one other aspect of analysis for understanding some of the characters involved: comparative political analysis. Via comparative politics, we can see shared values and commitments from the ideology of the American political tradition and that expressed by the Israelite tradition as expressed in the Torah and later biblical texts. The Torah is an inherently political document. The people that shaped it expressed their political opinions through these carefully crafted narratives and debates. In some instances, we even see people take different sides on arguments from the ancient world that are still being discussed and debated in our modern society.[7] Each of the characters can be understood as playing a role in the larger political drama of the Torah and must be understood in the context of its own world and time period. Specifically, the Torah sought to alter the way in which individuals related to one another, the way the individual related to the government, and the way that the government related to the individual. Compared to the political systems of the ancient world, the Torah presented a revolutionary understanding of these significant questions. It inverted the basic power structures at the core of ancient society, in which an autocratic monarch stood at the helm of society, serving as a "god king." The Israelite tradition flipped that narrative on its head, elevating God to the status of king and demanding that the king be accountable to some basic, universal principles and regulations.[8] At the core, the figures selected in this study were responding to some of the natural challenges that emerged in this new political ideal that the tradition envisioned. Through their own development as leaders, we can see the ways in which the biblical experiment in government and human relations succeeded and ways in which it needed to adapt to an ever-changing world. At the core of this comparative analysis is

[7] For example, the authors of the Book of Ezra and Ruth have very different opinions on the role of intermarriage in Judean society. This will be explored in more detail in the chapter on Ruth.
[8] See, for example, Deuteronomy 17:18, which limits how many horses (military), women (political power), and silver and gold (taxes) a king can hold. Additionally, the king is required to keep a copy of the Torah on his hands at all times (and some understand write a copy of the Torah as well) as part of the process of subjecting themselves to some legal system.

the question of leadership, a concept that could only emerge in a political system which created an inherent equality among people and ensured that no one individual was above restriction and law. As each comparison includes a study on leadership, the biblical figure being studied can be understood as part of this larger historical concept of shifting power away from an autocratic king. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks notes that "Judaism entered the world as an inversion of the highly hierarchical societies of the ancient near east."[9] As a result, we can understand these studies on leadership as cases in which individuals grappled with that inversion.

Leadership Studies

In his seminal work on leadership, James Macgregor Burns notes that "a leader and a tyrant are polar opposites."[10] Leadership could only emerge in a political system that inverted authoritarianism. Since our advancement into agricultural societies, humans have struggled over how to organize ourselves in societies. Observations from the animal kingdom teach us that interactions with unknown members of the same species can be extraordinarily dangerous. Thus, society and government were born to help make sure that large groups of people could share the same spaces without fearing unknown individuals, by ensuring that people in a society shared certain principles and basic ideas of respect across a wide group. The solution in the ancient near east was an authoritarian empire that concentrated the power to draft and tax in one individual who had been ordained by "the gods." Ronald Heifetz, in his study on leadership, teaches that "There is a compelling logic to imperial thinking, to a social contract of habitual deference and authoritative command as a means of governing large organizational systems or populations of people."[11] Authoritarianism, governmental systems in which the king has absolute power and

[9] Sacks, *Lessons on Leadership*, 304.
[10] Burns, *Leadership*, 3.
[11] Sacks, *Lessons on Leadership*, *xv*.

operates as a god-like figure worthy of idolatrous worship by the population, emerged as the most dominant form of government in the ancient world. However, there is one fundamental problem with authoritarian regimes: they are unable to adapt to the technical challenges that are presented by the forward progress of time and technological development. Empires tend to treat "adaptive challenges as if they were technical challenges"[12] and often fail when their technical responses become inadequate in the face of a major change. In the ancient near east, for example, there were several thriving autocratic civilizations between the 15th and 12th centuries BCE, including the Egyptian, Mycenaean (Greece), Hittite, Babylonian and Akkadian Kingdoms. Within one century, these great empires all uniformly collapsed and the archeological record reflects significant migrations of peoples across the ancient near east. While it is unknown exactly what caused this broad collapse, it is clear that some new challenge emerged (maybe ecological, climactic, or something of that nature) and the authoritarian governments did not have capacity to adapt and change to meet the needs of their civilization.

Out of this collapse, however, was born the first recorded inversion of autocracy. This new vision was a proto-democratic-republic, in which different groups of people shared power and leaders, with and without authority, could emerge to influence the system. While this new vision for governing needed some chains of command and authority in order to function, the bible instituted checks and balances by distributing power into different locations: kings, priests, prophets, local magistrates and elders all played a significant role in the new vision for government. In the biblical ideal, people would be responsible for various aspects of the functioning of their government and could even influence politics through their own leadership skills. Burns understands that a leader's task is igniting something simmering inside followers.

[12] Sacks, *Lessons on Leadership*, *xv*.

"The transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents."[13] Transformative leadership elevates the leader and the followers of the leader, allowing these agents to collectively transform society and address the changes that arise with the shift of time. While in a previous model only those with authority could wield power, not any person -- inside or outside positions of authority -- could serve as leaders and influence the functioning of the government. In this world, you could have a Hosea adjuring the people and the government to stop sacrificing to the gods when orphans and widows are suffering. In the biblical vision, people from across different branches of society could now play a political role.

There are several core aspects that create a "Jewish" understanding of leadership in a liberal society. Each of the leaders in this study embody certain aspects of that leadership. Before exploring leadership, consider what the Jewish tradition asks of us between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In that ten-day period, we are asked to evaluate our lives, assess our decisions, and wonder how we can improve in the year to come. The tradition asks us to do a *cheshbon hanefesh*, a weighing of our core being, and encourages us to take action by doing *tshuva*, repairing our relationships with those we may have harmed in the past year. I would argue the origins of this process can be found in biblical characters and their journey in leadership. Leadership is a process of development in which the individual becomes in tune with their own desires and motivations. The leader must look inward and evaluate their core being before making decisions that seek to impact and change the society around them. After evaluating the self, a leader shifts and tries to understand the desires and motivations of their followers and whether or not they are aligned with

[13] Burns, *Leadership*, 4.

their own goals for society. The task of the leader, then, is to harness the power of the collective motivation to create changes within a system of governance. The leaders are active members of society who take responsibility for the world as they see it. While others may simply wallow in the darkness of the world, the leader seeks to light a light, creating a vision for the world that others become excited to adopt as their own. Each of the leaders plays an educational role in society, something that the Torah adjures its leaders over and over again. As Sacks notes, "leading means education: getting people to think and see in new ways."[14] Like our journey between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, leadership is about the process that an individual goes through in their quest to elevate their own lives and, eventually, the lives of their followers who are aligned with their motivations and desires. As great studies of leadership have shown, leadership is not about some sort of natural gift that an individual is endowed with from birth; it is a process of self-examination and improvement that an individual goes through that enables them to rise to a specific occasion in a particular moment. The battles leaders fight are internal battles, in which their own fears and feelings of imposter syndrome challenge their fundamental ability to succeed more than any foreign enemy might. In newly constituted liberal societies, leadership became a process of personal development and, via that personal development, a process of actualization of a society to address the fundamental challenges that it was facing.

As part of this process, the biblical understanding of leadership recognizes that successful individuals should be reluctant to use their own power because they are inherently imperfect people. The Bible is filled with stories of individuals struggling with different aspects of leadership. The "hesitant leader" is one of the most common leadership motifs. Moses, the quintessential example, argues with God at the burning bush that he is not up to the task of leading

[14] Sacks, *Lessons on Leadership*, 307.

the people. The Jewish tradition ascribes an "imposter syndrome" to Moses at various points throughout the narrative as he questions his own ability to lead the people.[15] Like all human beings, Moses is a flawed character. The text of the Bible describes him as an ineffective orator. He struggles to balance the patience required of a leader and the desire to take action to fulfill his vision for the world and makes mistakes throughout the biblical narrative. Moses' example is reflective of nearly all biblical characters who play leadership roles in Israelite society. This applies to individuals who, like Moses, held positions of authority, and those who preached from sidelines. Unlike many other traditions, in which one prophet or individual is revered as being perfect or god-like, the Jewish tradition recognizes that each leader is inherently flawed. Ultimately, our tradition identifies a successful leader as a person who recognizes that he or she is just another human being, equal to all other human beings under the authority of God. The Bible provides examples of ways in which individuals have struggled with the task of leadership in a new world in which authority was not vested in one single source of human power. Since we can view the Bible as a piece of literature with individuals in their process of becoming leaders, it becomes a manual for a Jewish understanding of leadership that can be applied to myriad settings today. The Bible provided the first example of individuals attempting to lead in a society in which the monarch was not invested with absolute power.

Some of the leaders selected in this study were especially flawed human beings. Two of the leaders selected, Ahab and Robert E. Lee, made decisions that were abhorrent and counter-productive to the goals of their respective nations. Yet both emerged from the context that individuals would have a capacity to harness factions within society to achieve particular aims. Their flaws and failures highlight the challenges that individuals will continue to face in various

[15] See BT Rosh Hashanah 25a for an example of the Jewish tradition's understanding of this.

leadership capacities. In many other cases, these leaders, both American and Jewish, held positions or exhibited behavior that may have been acceptable at their own time period but are deemed immoral today. (This is not limited to Madison or Lee's relationship to slavery or Wilson's misogyny; Ezra's positions on intermarriage would cause most liberal Jews to bristle.) But part of the process of this study is recognizing the value and the power of studying our past as a guide for the future. The challenge of a society built around the premise that authority cannot be invested in one person is great and requires an adequate study of these characters so that individuals in the future can utilize their examples to address new challenges. By studying these individuals and their own leadership development and its flaws, we can gain some essential lessons for our own lives. In some cases, we can see individuals who, when tasked with the question of leadership, completely failed to achieve the goals or established goals that were counterintuitive to the fundamental principles of liberalism. In other cases, we can see individuals who thrived in the field of leadership and present wonderful lessons to the modern reader. As New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu noted in his decision to take down the statutes of Confederate Generals, "There is a difference between remembrance of history and reverence for it."[16] We do not have to revere all of the leaders of the past, especially if we find their aspects of their behavior appalling in our modern cultural context. But all of these leaders asked the question of how "a nation can be formed on the basis of shared commitment and collective responsibility."[17] Each rose to an occasion as a leader and we can learn from the example that they provided. The beauty of the process of leadership is the recognition that human beings are imperfect and that is a fundamental part of the learning process of living in an anti-authoritarian society.

[16] Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues*, 218.
[17] Sacks, *Lessons on Leadership*, 14.

The connections between the American political system and the biblical vision for a polity run deep. The biblical vision for a society was eventually quashed as the people desired a king, the king played politics, and the kingdom was eventually subsumed in the reinvigorated empires of the ancient near east in the 6th - 8th centuries BCE. The question of the Bible turned to one of preserving the ideas that were expressed rather than implementing this vision for society through government. Only in the modern era, in which enlightened thinkers deeply understood some of the fundamental political questions that the bible asked of people, could such a vision be achieved. The process of the development of Republican government will be explored in more detail in the sections on James Madison and the Constitution. But the American government created the first example in the modern world for a broad society in which millions of human beings were part of the same polity that maintained the principles first espoused by the Bible. Instead of priests, kings, and prophets, the United States divided power between an executive, a legislature, a judicial branch and varying levels of government. In expanding the size of democratic-republican governments, the American system could actualize a system in which human beings could become leaders and influence the polity and the governmental system through their own transformation. From the United States in 1789, these ideas spread across the world as more and more countries adopted the principles of liberalism, republicanism and democracy. And, while democracies and republics are also inherently flawed, these systems of government are able to respond to fundamental changes that arise *because* of the leadership of individuals. Because of leadership, these institutions may have the capacity to survive upheavals that authoritarian governments could not address. Thus, the value in comparison of biblical figures and figures from American history is rooted in the notion that they are both grappling with the same question: How does society deal with great changes that

can cause upheavals? The answer for both America and the Bible is through leadership, expressed by individuals with and without authority.

In this study, I will refer to both "America" and "Judaism" as "traditions" and "nations." Both traditions contain fundamental philosophical ideas in comparative politics, in which power is diffuse and flawed individuals must rise as leaders to solve the great challenges they face. And both traditions require a certain number of individuals to engage in a process of internal work as they rise to become leaders, shaping the polity and allowing it to grapple with arising challenges over time. As human beings face numerous challenges moving into the 21st century, there are growing voices for a return to authoritarianism -- for a view of the world in which power is simple and vested in one authority. This study will hopefully inspire those wanting to reject authoritarianism by recognizing the fundamental value of a society rooted in liberalism and republican values, preserving liberty and equality under the law for all citizens. At the core of that society is leadership. We have before us examples of individuals who have succeeded and examples of those who have failed while wielding the power of leadership, but each sought to guide liberal civilization forward.

Chapter 2: Joshua and Grant: A Study on the Challenge of Succession

In an authoritarian world, the line of succession is often predetermined by the authoritative figure and usually falls to a relative. Transitions from one godlike figure to another are, in theory, simple to manage. But in liberal political systems that diffuse power and demand leadership like our two great national stories, succession of authority presented one of the first great leadership challenges. In a world in which authority is not centered in one person, moments of succession for the head of state become fraught. Power vacuums easily emerge and people struggle to imagine life without the old leader. Anyone who has witnessed any succession can understand why: when an acclaimed individual has been *the* figurehead for a government, organization, company, or religious institution for a long time, the transition can be difficult. The constituent-followers in that government, organization, or company become used to the style of the leader and struggle to imagine what it would be like to have anyone else been at the helm. When the successor emerges as the new leader, they are faced with followers who glorify the days of the old leader. Even when the individual succeeding the great leader has a mandate to create change, the shift in tone, personality, and style at the top can be jarring for followers. Replacements often have poor records of success and short tenures.

There are countless examples of this in our modern day society. After a retiring rabbi spends decades at the helm of a synagogue, it is common practice for synagogues to have a long transition period or even an interim rabbi to help people adjust to new rabbinic leadership. The instances in which synagogues or longtime senior rabbis have quickly retired and brought on a new rabbi without properly preparing the congregation often lead to failure or a short term for that rabbi. In another example, we presently have the opportunity to watch someone succeed an institutional leader with the transition of the head coach of Duke's basketball team. The new

basketball coach, former player and current assistant coach Jon Scheier, will be replacing Mike Krzyzewki, someone renowned enough to be known as "Coach K." While Scheier is probably excited with his new promotion as coach of one of the most storied college basketball programs in the country, one can imagine the fear and anxiety as he replaces someone who has been a fixture for 42 years and coached the United States national team at the Olympics on three occasions. In Israeli politics, people became so accustomed to Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister that people began wondering if anyone would have the same gravitas and ability to lead. After twelve years, people were struggling to imagine anyone else in the role, creating a daunting challenge for any successor. The English-language idiom "shoes too big to fill" effectively describes the challenge of succession. In this idiomatic explanation of the challenge, the new leader is viewed as replacing the old leader and should act and behave exactly as that older leader: filling the proverbial "same shoes." People become accustomed to one particular leadership style and struggle to imagine what it might be like to change. Followers are looking for a leader who will continue to operate as the old leader had, but because no two people are alike, the task is impossible. In studying the challenge of succession, we can learn some essential tools at managing expectations in these difficult moments.

In our national stories, there are two individuals who exhibited leadership in a difficult moment of succession: Joshua and President Ulysses Grant. They provide lessons and a path for any company or government undergoing a leadership transition and can help us recognize some of the particular perils of succession leadership in a liberal system. Both of these men succeeded arguably the two most significant and well-regarded individuals of each national tradition: Moses and Lincoln. But both share more than just succession. They served in military roles before serving as heads of state. During their respective tenures, they implemented the dreams that had been

expressed by the visions of their predecessors: Joshua, the dream of the Israelites conquering the Land of Israel, and Grant, the vision of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation for a program of Reconstruction focused on equality and robust support for the rights of former slaves. Both men built close relationships with their predecessors, earning a deep-seated trust that enabled them to succeed when their time came. Yet both struggled to find their footing at the start of their tenures, filling shoes that were simply too big to fill.

Significantly, Joshua and Grant succeeded in the short-term but their political objectives collapsed upon the conclusion of their tenures. In the biblical narrative, Joshua is followed by the Book of Judges, an account of an era in which "everyone did as he pleased," (Judges 21:25). In the world after Joshua, the Israelites constantly turned to idolatry. As a result, they were oppressed by different enemies, indicating that the Israelites had not actually conquered the Land of Israel as we are told in the Book of Joshua. Judges is an emphatic counterpoint to the success that Joshua describes. Similarly, by the end of Grant's second term, Democrats and Republicans alike sought to end his program of Reconstruction and the progress in equality for Black Americans retreated to antebellum status. This was only overturned a century later with the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s, and some could argue that the dream of Reconstruction still has not been fulfilled at the time of this writing. But despite those failures, these two individuals managed to create the benchmarks for which their respective societies would look back to define national success.

From this study of succession, we learn a powerful leadership lesson: **know your predecessor, but be yourself**. Joshua and Grant teach us the importance and necessity of building a relationship with the predecessor. They understood the political objectives of their respective leaders and knew how to align with those objectives through their role in the military. In adopting Lincoln's and Moses' political values, they aligned their fates with the fate of the great leader of

each nation. Part of their later success depended on their deep connection to the previous leader and the fact that they were willing and able to refer to the visions of those respective leaders. At the same time, both understood it was incumbent to chart their own course and *be themselves*. Neither man *could* live up to Lincoln or Moses. Joshua had not been a boy in Pharaoh's court and Grant did not have the same adeptness as Lincoln in dealing with rivals. Both understood that they had to develop their own leadership style in order to succeed. While they implemented the political program of their predecessor, they recognized the need to bring their own unique style to leadership and, occasionally, diverged with the plans of their predecessors in order to achieve goals in a new era. Grant and Joshua felt comfortable moving the goalposts that their predecessors had established and changing the means by which they sought to lead their respective nations through those posts. Those divergences required immense patience and had the potential to be unpopular, but each persevered with outward strength rather than weakness and frustration. Additionally, we will explore the moment of succession for these two individuals, in which they saw the importance of taking action despite fear about succession. Fear can be debilitating for new leaders, especially in moments of transition, and they both understood the importance of moving forward despite uncertainty. This is true in any new leadership position, but is exacerbated when an individual is following a great leader and has high expectations from their constituency groups. **Taking action** in the face of fear were critical hallmarks of their leadership styles.

Introduction: The Historical Grant and the Literary Joshua

GRANT

Hiram Ulysses Grant had one of the most unexpected, meteoric rises in American history. Grant was born in Ohio when that was considered the unbridled west of the new United States of America. Until the Civil War, Grant had exhibited few of the characteristics of a great leader.

While he had been a soldier in the Mexican-American War, Grant largely failed in business and was dependent upon his slave-holding father-in-law through the 1850s. His career in business was marked by poor speculation and investing his limited resources with people who squandered the funds. Grant and his wife, Julia, moved their family to Galena, Illinois in 1859, placing him in the home state of the new president when the Civil War began.

As a young man, Grant attended West Point. In an unusual twist of fate, his Congressman accidentally signed wrote his name as "Ulysses S. Grant" on his commission to the military academy, despite the fact that his real name was Hiram Ulysses Grant. Since Grant was embarrassed about his initials, HUG, he leaned into the mistake and started going by US Grant, a patriotic moniker that would inspire millions during the Civil War. At West Point, his classmates called him "Sam" or "Uncle Sam." Grant served in a supply unit in the Mexican-American War, where he saw generals like Robert E. Lee in action. In Mexico, he became a hardened soldier with battle experience. "During his maiden battle, Grant discovered something curious about his own metabolism: he was tranquil in warfare, as if temporarily anesthetized, preternaturally cool under fire."[18]

When the Civil War started, Grant was one of the few Americans with military experience, which enabled him to rise through the office corps quickly as the Union army expanded rapidly. Grant's ease in the military contrasted greatly with his complete failures in business. His instincts were sharp, he was decisive, and his terse orders became renowned for their clarity. As a result, Grant rose through the ranks, eventually heading the entire western army.[19] Grant led the Union

[18] Chernow, *Grant*, 44.

[19] The Civil War consisted of two primary theaters: Virginia and the "west." The Virginia theater won primary attention during the war because of the proximity of the two capitals, Washington and Richmond, and the "big name" generals involved. The western theater received significantly less attention but was critical in limiting the vast resources of the confederacy. The battles in the Western theater primarily took place along the Union-Confederate border along the Mississippi River and Tennessee, before the Union army eventually smashed through

Army in the Battle of Shiloh, one of the most devastating battles in the western theater. While victorious, the Union lost many more troops than the Confederacy, something that became commonplace in Grant's battles. Many criticized Grant throughout the war for treating his soldiers as expendable in order to defeat the outnumbers Confederates, though many soldiers revered and trusted Grant. Unlike other generals, Grant did not flaunt his status as a general and often stayed in battle with his soldiers, which increased their confidence in him.

After the Battle of Shiloh, Grant suddenly found himself in control of a large military department including cotton-rich farmland that had previously been controlled by Confederates. In an effort to avoid Northern speculators purchasing southern cotton and thus directing northern resources to the south, the Union gave permits to speculators to buy cotton as long as they did not move into enemy territory to do so. The victory at Shiloh, and the expansion of Grant's military department, gave speculators a sudden opportunity to buy cotton and sell it to the government which was stretched thin in making uniforms for new soldiers. Grant issues General Orders No. 11, which has aptly been described as the most anti-Jewish government act in American history. "The Jews, as a class, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, and also Department orders, are hereby expelled from the Department,"[20] he wrote. As a result, the Jewish community of Paducah, Kentucky was forced to relocate. These orders were controversial and Lincoln immediately ordered Grant to rescind the orders, but Grant's image and relationship to Jews was tarnished. Over the course of his life, however, many Jewish leaders felt that Grant properly repented for General Orders No. 11. Grant apologized to the Jewish community for an order made "without any reflection,"[21]and, as President, he advocated for Jews in countries

Georgia and North Carolina. Grant thrived in this environment that was distant from the political battles that infected the Union armies around Washington.

[20] "Ulysses S. Grant and General Orders No. 11," *National Park Service*.

[21] "Ulysses S. Grant and General Orders No. 11," *National Park Service*.

where they were being persecuted, attended the opening of Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, and appointed a record number of Jews to government positions.

Grant's success in the western theater came to its zenith during the Battle of Vicksburg. Vicksburg was a well-guarded Confederate Fortress on the Mississippi River that limited the Union's ability to use this vital waterway. After months of navigating his army into the right position, Grant and his solders finally defeated the Confederates and took control of the fortress on July 4, 1863, one day after the Battle of Gettysburg. This Union victory, paralleled with Gettysburg, elevated Grant to a new status in the Union. Under Grant's leadership, Union soldiers in the western theater had been competent and defeated the Confederate Army, splitting the Confederacy into two, controlling many of its vital resources and the port city of New Orleans. Eastern newspapers praised Grant's limited ego, which contrasted with the litany of egoistical Union generals in charge in the Virginia theater. As a result, Lincoln appointed Grant as the commanding general of the Union Army in 1864. With the rapid expansion of telegraph infrastructure, Grant became the first general in history to direct soldiers on multiple fronts in real time, running the Army of the Potomac in its battles against Lee through 1864 and 1865 while staying in regular contact with other commanders like General William Tecumseh Sherman in Tennessee and Georgia in the Fall of 1864. Grant's ability to keep Lee pinned down while coordinating the rest of the Union army was instrumental to the Union's success in the final year of the Civil War. In the new spotlight, accusations of alcoholism became rampant and questions remain about whether or not Grant drank throughout the war. While he claimed to be sober, some evidence points to lapses and moments throughout the war in which Grant was out of commission because of alcohol.

Upon the conclusion of the war, Grant was a hero. Americans called him "Unconditional Surrender" Grant because he demanded the unconditional surrender and defeat of the Confederacy and its General Lee. Grant navigated through Virginia, blockading Lee in Richmond and then eventually chasing him to Appomattox Courthouse, where the Confederacy officially surrendered. In his service as the general of the Army of the Potomac, he became a close friend and confidant of Lincoln, who spent time with Grant when the Union soldiers were blockading Richmond. Grant had become so renowned that people plotted his assassination. On April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth had hoped Grant would be joining Lincoln at Ford's Theater in order to kill both men at the same time. Lincoln was succeeding by his Vice President and former Tennessee Senator Andrew Johnson, the lone patriotic southerner who remained supportive of the Union in the Senate in 1860. Johnson had been appointed Vice President in 1864 as a sign of reconciliation between the two sides of the United States, but his ascension to the presidency was ill-timed and he failed to navigate the challenges of the post-war era. The super-majority of Republicans in Congress never trusted him and eventually impeached him, rendering him politically impotent for the duration of his presidency. In the meantime, the Republicans drafted Grant, the most popular American, to their ticket in 1868, where he handily defeated Horatio Seymour.

Grant embodied Lincoln's spirit in his presidency and had a vision for the United States that aligned with Lincoln's goals for the country in the aftermath of the bloodiest war in American history. During his presidency, Grant oversaw the vast economic boom that followed the Civil War and led the project of Reconstruction. Initially, Grant deployed the army to ensure that states were readmitted to the Union under the premise of equality. Throughout Grant's presidency, Congress passed and Grant executed several different Enforcement and Civil Rights Acts that gave the federal government the power to ensure that Black Americans were treated equally and free

from harassment in the South. Grant created the Department of Justice to prosecute the rising Ku Klux Klan and oversaw the election of Black leaders in several states. During his presidency, Grant "had striven to protect the black community, regularly met with black leaders, and given them unprecedented White House access, making global abolitionism an explicit aim of American foreign policy."[22] He called for respectful treatment of natives, appointing Ely S. Parker, a Native American, to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and declared Yellowstone the first national park. He created a Civil Service Commission that tried to change the spoils system that had reigned since the founding of the country and called for mass public education to instill democracy and civic knowledge among American citizens. But by the end of his presidency, scandals were dogging the administration. The northern will to continue enforcing Civil Rights in the South through the military was ebbing and Democrats and Republicans alike were calling for the end of Reconstruction. Grant negotiated the complex end to the Presidential Election of 1876, one of the most difficult presidential transitions in American history, in which disputed electors in southern states (and Oregon) created a deadlock in the electoral college. Grant salvaged the Union once again by leading negotiations between Democrats and Republicans and ensuring a smooth transition of power just days before his term expired.

Grant was the only person to serve two consecutive terms as President between Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson, a nearly 100-year period. In 1880, Grant embarked on a world tour and was greeted with great fanfare in foreign capitals. Upon return, he flirted with a third run at the presidency, which would have broken the precedent set by George Washington, but he opted not to be considered. In 1884, still in dire financial straits despite his status as an American hero, Grant was diagnosed with throat cancer, likely a result of cigar smoking. Realizing that he had

[22] Chernow, *Grant*, 744.

limited time, Mark Twain agreed to publish Grant's personal memoirs to ensure that his wife would not become destitute upon his death. He completed the memoirs a few days before he died and Twain orchestrated the publication of what became one of the most well-regarded memoirs and military accounts of the Civil War. Grant died as one of the most significant heroes of the 19th century, widely popular and beloved across the United States and someone who had enforced implementation of Civil Rights measures that granted Black Americans equality and access to the ballot that would not return until 1964.

JOSHUA

In the Israeli public education system, the Book of Joshua is one of the first books taught in a class on Tanakh. It is arguably the only book in the entire Bible that consists of a string of successes as the Israelites enter the Land of Israel, conquering it from the idolatrous Canaanite tribes. We meet Joshua on several occasions in the Torah and it becomes clear over the course of the narrative that Joshua will succeed Moses as the "head of government" for the Israelites. Joshua appears as the servant of Moses, as a military leader, and, most famously, as one of the spies. Joshua, along with eleven other spies from the different tribes, scout out the Land to determine whether or not the Israelites were capable of conquering it. Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies who reported that the Israelites could subdue their enemies. As a result, these men are the only two individuals who had fled Egypt and were welcomed into the Land of Israel; everyone else was subjected to a life wandering the desert, waiting for a new generation that had never experienced slavery to arise. Like Grant, Joshua was a military hero who eventually implemented the vision of his predecessor. But at the end of the day, his leadership was for naught, as the Israelite grasp on the land remained tenuous until the rise of the Davidic Monarchy.

The structure of the Book of Joshua can be divided into two main sections: "The Book of Conquests" (Chapters 1-11), which details the Israelite conquests of the Land of Canaan, and the "The Book of Apportionments," (Chapters 12-22), which details the division of the land into tribal territories.[23] The "Book of Conquests" can be further divided into two parts. Chapters 1-5 tell the story of Joshua's succession of Moses, the Israelite preparations before crossing the Jordan River, and the dramatic crossing of the River. The events in this section mirror many of the events that occur throughout the Torah, including circumcision of adult males, spies contouring in the Land of Israel (which will be discussed more extensively below), and the dramatic crossing of a large body of water that splits in two. Chapters 6-11 tells the story of conquering the Land, featuring two big battles at Jericho and Ai and providing a list of 31 defeated Canaanite Kings. The book concludes with Joshua's final address in Chapter 23 and 24, in which Joshua signs a covenant with the people, gives a series of laws, and writes them down in a book. These actions mirror Moses' concluding acts with the people at the end of Deuteronomy.

As a historical and literary document, there is a great debate among academics about the timing of the authorship of the Book of Joshua, its historicity, and its role in the canon. The Book of Joshua is the first book of the Prophets. While Jews often conclude reading the Torah with the end of Deuteronomy and begin again with Genesis, the Book of Joshua serves as the next step in the narrative story that begins with Genesis and concludes with the destruction of the First Temple in the book of Kings. Indeed, some scholars debate whether Joshua should be considered part of a "Hexateuch," meaning that it was understood to be a single unit with the books that we traditionally understand as "Torah." In this understanding, Joshua's concluding speech in Joshua 24, "may be understood as an attempt to present the book of Joshua as inseparably linked to Deuteronomy,"[24]

[23] Alter, "Ancient Israel," 3.
[24] Romer, "How Many Books," 30

and thus should be read with the Torah. Others view the Book of Joshua as part of an "Enneateuch," the sixth book of a nine-book narrative history spanning from Genesis to the Book of Kings. In this understanding, Joshua serves as a transition point between the desert narrative of the Torah and the narrative of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, which center on the Israelite experience in the Land of Israel. Still others understand Joshua as part of the Deuteronomistic history, a series of texts developed in the 6th and 7th centuries BCE with a particular political perspective that focused on the divine promise of the land, covenant from Sinai, and centralization of the cult in Jerusalem. Scholars who follow this perspective might argue that the texts of Deuteronomy through Kings have nothing to do with the first four books of the Torah, though later redactors combined them into one text.[25] While each of these academic perspectives have their own flaws in understanding the text and its place in the canon, it is clear that the Book of Joshua was "the result of many editions, revisions, and additions, reflecting changing concepts of the fulfillment of the divine promise of the land over a long period of time."[26]

Rabbinic tradition ascribes authorship of the Book of Joshua to Joshua himself, although there are obvious problems with that theory, including the fact that some of the events that are purported to take place in the book happen after Joshua died. Through linguistic, idiomatic and thematic studies, most modern scholars conclude that "the book is part of the Deuteronomistic corpus of literature."[27] While Deuteronomistic themes are woven in throughout the text, scholars do note that some sections of the Book of Joshua likely have "an independent history which is entirely unrelated to the Pentateuchal sources,"[28] particularly focusing on the chapters in which

[25] Schmid, "The Emergence and Disappearance of the Separation between the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History in Biblical Studies," 14.
[26] Wazana, "Introduction," 439.
[27] Ernest, "Introduction," 41.
[28] Ernest, "Introduction," 66.

Joshua divides up the various parts of the land into tribal territories. Other sections include similar features to different books in the Torah with influence from authors classically understood as related to the Northern and Southern Kingdom, as "the basic narrative in Joshua 2-11 seems to be drawn from older sources, related to those in Genesis, Exodus and Numbers. Indeed, it is the fulfillment of the promise of the land and the climax expected of the epic sources."[29] So, like much of the Torah, the book shows heavy editing that indicates it should be read "as an ideological manifesto rather than as an attempt at accurate history."[30] Therefore, while the authorship of the Book of Joshua is unclear, it is likely a text that was redacted over centuries with a final overlay by the editors of Deuteronomy. The historicity of the book of Joshua is further challenged by the archeological record. In general, archeological data from the time period does not conform with the record as established by the Book itself, which purports to take place sometime in the 13th century BCE. While the book suggests "a violent entry into a populated land, the first Israelites settled a mostly empty part of the region, the central hill country. Archeology also contradicts the detailed stories of the conquest of the two cities, Jericho and Ai, which were apparently not inhabited during the Late Bronze Age."[31] Taking all of this into consideration, many conclude that the Book of Joshua is not intended to be a historical book, but rather has a distinct political and ideological perspective.

As a lesson in leadership, Joshua represents the ideal for the redactors of the Torah. The book has little controversy or failure and shows an individual who studiously followed Moses and the excelled when he took over this position. As the Israelite tradition formed, Joshua became the first post-Mosaic model of human leadership. He clearly learns lessons from the Israelites'

[29] Ernest, "Introduction," 56.
[30] Wazana, "Introduction," 439.
[31] Wazana, "Introduction," 439.

experience in the desert and does a lot of internal work as he prepares to take over for Moses. It will be clear from particular stories in his life that Joshua embodied the ideal of leadership for the Israelites: he was an imperfect figure who learned from his mistakes and overcame his fears about succeeding Moses. In a liberal governance structure, which inverted the authoritarianism of the ancient world, Joshua becomes the perfect successor to Moses because of his own shrewd leadership skills and alignment with Moses. Significantly, Joshua is not even from the same tribe as Moses, contrasting to monarchies in which authority is passed from parent to child. Thus, it is through Joshua's internal work, his navigation of his own understanding of the liberal Israelite tradition, and his inspiration to others that he succeeds.

The text of the Torah shares background on Joshua that animates his leadership style and the skills that he would later employ upon taking a position of authority. Joshua appears haphazardly in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In the rabbinic period, the rabbis understood the Torah not as a chronological document but rather as a document with stories placed strategically throughout the narrative to prove some point.[32] While a text might appear to be chronological, the rabbis understand that it could have happened before or after and that the final redactor of the Torah (or God in the rabbinic understanding) placed that text *out of order* to prove something else. This is useful for understanding the development of the character of Joshua, because the different references to him throughout the Torah do not all add up properly taken chronologically. For example, Joshua is first introduced as a military commander and hero but then later introduced as Moses' servant and "a youth." Later on in Numbers, we learn that Moses changed Joshua's name, which one might expect to hear in his "youth" or before first meeting him for the first time. The narratives in which Joshua appear are a perfect example for this: taken

[32] BT Pesachim 6b:7

chronologically, his role might confuse the reader. But when the pieces of his narrative are studied distinctively, a clear evolution of his character and his leadership becomes more obvious.

Joshua shows two distinct leadership traits in his appearances in the Torah before he is set to take over after Moses: scholar and military leader. Our first chronological introduction to Joshua comes in the Book of Exodus during the Battle with the Amalekites and, in this case, we are introduced to Joshua as a military leader. The Amalekites, who become the proverbial enemy of the Jewish people throughout history, attacked the people in the desert after fleeing Egypt but before receiving Torah on Sinai. Moses instructs Joshua to rally troops to fight Amalek, while Moses stands upon a hill and holds a rod over his head. When Moses manages to hold the rod upright, Joshua and his army prevail. When Moses' arm becomes tired and falls, the army struggles. At the end of the battle, Joshua prevails and Moses writes down an instruction to Joshua to blot out the name of Amalek forever. In our first introduction to Joshua, he clearly serves as the military general for Moses. Joshua's role as military hero and commander is further solidified in the narrative of the spies, a narrative centered on the military's role in the conquest of the land. This understanding of Joshua as a military hero prepares him adequately for his role as leader at a time when the people needed military strategy and acumen. As the people were preparing to conquer the land, Joshua's military skill was a prerequisite for his own ascension as the people depend on his military strength and might to enter the land and displace the peoples already there, just as Grant's comfort with command of the military enabled him to keep the Southern states in line during Reconstruction.

The Torah also introduces us to Joshua as a learned scholar, fluent in the laws of Moses. After the revelation at Sinai, The Torah describes Moses and Joshua together in the Tent of Meeting. "And the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his fellow. And

he would return to the camp, and his attendant Joshua son of Nun, a lad, would not budge from within the Tent," (Exodus 33:11). When Moses had to leave the tent (his office) to attend to various problems, Joshua would stay back in the tent and learn the Mosaic Law. The rabbinic tradition utilizes this line to teach us that Joshua, as the servant of Moses, was also his student. The rabbis envision Joshua sitting in a *yeshiva* learning all of the laws that God had taught Moses, and even continuing to study them after Moses would leave to address certain issues. This verse can help us understand the opening of the great ethical teachings, *Pirkei Avot*: "Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua," (Mishnah Avot, 1:1). The tradition recognizes that Joshua was not just a political and military leader but also amassed knowledge to transmit the Mosaic legal tradition to the next generation. We have more evidence for Joshua as a scholar in the Talmud, which teaches that Joshua instituted a series of new laws once the people entered the land. These laws would not have made any sense for nomads in the desert but became relevant once they were settled in the land, (BT Bava Kamma 80b). Through these two expositions in the Torah, we can understand some central aspects of Joshua's character as he prepared to become a leader. He was an adept learned, who understood both the importance of legal and philosophical matters and military affairs. But despite his pedigree, Joshua is still trepidatious as the mantle of leadership passes to him.

Hazak V'Ematz: Take Action

Fear can be debilitating for new leaders. Overcoming it is one of the great challenges of leadership. For Joshua and Grant, this was exacerbated by the fact that they were succeeding the great leaders of their era. Because we often view people in a position of leadership by their public persona, we often fail to recognize the private misgivings and fears they have about the decisions that they make. The public often sees a leader as a successful, confident individual, but behind the

scenes, there are consistently worries about whether or not the decisions that are being made are the best decisions. Grant summed this up nicely as he reflected on his fears throughout the war. "There has not been one hour since this war commenced that I have been relieved from anxiety."[33] Both of these characters reflect an important understanding of leadership as a process of personal development. Both had the potential to become immobilized by fear, but learned how to overcome that challenge and become significant leaders.

JOSHUA: HAZAK V'EMATZ

The Book of Joshua gives the perfect mantra to inform someone debilitated by fear upon assumption of a position of leadership: **Hazak v'Ematz.** The idiom combines the words *Hazak,* "strong," and *Ematz*, which roughly means "resoluteness," or, less succinctly, what the lion searches for in the *Wizard of Oz*. While these words individually appear in the bible regularly, they operate together as an idiomatic expression only fourteen times in the entire Bible. Rabbi Michael Hattin notes that of those fourteen, seven are directly addressed to Joshua and four are spoken by Moses and God as Joshua transitions to become the leader upon Moses' death.[34] This phrase also appears in the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, a narrative retelling of the stories of Samuel and Kings that adds some of the emotions facing kings in difficult moments. It also concludes Psalm 27, which will be analyzed in more detail below.

When the Bible repeats phrases regularly in a section, it is often trying to make an emphatic point by connecting that phrase to a particular individual or moment. Martin Buber uses the German phrase *leitwort*, or leading word, to describe how this operates. "Key ("leading") words are repeated within a text to signify major themes and concerns, like recurring themes in a piece of music (hence the similarity of Buber's term to composer Richard Wagner's word *Leitmotif*). A

[33] Chernow, *Grant*, 451.
[34] Hattin, *Joshua*, 8.

leading-word operates on the basis of sound: the repetition of a word or word root encourages the listener to make connections between diverse parts of a story (or even a book), and to trace a particular theme throughout."[35] Because *Hazak v'Ematz* is repeated so often both at the end of Deuteronomy and in the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, we can understand it as the *leitwort* of Joshua's transition into a position of authority. This phrase appears at dramatic and daunting moments of uncertainty, in which Joshua might be debilitated by fear. Rabbi Hattin understands it as an exhortative:

> "not to be overawed by the daunting mandate, not to be fearful to exercise his newly-acquired authority, not to be overwhelmed by the tasking of foreign disparate tribes with sectarian concerns into a unified nation, not to be intimidated by the unavoidable prospect of conflict, warfare, and bloodshed. As if that were not enough, Joshua stands in need of reassurance also because he has been called upon to complete the work of Moses -- the most storied leader in the history of the people of Israel."[36]

Moments of uncertainty and transition are essential parts of the human experience. The uncertainty can be overwhelming. The weight of the mantle of leadership can be too heavy to bear. The sense of imposter syndrome is powerful. But this phrase is more than just a means of relaxing yourself in a period of heightened anxiety: it is also a call to action. For new leaders, inaction can tank their tenure as leader. In Joshua's case, despite his fear, he had to guide the Israelites over the Jordan River and then conquer the various kingdoms of the Land of Canaan. This phrase becomes Joshua's mantra because it reminds him that action is necessary, even if he is paralyzed by fear or uncertainty as the people mourn Moses. Idiomatically, these two words combine to remind the reader that anxiety is normal in difficult situations but that one must remind oneself of the importance of taking action in the face of fear.

[35] Fox, *The Five Books*, xvi.
[36] Hattin, *Joshua*, 9.

The rabbis connect *Hazak v'Ematz* and Joshua's lesson to the experience of the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in which Jews engage in great introspection. The vehicle that the rabbis use to bring this to our attention is Psalm 27, the Psalm read daily in synagogue during the month of Elul and the ten-day period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. By connecting this Psalm to the experience of Yom Kippur, the rabbis recognize the fear and anxiety associated with these Days of Awe. As Jews, we have two main tasks during the High Holidays: *cheshbon hanefesh*, a reflection on who we are as human beings, to consider the ways in which we do good in the world and the ways in which we need to improve, and *tshuva*, to acknowledge the ways in which we have done wrong before both God and other human beings. Oftentimes, the exercise of the Days of Awe feels unnatural, pushing our comfort zones beyond their normal bounds. We are asked to take this process one step further: to apologize to the people who we have harmed in the past year and consider the ways in which we can improve our relationships with the ones around us. As the rabbis teach, "The Day of Atonement atones for wrongdoings between people and God, but between two people, the Day of Atonement does not atone," (Mishnah Yoma 8:1). To make things even more difficult, the tradition teaches us that the Book of Life is open in the Ten Days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: that our actions and decisions during this ten-day period will have an impact on our life over the course of the next year. The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can cripple a Jew standing before God for cosmic judgment. Because of that, the rabbis connected this awesome and dreadful time with a Psalm that ends with the words *Hazak V'Ematz.* Like Joshua and his moment of fear succeeding Moses, we must recognize our fears. But we cannot let those fears debilitate us from taking action and doing the work that we are instructed to do. *Hazak v'Ematz* is an important lesson for any new leader, holding anxiety before assuming a leadership role within a society.

GRANT: WHEREVER HE IS, THINGS MOVE

Like Joshua, Grant faced moments of great fear and anxiety in the face of uncertainty. Part of Grant's success was his embodiment of *Hazak v'Ematz* as a personal mantra: Grant recognized the importance of taking action despite uncertainty about the outcome of his decision. Grant's military tactics could be reduced to that simple lesson: take action. Abraham Lincoln said of Grant, "wherever he is, things move!"[37] A colonel that worked under Grant noted how quickly he would make decisions, even in the midst of uncertainty:

> "[Colonel Rusling] noticed how decisively Grant acted under pressure. When brought a request for a major expenditure, Grant approved it with startling speed. Rusling asked Grant if he was sure he was correct. 'No, I am not,' Grant shot back, 'but in war anything is better than indecision. We must decide. If I am wrong we shall find out soon, and can do the other thing. But *not to decide* wastes both time and money and may ruin everything.'"[38]

Grant's penchant for action contrasted with the litany of Union generals preceding Grant who failed to move in the face of uncertainty. Generals Winfield Scott, George McClellan, and Henry Halleck notoriously hesitated before taking any significant actions that cost them in the aftermath of significant battles. They all feared the political and personal consequences of losing and thus wanted each decision they made to be calculated and perfect. In reality, it hampered their ability to succeed and impacted their political lives negatively. In the style of fighting during the Civil War, battles were often fought to a draw. Scott, McClellan and Halleck often stopped after a draw, retreating behind Union lines. With the Union army falling back, Lee's army could recuperate, recover, and dig-in despite being outnumbered and having significantly fewer resources.

One example of Grant embracing *Hazak v'Ematz* happened in May of 1864. Grant had just been appointed as the commanding general of the entire Union Army and was personally leading

[37] Chernow, *Grant*, 353.
[38] Chernow, *Grant*, 330.

the Army of the Potomac facing off against Lee in Virginia. As the head of the Army, he embraced this attitude of action in the face of uncertainty. Grant gathered his massive army and crossed the Rapidan River into Virginia. He and Lee engaged one another in a brutal battle at The Wilderness. In the middle of a forested area, fires had been set adding an eerie haze to the entire two-day battle from May 5-7, 1864. The Union estimated 17,000 casualties to the Confederates' 13,000 and the battle was, altogether, inconclusive. Since this battle had no nearby hilltops to view the results, Grant spent much of the battle in a precarious situation, calm but anxious in the midst of the chaos.

> "Seated on a tree stump, in a hilly clearing, he puffed through twenty cigars, smoked a briarwood pipe, wrote orders, examined maps, and chatted with [General] Meade. He idly whittled so many branches with a pen knife that he wore holes in his thread gloves. While some observers claimed his hands trembled, most were struck by his unnatural calm. He seemed undisturbed when enemy shells burst nearby, refusing to relocate to a safer place, saying, 'it would be better to order up some artillery and defend the present location.'"[39]

If Grant knew the phrase *Hazak V'Ematz*, he surely would have said it during the Battle of the Wilderness. While Grant's whittling and cigar smoking throughout the battle may seem like coping mechanisms to deal with anxiety, Grant remained calm and recognized the importance of taking action. Rather than retreating across the Rapidan after two days of inconclusive battle, Grant pushed forward. "Throughout the Overland Campaign, he would force Lee to react to him. Striking first, setting the pace, shaping the contours of battle -- these were priorities dear to Grant's heart."[40] Despite setback after setback on his army's march from the outskirts of Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia, the Army of the Potomac pushed forward, eventually trapping Lee's army in Richmond and barricading the city. There were numerous battles that were draws or even losses for the Union Army, but Grant utilized his advantages with resources, soldiers, and communications to continue to push Lee, ensuring that he did not have time to set up fortifications

[39] Chrenow, *Grant*, 381.
[40] Chernow, *Grant*, 380.

or replenish the Confederate army. At the same time, as Grant was directing the other parts of the army utilizing thousands of miles of telegraph, Lee was unable to move his troops to replenish the rest of the Confederate forces, ensuring the collapse of Atlanta and cutting off the Confederate government from the rest of its territories. Walt Whitman, the poet of a generation, wrote of Grant's brilliance as a general: "When did Grant ever turn back? He was not that sort; he could no more turn back than time… [He] often seemed about to be defeated when he was in fact on the eve of a tremendous victory."[41]

JOSHUA IN ACTION: ACHAN'S MUTINY

The Book of Joshua is similarly filled with swift, decisive action by Israel's commanding general in a campaign of total war as the Israelites conquered kingdom after kingdom. After initial fears about taking over from Moses, Joshua quickly made decisions and moved his army into the land of Canaan. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua conquered the mighty fortress city of Jericho, paving the path to move up into the mountains and conquer the rest of the Land. After Jericho, Joshua had established clear guidelines for what to do with the defeated city: the Israelites could not take spoils of war for themselves. This style of warfare, called *herem* or "the ban" in Hebrew, was not completely uncommon in the ancient world although it was used sparingly. It entailed the total destruction of a defeated civilization, amounting to what we would call a genocide. Under the *herem*, even animals were set to be slaughtered rather than being incorporated as spoils of war. Recognizing that the historicity of this document is unfounded, scholars wonder why the later Deuteronomistic authors, writing in the 7th century BCE, would feel compelled to "invent a narrative of conquest of the land in which a genocidal onslaught on its indigenous population is repeatedly stressed."[42] Robert Alter explains the use of the *herem* in this section by recognizing

[41] Chernow, *Grant*, 385.
[42] Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 3.

that the authors of Deuteronomy had a particular objective of separating the Israelites from their idolatrous neighbors, despite the fact that the people were inherently intermingled with their neighbors and assimilated into some of the customs and norms of others in the land.[43] This section of the Book of Joshua was written to match that ideological perspective and the *herem* on spoils of war was an essential method by which the authors made their political points.

As the Battle of Jericho ended, the text informs us of insurrection within the ranks regarding this total ban on spoils of war. "The LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was throughout the land. And the Israelites violated the ban, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah from the tribe of Judah took from the ban, and the Lord's wrath flared against the Israelites," (Joshua 6:27-7:1). While this text adds a Deuteronomistic spin, we can understand this as an incident of a soldier not following a commander's orders. In a military setting, unit cohesion is one central aspect of success. Dissent within the ranks, with soldiers willing to break the rules that had been established by their commander, could lead to problems for the entire army. In the aftermath of his first battle, Joshua was sorely tested by the soldiers that were under his command for the first time. While Joshua was still unaware of the situation with Achan, son of Carmi, he pushed the army forward into the hill country west of Jericho. In this next battle, the Israelite army suffered a bitter defeat in the town of Ai. The army was stymied by a lack of discipline, exemplified by the disobedience of Achan son of Carmi. The Israelites suffered a bitter defeat and the loss of 3,000 soldiers. As soon as he discovered the mutiny within his ranks, the first rebellion against his leadership since he had taken over from Moses, Joshua did not hesitate. He acted quickly, putting Achan to death. Once this was behind him, the army was able to proceed and conquer the city. The lesson here was simple: inaction would lead to disarray and the army would fail. But Joshua

[43] Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 5.

understood the lesson of *Hazak V'Ematz*: he was now the leader and needed to quickly take action to resolve the problem in the army. Despite the initial setback with the destruction of 3,000 Israelite troops in Ai, Joshua pushed forward and took the actions he needed to take without hesitation or fear of reprisal from the rank and file soldiers.

There are drawbacks to rushing headfirst into your new leadership position, slashing and making changes suddenly and without hesitation. The core Grant and Joshua's leadership came down to an understanding of playing politics. Joshua gave the people 30 days to mourn the death of Moses and navigated the optics of crossing the river and the Battle of Jericho so that he could begin his tenure with two major successes in which the people viewed him as the leader. Grant, as we will see below, built a strong relationship with Lincoln that enabled the president to trust his general. But it must be noted that Grant was criticized throughout the war for the massive number of Union casualties during his battles against Lee's Army. Grant recognized that he had an advantage over Lee in supplies, ammunition, resources, and numbers of soldiers. He utilized that advantage by pushing Lee's army into submission, constantly throwing more soldiers and weapons at the dwindling confederate army. That came at a huge cost of life, something that Grant mourned in his memoirs. But despite the criticism, Grant also recognized that taking advantage of his numerical advantage was the only path to "unconditional surrender." Any new leader, and particularly one succeeding a great leader, must find a balance between rash action at the start of a tenure and calm, collected action after a period of reflection and appreciation for the difficulty of the moment. Moments of transition provide great hesitation for leaders. Leaders often struggle with imposter syndrome, wondering if they will succeed despite a constituency that may doubt their leadership skills, especially in comparison with a revered predecessor. The phrase *Hazak v'Ematz* is designed to help that leader contemplate the difficulty of the moment ahead and

recognize that the individual can succeed. If leadership is about turning inward and investigating the self at critical moments, both Grant and Joshua embodied that before taking decisive action. We can imagine both Grant and Joshua turning to gimmicks (like alcohol or whittling) to ease the immense stress of the campaign ahead of them. Yet this simple mantra, *Hazak v'Ematz,* was that meditation that these two individuals needed to remind themselves the importance of taking action despite great anxiety and tribulation about their own leadership capacity.

Leadership Lesson: Know your predecessor, but be yourself

Joshua and Grant provide an essential leadership lesson for the individual seeking to replace a long-tenured, successful leader: **know your predecessor, but be yourself.** Both individuals built strong relationships with Moses and Lincoln and adopted core aspects of their political programs. Yet in the moment of transition, both recognized that they would never *be* Lincoln or Moses: they had to chart their own course as leaders. In exploring this, it is essential to consider the political program of their predecessors, how they aligned with it, and when they broke with their previous bosses.

GRANT: KNOW YOUR PREDECESSOR

Grant adeptly adopted the program of his predecessor, Abraham Lincoln. Through the 1850s, like most white northern liberals, he opposed slavery, but also worried that outright Civil War was worse than the scrouge of slavery. Only the secession of the southern states turned him into an "outright militant"[44] in the cause of abolition. While he started out in a very junior role in the military, his experience in the Mexican-American War and West Point connections quickly allowed him to rise through the ranks of the rapidly growing Union Army. In addition to his military skills, Grant, on three occasions, showed adept political skills, ingratiating himself to

[44] Chernow, *Grant*, 99.

Lincoln and helping establish and deepen their relationship with one another. These decisions allowed Grant to both succeed Lincoln and implement his vision for a new America.

In the first case, Grant was the head of a Union unit dispatched to secure the strategic city of Paducah, Kentucky, at the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio Rivers, in 1861. As the contours of the Civil War took shape in 1861, there were several border states split between the Union and the Confederacy including Missouri (where Grant had lived and his father-in-law owned slaves), Kentucky and Maryland. In these states in particular, families found themselves fighting on opposite sides in a bloody war. These border states had tepid conflict between abolitionists and slave owners during the decade preceding the Civil War. Kentucky and Maryland were both geographically strategic locations, as those two states ensured control of the Ohio River and the District of Columbia, the seat of government for the Union. Lincoln understood that the Union's success depended upon keeping Missouri, Kentucky and Maryland in the Union in 1861. When Grant's unit arrived in Paducah, he drafted a letter to the citizens of the town highlighting his recognition of this critical goal:

> "I have come among you, not as an enemy, but as your friend and fellow-citizen, not to injure or annoy you, but to respect the rights, and to defend and enforce the rights of all loyal citizens. An enemy, in rebellion against our common government, has taken possession of, and planted its guns upon the soil of Kentucky and fired upon our flag… He is moving upon your city. I am here to defend you against this enemy and to assert and maintain the authority and sovereignty of your Government and mine."[45]

Grant's letter perfectly articulated Lincoln's goal of keeping these states on the side of the Union. By calling the citizens of Paducah "loyal citizens," he helped the community understand its own role in the conflict while letting potential dissenters know who was in charge. He framed the role of the army in the town as defending the citizens of Paducah against the scourge of an enemy in

[45] Chernow, *Grant*, 155.

rebellion. By using language of defending sovereignty and the flag of the United States, Grant made his mission in the town clear to citizens and reminded those who might have had family members breaking for the confederacy the importance of staying attached to the Union. The letter imbued the townspeople with a sense of patriotism and had the desired effect. Indeed, Lincoln wrote, "The modesty and brevity of that address shows that the officer issuing it understands the situation and is a proper man to command there at this time."[46] This was the first occasion in which Grant used his pen to issue a terse and direct army order reflecting the political program of Lincoln. While this example is not commonly found in history books, it is, arguably, equally as important as the other two cases in which Grant aligned himself with Lincoln's political program and secured his place as the successor to the great leader.

The second case of Grant aligning with Lincoln's political program came in his handling of freed slaves. As the Civil War progressed, the Emancipation Proclamation and the treatment of former slaves became a central political challenge for the Union. On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln declared that all slaves in confederate areas were to be set free. Both Lincoln and Grant came to recognize that the issue of slavery at the heart of sectional conflict in the United States had to be permanently resolved by granting freedom and citizenship, with all of its rights, to the former slaves. Grant wrote that it had become "patent to my mind early in the rebellion that the North and South could never live at peace with each other except as one nation, and that without slavery. As anxious as I am to see peace reestablished, I would not therefore be willing to see any settlement until this question is forever settled."[47]Grant enacted several military policies about the treatment of former slaves that eventually reflected Lincoln's evolving objective of integrating former slaves into the fabric of American society. As Grant's army progressed in the western

[46] Chernow, *Grant*, 155.
[47] Chernow, *Grant*, 243.

theater in 1862, slaves ran toward his army. Ramshackle villages of former slaves started forming on the edge of the Union army. At this time, there was a lot of fear about what would happen to these former slaves and many northerners worried that freed slaves would suddenly descend on their cities. After initially writing General Halleck that he did not know what to do with these former slaves, Grant came up with a clear plan for treating the former slaves. In this process, "Grant's imagination had charted the entire arc of the freed slaves from wartime runaways to full voting citizenship."[48] Grant declared the runaway slaves "contraband" of war, a legal slip that allowed him to bypass the Fugitive Slave Act, which was still on the books for the Union. Then, the army set up "contraband camps" which would house, feed, educate and employ the former slaves, primarily picking the cotton fields that the Union army had captured, for wages.[49] The last point was critical, as Grant envisioned the former slaves becoming independent laborers like any other American and specifically envisioned the army as the first place to prove that. Grant used the proceeds from the Black laborers to build comfortable cabins, hospitals, and "supply them with many comforts they had never known before."[50]

In the 1862 midterm elections, one of the main reasons that Republicans lost 27 seats in the House of Representatives came down to this question of integration of former slaves into Union life. Indeed, many white northern liberals feared how the freed slaves might impact their lives, their economy or their general safety. The challenges of integration of the former slaves was not solved by politicians in Washington, but rather by Grant's integration of the former slaves into the military's apparatus. He solved some of the temporary challenges and the decisions he made at this moment later informed his leadership as president during Reconstruction. Frederick Douglass

[48] Chernow, *Grant*, 243.
[49] Chernow, *Grant*, 229.
[50] Chernow, *Grant,* 230.

noted that Grant "was always up with, or in advance of authority furnished from Washington in regard to the treatment of those of our color then slaves."[51] Grant, more effectively than any other general or person in Lincoln's orbit, executed some aspects of the dream that was developing about the role of freed slaves in the postwar society. While Grant and Lincoln both were hesitant to express the end of slavery as an objective of the Civil War at its beginning, both recognized during the war that the United States would not be able to reunite as a nation continuously divided over the issue of slavery. As a general, Grant figured out the practical details of some of the most difficult questions that a society imbued with racism and negative attitudes toward newly freed slaves was struggling to solve. This alignment with Lincoln's policy helped set Grant up to be Lincoln's successor. Furthermore, Lincoln began to trust that Grant was one of the few people on the Union side who could actually get things done, sometimes on his own initiative.

Lastly, Grant wholeheartedly embraced Lincoln in the run up to the Election of 1864. While Americans often look back at the re-election of Lincoln as a foregone conclusion, there was, in fact, a lot of tension around his re-election. In 1864, Grant's campaign with the Army of the Potomac was stalling and the Confederacy still managed an effective train system to transport goods and weapons around the region, managed through the hub city of Atlanta. Four years after the war broke out, an increasing number of people were frustrated with Lincoln's leadership and the Union inability to win the war despite numerical, technological, and logistical advantages. The outsized opinion of people seeking to remove Lincoln were in the "peace now" camp. This group included many war weary northerners: people who were tired of the war and its overdue costs and carnage. This ascendant group sought to cut a deal and make peace with the Confederacy as it was, either splitting the United States into two countries or continuing to operate as one country divided

[51] Chernow, *Grant,* 230.

over the legality of slavery. They were best represented by General McClellan, who "was perfectly willing to trade emancipation for peace"[52] and eventually ran as the Democrat in 1864. The dismay among the Lincoln camp was so intense that in August of 1864, Lincoln told his cabinet that he felt the chances of his re-election were quite low.[53]

Throughout this dire period, Grant navigated the political situation quite adeptly and recognized that political and military affairs were closely connected to one another. Despite Grant's wholehearted rejection of this plan, on August 18th, 1864, a group of Republicans proposed nominating Grant to be president because they felt that Lincoln would not be able to win. Grant, however, had begun writing letters that were then published making his alignment with Lincoln clear and known: "I consider it as important for the cause that Lincoln should be elected and that the army should be successful in the field."[54] Grant was publicly supportive of Lincoln's determination to keep emancipation and total victory on the table throughout this difficult period and eventually delivered the victory that Lincoln needed to ease the minds of northerners worried about an indefinite war. On September 2, 1864, under the direction of Grant, Sherman reached Atlanta, the linchpin of the Confederacy supply system. Sherman burned Atlanta to the ground and turned toward the ocean, unleashing a campaign of total destruction (a modern day *harem* style war, without killing the people) against Georgia and North Carolina, destroying the natural resources of the confederacy. Republicans quickly fell into line behind Lincoln and abandoned the "peace now" plan and Lincoln easily defeated his former General, McClellan, in the Election of 1864. Grant aligned himself with Lincoln publicly and repudiated efforts to replace Lincoln. As a result, Lincoln came to trust and appreciate Grant more than anyone else. From this point forward,

[52] Chernow, *Grant*, 441.
[53] It is important to remember that, not including Presidents who had been active during the Revolutionary War, only one president had served two consecutive terms in America's nearly 90 years.
[54] Chernow, *Grant*, 440.

Grant and Lincoln trusted one another and recognized the important role each played. Grant had also publicly identified himself with Lincoln's plan. By **knowing his predecessor**, Grant was able to catapult himself from the military role to the successor and eventually become the President implementing many of Lincoln's dreams.

JOSHUA: KNOW YOUR PREDECESSOR

Like Grant, Joshua developed a keen understanding of the political program implemented by Moses. We have already seen that Joshua was a devoted student of the legal system that Moses implemented, but as part of that studying, we can also understand that Joshua was keen on supporting the major societal shift that Moses sought to create. Moses faced a unique political challenge in the ancient world. The Israelites were most likely the first (and only) society in the ancient world in which national identity formed as slaves. Therefore, once free, Moses sought to create an alternative form of government in which human beings were not treated as commodities. Slavery had been a fundamental part of typical society in the ancient near east in which an autocratic king supported one group of people (citizens) at the expense of another (slaves). The Israelites tried to invert this by introducing the radical concept that each human life had inherent value.

The practical creation of a new government valuing each person proved to be a difficult task for Moses. The Torah's narrative between the Israelites' freedom and receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai shows the difficulty Moses faced in creating a new political model that upended the norms of the ancient world. In Exodus 15, the Israelites celebrate euphorically as they emerge onto the other side of the sea, watching Pharaoh and his army drown. They were free from the yoke of slavery. But rather than setting up some utopian desert society on their way to the Land of Canaan, the Israelites immediately face a series of practical challenges in governorship.

In Exodus 16, immediately after crossing the Sea and wandering around the desert for a few days, the Israelites began complaining about the lack of food and water. The people pined for the simplicity of their life in Egypt which, while difficult, met their most basic needs. In Exodus 17, they were attacked by the Amalekites and had to establish certain hierarchies in order for the military to succeed (when we met Joshua for the first time). And in Exodus 18, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and a Midianite priest, visits the camp and expresses great concern that Moses was overworking himself as the judge of the various disputes that were arising among the people. Jethro provided the wise counsel that Moses was taking all of the leadership responsibilities upon himself and that was not a sustainable form of government for a free, liberal society. Moses was overwhelmed with resolving disputes among people and *needed* hierarchy and bureaucracy to help him navigate the problems facing the new Israelite society. The new society that Moses sought to create needed a military and a judicial system that could function in order to survive. Moses needed *some* hierarchy, but wanted to avoid creating another empire in which he would serve as King and Priest, which would inevitably lead to class divisions and eventually slavery.

After this scene with Jethro, in which Moses realizes the necessity of hierarchy in creating a new society, we have the most significant moment in Israelite history: the Divine Revelation, the national covenant with God, and the giving of the Torah. Moses recognized one essential change would be necessary for the construction of a society of former slaves that wanted to avoid the pitfalls of the other empires and kingdoms across the world: he flipped around the notion of "the King is God" to "God is King." (For a longer elaboration on this, see the chapter of Samuel and Washington.) By elevating the role of God in society to being all powerful, Moses' political program could accomplish two things: ending sovereign immunity, and ensuring that each human life was valued. Through these two changes, he could create a society that would not be dependent

on an authoritarian leader and contained the principles of liberalism. Moses' understanding of the divine lay at the crux of these radical revolutions at the heart of his new political program.[55]

First, by elevating the status of "God" to omnipotent, Moses inherently lowered the status of the king. As a result, the king would be subject to laws like any other person. According to Deuteronomy, the king had to carry a copy of the Torah with him at all times and was limited from amassing too many horses, money or women in his harem, (Deut. 17:18). While we take this for granted today, limiting the power of the king and ensuring that the king had to follow laws was a revolutionary idea at the time and was critical to ensuring the creation of a society in which people had fundamental freedoms and rights. Furthermore, if the king was subject to laws, other people would also be uniformly obligated to follow the legal system that was divinely mandated. These laws regulated the ways in which people related to one another and even guaranteed slaves some basic rights. Second, the laws espoused by Moses, both in the chapters following the revelation at Mt. Sinai in Exodus and beyond, were rooted in questions of human value. Moshe Greenberg argues that the "concept of the nature and worth of man" is the "cornerstone of the whole value structure" of Israelite society.[56] In positing his argument, Greenberg understands that the political program of Moses (as expressed by biblical law) was revolutionary regarding treatment of human beings and this was expressed by a fundamental understanding of the responsibility of one human being toward another in this legal society.[57] For Moses, this creation of a society in which the king

[55] With regard to my claims about Moses' "political program," there are some historical questions at play here. While Moses most likely never heard of Deuteronomy and the laws it entailed, I am reading the Torah from a literary perspective. According to the Torah, Moses represents the leader who created these radical shifts in government that ushered in a new period. In the biblical record, the Israelites often failed to achieve those goals that Moses outlined. Rather, his political program created the "ideal" for which Israelites would turn. In reality, this probably reflects political ideologies that emerged at least after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE. But, as all of these literary figures as we know today emerged in this time period, I am using the shorthand of "Moses' political program" to describe the Israelite quest to limit the power of the king and increase the value of human life.

[56] Greenberg, "Biblical Grounding of Human Value," 39.

[57] For more information on this topic, see, "The Biblical Grounding of Human Value." Greenberg compares the Biblical law codes to the legal framework developed by Babylonian texts like Hammurabi's Code and the Enuma

was subject to laws and all people inherently had value, depended on a new understanding of the divine and society's relationship to God.

We have evidence of Joshua adopting this political program instituted by Moses in one particular place in the Torah: his name change. In biblical literature, a name change typically represents a shift in ideology or understanding for the character involved. As an individual adopts a new name, it represents some sort of fundamental or ideological shift in his or her understanding of the world. Some name changes represent complete switches and the reason is explicitly given by the Torah, like when Jacob becomes Israel, with the Torah defining the reason as Jacob "wrestling with divine being." But others, like Joshua or Jonathan (Yehoshua or Yonatan in Hebrew) undergo a simple name change with the addition of a theophoric statement: "yo" or "yeho" at the start of a name or "yahu" or "ya" at the end of the name. Indeed, "the first personal name that was definitely constructed with the tetragrammaton is Yehoshua (Joshua)."[58] When we meet Joshua in Exodus, he is clearly called "Joshua." But as the narrative of the spies begins, we are suddenly and surprisingly introduced to the fact that Joshua's name had previously been changed by Moses! As Moses introduces the 12 different spies from each of the tribes, he calls out Hosea bin-Nun from the tribe of Ephraim. After listing all of the spies that will be sent from each of the tribes, the Torah says: "These were the names of the people which Moses sent to scout the

Elish, which conceive of law established by mythical figures and do not hold human life as the chief source of concern in the law. By contrast, Mosaic Law posits universal truths that presume that people are fundamentally responsible for their actions, especially with regard to those that take human life." Greenberg looks at capital punishment to derive proof for his theory: "Both Assyrian and Babylonian law know of offenses against property that entail the death penalty." In those legal systems, property damage by the wrong person makes them subject to capital punishment. "For breaking and entering with intent to steal, for looting at a fire, for night trespass in another's domain… even for theft from another's possession, Babylonian law takes the life of the culprit… Life and property are commensurable." Greenberg notes that, at a quick glance, biblical law seems equally problematic as it maintains capital punishment. However, with a dive into biblical law, it becomes clear that biblical law requires death in all cases in which human life is taken. "A religious evaluation of the value of man is inherently in this law… it places life beyond the reach of other values."

[58] Stamm, "Names," 805.

land, but Moses changed the name of Hosea-bin-Nun to Yehoshua (Joshua) bin Nun."[59] This change can be understood as an ideological shift for Joshua as he adopted the personal name of God in his own name. By adding the tetragrammaton, the personal, four-letter name for God that best represents the political program espoused by Moses, Joshua shows Moses that he is willing to accept his ideas. Joshua recognizes the importance of creating a new society in which God reigned above all, the king was limited in power, and all human life was understood as having value. Indeed, in this moment it becomes clear that Joshua transitions: he is no longer just a servant or a student. Rather, Joshua can rise to the occasion of leading the entire people after the death of Moses because he understands Moses' main objective: creating a society imbued with monotheism in order to avoid the pitfalls of idolatry, autocratic kings above the law, and a legal system that does not treat human beings with inherent value. His name can now be translated as "God will save," allowing Joshua to recognize that, as a leader, there will be certain things out of his control and that deference to God and recognition of a higher power will enable Joshua to thrive as a leader of the Mosaic ilk. Through his name change, we can understand that, over the course of his development of a leader, Joshua eventually adopted Moses' political program. He embraced the ideals of leadership as outlined in the introduction and understood the importance of building a society in which authority was diffuse and liberal values trounced notions of authoritarianism.

… But Be Yourself

Despite adopting the political program of their predecessors in very public and defined ways, both Joshua and Grant recognized shortly after becoming leaders that they would have to operate differently than their predecessors. Both embody a critical second step of leadership lessons for the successor: **be yourself**. Joshua and Grant were willing to break, both in content and

[59] Exodus 13:16

in style, with their predecessors as new situations arose. As both sought to emerge as their own leaders, they recognized the importance of being able to distinguish themselves from their predecessors. While they maintained the broad, programmatic ideas of the leaders that came before them, changing times led to the importance of shifting the goal posts once they were in charge.

JOSHUA: THE SPIES, REDUX

Joshua's very first action as the leader of the Israelites was a direct inversion of the narrative of the spies that we read in Numbers 13. In Numbers, Joshua plays a critical role as one of the twelve spies as they scout out the land of Israel. At the start of the Book of Joshua, Joshua sends spies off to scout the city of Jericho before the Israelites cross the Jordan River and eventually conquer the city. Because Joshua played such a central role in both narratives, the second text serve to distinguish his leadership style as compared to that of Moses in the first text. Furthermore, Joshua felt comfortable learning from the lessons and failures of Moses in creating his own, unique leadership style.

There are a few key stages of the dueling scout narratives that highlight Joshua's leadership strategy: public relations, establishing objectives, the duration of the mission, establishment of intelligence agents, and the report of the mission's success. In each of these cases, we see Joshua's leadership style emerge. The most essential difference between the two missions deals with public relations. In the narrative of the spies from Numbers, Moses does what might seem natural in a central mission for a group gathering information about conquering and settling the land: he publicizes the mission and secures buy-in from all the parties to create unity among the people. The instruction from God to Moses comes in a powerful form that both names the Parsha and resonates with other significant and powerful moments throughout the Bible: *shelach-lecha* "send forth!" (Numbers 13:1). This imperative biblical structure naturally reminds the reader of *lech-*

lecha "go forth!" (Genesis 12:1) the famous call to Abraham to go to a new land, and might even remind the esteemed reader of *kum v'lech* "get up and go!" (Jonah 1:2) the phrase directed to Jonah. While God speaks directly to Moses, the camp responds with excitement to this new directive to select one person from each tribe to spy on the land of Canaan. From here, the narrative continues with a list of the names of the spies and each of their respective tribes. One can imagine each of the tribes deliberating about which warrior deserved the honor of being sent to Moses to represent them on this essential mission. The spies are sent off in fanfare in a military mission that was designed to be part of the process of uniting all of the tribes before conquering the land of Israel. But Joshua clearly recognized the potential pitfalls of this strategy: if the mission succeeds, the tribes will all have felt a deep sense of involvement in the scouting and therefore a willingness to fight in a unified manner against the Canaanites. But if the mission fails, the entire people will know about it and may become war weary and hesitant for a long battle that may not be successful.

In contrast with the scouting narrative in Numbers, we read in the Book of Joshua that "Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim saying, 'Go, reconnoiter the region of Jericho,'" (Joshua 2:1) In contrast to the biblical scouting scene, the scouting narrative in the Book of Joshua begins with an essential word: "secretly." Joshua recognizes that in some cases, military discretion is essential, especially when dealing with people who may be fickle about engaging in a long, drawn-out military campaign whose benefits may not be clearly understood. Indeed, rather than choosing one scout from each tribe, Joshua picks two people who go unnamed. While Moses felt the scouting mission deserved public attention and the involvement of the joint chiefs of staff, Joshua recognized that a covert operation has its place in certain contexts. Indeed, the Rabbi David Kimhi (the "Radak") teaches that "Joshua sent the men secretly so that the people of Israel would be unaware and therefore not discomfited by the thought of sending spies," (Radak on Joshua 2:1).

While Joshua was certainly "filling big shoes" in taking over after Moses, he already has a clear sense of his own leadership style and can operate differently than his old boss. As the new leader in charge, he felt that discretion would help the mission succeed.

Second, Joshua and Moses gave very different instructions to the scouts. Moses' command to the spies was broad:

> "Go up this way through the Negev, and you shall go up into the high country. And you shall see the land, what it is like, and the people that dwells in it, are they strong or slack, are they few or many. And what is the land in which they dwell, is it good or bad, and what are the towns in which they dwell, are they in open settlements or in fortresses. And what is the land, is it fat or lean, are there trees in it or not. And you shall muster strength and take of the fruit of the land," (Numbers 13:17-20).

The Israelites, inspiring the Jewish people for millennia, are prone to argument and disagreement with one another. It is not surprising that with all of these questions that Moses asked, the scouts come back with varying degrees of information to report back. One scout might have seen the people as intimidating while another was more worried about the large fortifications. While individually this might be harmless, altogether the voices that emerge from the scouts express worries regarding each of the questions that Moses asked. The people hearing the report of the scouts would be unsatisfied as each came back reporting specific elements to fear, disheartening the people from engaging in this conflict.

Joshua, on the other hand, gives much more circumspect instruction to his unnamed scouts. An accurate translation of Joshua's call to his spies would read: "Go, see The Land, and Jericho," (Joshua 2:1). The verb choice here, "see," is much more limited than the request of Moses in Numbers, who asked the spies to gather a lot of specific information and even return with fruit. But medieval Jewish commentators like Rashi and the Radak stumble upon the odd phrasing, *et*

ha'aretz hazot, et Yericho, "the Land, and Jericho."[60] They wonder why Joshua felt compelled to add "Jericho" specifically rather than just the entire land. Rashi argues that Jericho was as powerful as the entire land because it was on the border, and therefore it equates Jericho with the land, (Rashi on Joshua 2:1). The Radak reads it more simply by saying that Joshua wanted the spies to scout out the land more broadly and mentioned Jericho as one example of a place to scout out, (Radak on Joshua 2:1). I would argue, however, that Joshua was simply limiting the scope of the mission. He wanted his unnamed spies to focus on a very simple task: see Jericho. Rather than scouting out the entire land, he wanted the spies to go into Jericho to get an understanding of their defenses and get a sense of the local population's understanding of this large, nomadic band sitting on the river opposite their city. Joshua's simple and limited instructions also reflect his leadership style and its contrast to Moses' leadership.

Third, there are major differences in the duration of the mission. In the narrative of the spies from Numbers, the mission took forty days. In biblical literature, forty days represents a transformative period of time. The flood of Noah lasted for forty days and Moses tarried on Sinai for an equally long period. In both instances, that period of time is transformative for the individual on the journey. Yet both cases include a certain level of restlessness during the period of waiting. Noah and his family emerge from the flood and immediately plant a vineyard and get drunk. When Noah is drunk and engaging in some sort of indistinct sexual activity, his youngest son feels compelled to watch and tell his brothers about it, committing an act of sexual indiscretion that brings a curse upon his descendants. At the conclusion of Moses' forty days on Mt. Sinai, the Israelites' anxiety peaked with the construction and idolization of the golden calf, the ultimate sin. In this case of forty days, we can understand the people anxiously awaiting the return of the twelve

[60] Grammatically, the appearance of "et" before Jericho indicates that the text has two distinct, definite nouns appearing after the verb.

spies, already on edge as they prepare to hear the news from the scouts. While that forty-day period may have been transformative for the spies themselves, because of the public nature of this military matter, the anxiety of the people impacts what they want to hear and how they will respond to the news. On the other hand, in the story of the scouts in the Book of Joshua, the duration of the mission is much more limited. The scouts appear to spend all of one day in Jericho scouting out the city before departing. Then, they wait for three days on the outskirts of the city in order to avoid the pursuers sent out by the city of Jericho before returning to Joshua. The limited nature of the duration of this mission ensured that the journey was about the mission rather than a transformation of the individuals involved. In addition, because the mission had a very specific objective, the scouts were able to minimize the amount of time spent in enemy territory before reporting to Joshua. By limiting the duration of the mission, Joshua helped the spies focus on the mission in front of them without being distracted by the potential pitfalls (or glories) that could come from a wider military campaign.

Fourth, the campaign in the book of Numbers does not reflect any interaction with the local peoples. An essential part of intelligence gathering is understanding the motivations and fears of the population in order to assess the weak points. In the modern world, human intelligence has been the heart of operations for groups like the CIA or the Mossad, seeking to covertly understand the enemy's position and view of their own strength. In the case of Moses' leadership, the individuals are not presented any opportunity to talk with local people. Rather, Moses instructs them to bring back some fruit of the land. Without interacting with the locals, the Israelite spies stole fruit from their farms and vineyards, something that certainly would have elevated their fear rather than placating it. Without gathering any human intelligence, the spies let their fears dominate their understanding of the region.

In the story of the Book of Joshua, however, we meet a unique character: Rahav the Harlot. We have limited information about Rahav, although we do know that she lived in the wall of Jericho. In ancient cities, the walls of towns often had sections that people lived in. Then, during a siege in which the wall needed to be fortified, people living "on the edge" of the city would be removed from their homes and the walls would be filled with more stone in order to strengthen the fortifications. That section of town was typically reserved for poorer people or individuals who may be more frustrated with their position in life. In this case, it is not surprising to find Rahav's home in that section of the city considering her line of work. Rahav agreed to help the spies in their evacuation of Jericho during this mission once their position was compromised. But more importantly, she provided the spies with the human intelligence they needed in order for the Israelites to win the actual battle. "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that your terror has fallen upon us and that all the dwellers of the land quail before you," (Joshua 2:9) she tells them. Rahav recounts the Israelite conquests in the desert, indicating that the people of Jericho feared the Israelite army and did not feel up to the task of defeating this group. With Jericho's demise approaching, she sought to survive the forthcoming Israelite onslaught and was willing to give this group of spies critical information about the political will of Jericho to fight. Rahav's willingness to harbor spies for the enemy serves as a major confidence boost for the approaching Israelite army. The people of Jericho worried their own government would be unable to defend them from this army to the point that people were willing to help enemy spies evade capture. Joshua certainly utilized this knowledge as he proceeded to fight the Battle of Jericho a few chapters later. In that battle, in which the army famously surrounds the city and blasts trumpets, Joshua played on the fear of the citizens of Jericho in his victory.

Lastly, Joshua showed his own independent leadership mettle in the manner in which the information was reported to the Israelites. In the narrative in Numbers, the spies publicly shared the information with all of the Israelites. This led to a widespread outcry and frustration as the people wondered why they had left Egypt where there had at least been food and security despite slavery. Despite Caleb and Joshua speaking up publicly in support of conquering the land, the peoples' unwillingness to support the mission led to forty years of banishment in the desert until a new generation could enter the land. Moses' leadership style encouraged these debates to occur in a public setting, letting people air their misgivings aloud, which, in this case, led to the detraction of the overall mission and another thirty-eight years in the desert. In the Book of Joshua, on the other hand, we hear a much more simple and direct approach. "And the two men went back and came down from the high country and crossed over to Joshua son of Nun and recounted to him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, 'Yes, the LORD has given all the land into our hands, and what's more, all the dwellers of the land quail before us,'" (Joshua 2:23-24). Unlike the long, public discussion that appears to be more of a town hall meeting in Numbers, this information is privately given to Joshua who immediately acts upon it.

By contrasting these two narratives, we develop a distinct understanding of some of the differences in leadership style between Joshua and Moses. Moses allowed conversations and discussions to be held in public while Joshua recognized that, in some cases, discretion is key. In addition, Joshua showed a capacity to learn lessons from the failures of the first story of spying on the land, an essential task of leadership. But, most importantly, Joshua gives us a wonderful example of the critical leadership lesson of the successor: **know your predecessor, but be yourself.** While Joshua knows that Moses may have operated differently in this case of spying on

the land, he is willing to carry the mantle of leadership himself and enact the strategy he believes is most likely to succeed.

GRANT: WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE

Throughout his presidency, Grant took actions that countered the ultimate maxim that Lincoln used to guide his view on what peace should look like. In Lincoln's Second Inaugural address, with the Confederacy on the cusp of defeat, Lincoln was staring down the task of rebuilding a unified nation that had just gone to war with itself and watched 620,000 young men, brothers, kill each other. In his Second Inaugural Address, etched into stone on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., Lincoln concluded by saying, "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan -- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."[61] Grant embodied this ethos of "malice toward none, charity for all," in the manner in which he engaged in Lee's surrender. As Grant chased Lee's army to Appomattox Courthouse, people adopted a new nickname for him: Unconditional Surrender Grant. Despite his quest for Unconditional Surrender, Grant treated Lee and his soldiers with respect as he followed Lincoln's quest for "malice toward none, charity for all." Grant and Lee met at the home of Wilmer McLean, who owned a house that was damaged at the Battle of Bull Run and famously said that the Civil War began in his backyard and ended in his parlor. Grant was covered in mud and began the meeting by acknowledging the time he had met Lee, who was 15 years older than him and had been more senior in military rank, in Mexico during the Mexican-American war. In the terms of agreement, Grant directed all weapons and arms to be given to his

[61] Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address to the Nation," March 4, 1865.

army, but that "each officer and man will be allowed to return to their homes not to be disturbed by United States Authority so long as they observe their parole and the laws in force where they reside."[62] Historians have noted that "this last sentence was significant, making southern soldiers immune from treason prosecutions and setting the stage for postwar reconciliation -- or so it was hoped,"[63] and Grant even allowed the Confederate soldiers to return home with their horses. Lee was allowed to keep his horse and his sword and even omitted the words "unconditional surrender" from the terms of agreement. Grant felt that his decisions at Appomattox would allow former Confederate soldiers to have positive feelings toward the new Union they would be rejoining, in which former slaves would be treated as citizens like anyone else.

While Lincoln and Grant both understood that the military would continue to control the southern states as they were readmitted to the Union, the extent to which Grant had to maintain the army to support Reconstruction marked a shift away from the principle of malice toward none and charity toward all. Grant's actions as President during Reconstruction were not without warrant -- in 1870, over 60 Black Americans were killed in Mississippi without any prosecution of the murderers. According to some estimates, there had been over 2,000 political murders in the State of Louisiana between 1866 and 1876.[64] These murders were primarily driven by the new group, the Ku Klux Klan, which had formed in the aftermath of the Civil War to use violence and terrorism to try to strip Black voters of their newfound rights.

There were two major stages of Grant's response to violence in the South, both of which were critical moments in Reconstruction. In both of these cases, Grant reacted to new challenges of the day. He was willing to move past any notions of reconciliation with the southern states and

[62] Chernow, *Grant*, 509.
[63] Chernow, *Grant*, 509.
[64] Chernow, *Grant*, 794.

demanded strong federal oversight of the provisions of the Civil War Amendments. In the first stage, during Grant's first term, Grant lobbied Congress to pass several bills to give the federal government the power to prosecute civil rights cases and violent homicides in the south. In order to execute these bills, he established the Department of Justice. Previously, the Attorney General had operated as more of a counselor for the President, but this newly empowered branch of the government began serving the role it continues to serve to this day: prosecuting federal crimes. In its early days, witnesses were unwilling to come forth and testify against the Klan for fear of reprisal, and the Klan was responsible for launching "a new civil war by clandestine means."[65] Congress passed and the justice department executed protections in a series of measures designed to help protect people in the voting process and challenge intimidation. In practice, the army would come and arrest Klan members while the U.S. Attorneys would arrange federal trials for these criminals, marking the first time in which the federal government prosecuted criminal acts instead of state and local governments. This came to a head with the passage of the Ku Klux Klan Bill by Congress in 1871. Grant pushed Congress to meet early and "marched up to Capitol Hill, accompanied by virtually every member of his cabinet, and lobbied for an explicitly anti-Klan bill, leaving the particulars up to legislators."[66] This law allowed the federal government to act in certain cases when state governments were unwilling to do so, and even granted the federal government the power to suspend habeas corpus (the right to not be held indefinitely and without cause) and declare martial law by sending in troops to restore order to a specific area. By 1872, the Klan had been thoroughly defeated (its later iterations had no direct personal connection though an obvious ideological one exists) and the South held free and fair elections with minimal interference or intimidation. "It was a startling triumph for Grant, who had dared to flout what

[65] Chernow, *Grant*, 702.
[66] Chernow, *Grant,* 705.

southern states considered their sacred rights to enforce the law within their borders."[67] The decisions Grant made in his first term, while not directly in the spirit of "with malice toward none, and charity for all," allowed him to create a society in which freed blacks would have the same rights as white people across the South. Grant was willing to go the extra mile in creating unprecedented federal policy and standards to deal with the rising levels of terrorism by white southerners and use the muscle of the federal government to achieve his ends.

Grant's effort in his first term at squashing the Ku Klux Klan was widely successful, but it must be noted that there was significant backlash, both from whites in the south and in the north. By the time a new set of issues arose, in which white people across the south were intimidating voters and corrupting ballots and elections, Grant tried once again to use the force of the federal government to achieve his aims. In this case, however, people had lost the will to keep using the army to enforce the Civil War Amendments. Democrats, ascendant again across the country, argued that Grant and the Republicans were enacting these bills for political purposes and to protect carpetbaggers, people who had moved to the south after the war in order to get elected as Republicans. While Grant passed an Amnesty Act in May of 1872, which gave former Confederates amnesty as long as they did not disrupt the process of voting and speaking freely and fairly, the challenges became more complicated in his second term. Horace Greely, the New York newspaper publisher, changed his tune and started publishing statistics about crimes in New York City compared to crimes in Texas, arguing that much more attention should be paid to the higher rates in the more populated areas rather than protecting Black voters in the south. Alongside this white backlash in the south, the racism of northern liberals reared its ugly head as people started empathizing with southerners and disdaining the freed Black slaves. Greely represented many

[67] Chernow, *Grant,* 709.

white northerners when he described the freed slaves, "as an easy, worthless race [who took] no thought for the morrow."[68] Support for Reconstruction was waning across the board and "the president was running out of room to maneuver as the country backed away from further federal inference in the South."[69] In 1875, Grant lobbied Congress to pass a Civil Rights Act, legislation that was quickly rejected by the Supreme Court and would only return to the United States a century later in the 1960s. In both of his terms, Grant had admirably decided to use the military and new levers of the federal government to enact laws that forced the South to accept the changes that were being foisted upon them by the Civil Rights Amendments. Grant was willing to change the *means* to achieving the goals that he desired by directly intervening in Southern affairs in order to allow Black people the right to vote. While Grant succeeded in this shift in the short term, the lack of political will from the American public for continued interventions upended this strategy. By 1876, despite deep partisanship rancor, Democrats and Republicans alike were vowing to end Reconstruction and Grant's efforts were overturned as the Southern states managed to block Black voting for another century. It is difficult to know what type of peace Lincoln would have implemented had he remained alive. Yet in his final words, Lincoln preached to the country about the need to move beyond the war itself and to heal as a country. Yet when Grant felt like the southerners were unwilling to accept the radical changes, he was willing to depart from the amiable attitude that Lincoln espoused in his final days. Grant did what he knew best: he brought the full force of the federal government, in conjunction with the military, onto the southern terrorists and rebels. In the short term, he succeeded in creating a model for racial reconciliation in the United States that people today should consider as they seek to address the continued racial disparities in voting, in elected office, and in many other economic and political metrics.

[68] Chernow, *Grant*, 742.
[69] Chernow, *Grant*, 794.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Grant and Joshua provide lessons for the individual transitioning into a position of authority and replacing a highly regarded leader. They both faced difficult challenges following Moses and Lincoln, but both teach us critical lessons about how to overcome the difficulty of those moments. Grant and Joshua both displayed a natural amount of fear and anxiety upon ascending to their own positions of leadership, but both valued the importance of taking action, even in the face of uncertainty. As they sought to become the successors of such vaunted and praised leaders, they both managed to align themselves with the political programs and objectives of their predecessors. This was an essential decision that each made that shaped their ability to *become* the successor in the first place. But when both individuals actually became the leaders, replacing their old bosses, they recognized the importance of being able to depart from the vision or plan of their predecessor. Both maintained the fundamental goals of the programs: settlement of the land of Israel and the equal treatment of Black Americans in the United States. But both used their own styles to achieve those ends and recognized the value in their stylistic differences from their predecessors. For the individual that finds themselves rising into a new position of leadership, succeeding someone who was loved and revered at an organization or in government, I hope the examples of Joshua and Grant, with their pitfalls and successes, can serve as an example of how to navigate some of the most difficult elements of being the successor.

Chapter 3: Be The Most Prepared Person in the Room: Madison and Ezra

As I was growing up, my Dad shared some of his wisdom from years as a lawyer arguing cases in court before a judge. He used to share with me that, whenever he was getting ready for court, he strived to be the most prepared person in the room. In a legal setting, that meant knowing all of the facts and evidence that were going to be introduced in a case, understanding the law as it applied to the situation, and reading everything that witnesses or defendants had previously said or written. He tried to fashion arguments that passed his own scrutiny, thinking through every hole that everyone was going to tear into his arguments. He would predict the arguments that the other side would bring and figure out how to refute his opponents' potential arguments as part of the process of being the most prepared person in the room. While this made him a good lawyer, he spoke about an additional effect of being the most prepared person in the room. One time, as my Dad was preparing to argue a case before a judge that he knew well, the judge said to him, "Mr. Lewis, you're very confident you're going to win here today, aren't you? Because your body language exudes confidence that you are going to win." While my Dad acknowledged that he felt self-conscious about the unconscious body language he was conveying to others in the room, he recognized that he was not even aware of the confidence he was showing that resulted from his feeling of being the most prepared person in the room. But the confidence of being the most prepared person in the room can, in turn, lead to success and greater ability to influence a situation. The leadership lesson of preparation applies in so many different leadership capacities. As a teacher and rabbi, I always strive to be the most prepared person in the room, whether it is helping people studying a difficult argument with a text or preparing for a pastoral care setting.

In our respective traditions, Ezra and James Madison are ripe for comparison. Both individuals were influential in shaping the foundational documents at the heart of the United States

and the Jewish tradition, respectively, but both are not particularly well known. James Madison was the author of our constitution, the leader of the Democratic-Republicans in Congress in the Washington administration, an influential Secretary of State and the first wartime president. Just as Madison is relatively unknown in American history, Jews rarely touch the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah. Most books in the section of the Bible, Ketuvim, or Writings, are read publicly at various stages in the Jewish liturgical calendar. The Psalms are incorporated into daily prayer, the Five Scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther) are read on various holidays, and the maxims of Proverbs and Job and the stories of Chronicles are referenced throughout rabbinic literature. The historical narrative of Ezra is an outlier in this section as a continuation of the historical narrative of the Israelites, fitting naturally with the end of the Book of Kings and the destruction of the First Temple. Despite their lack of attention in modern society, both of these individuals had outsize influence on *the* foundational documents of each nation: the Torah and the Constitution. In both modern scholarship and the narrative of the Bible, the Torah as we know it was most likely redacted in the post-exilic, early Second Temple period, fitting perfectly with the timeline of Ezra. In this chapter, I will argue that Ezra was the chief redactor of the Torah, or at a minimum, his literary character represents the leader of the group that redacted the Torah. The theatrics of the Torah service that happens in synagogue today are based on the events that take place in the Book of Ezra. And while the Constitution was shaped and edited throughout the Constitutional Convention, Madison is known as the "Father of the Constitution," developing the framework that would eventually be adopted as the governing document that established the framework for republican government in the modern period. Madison did not stop there: when the Constitution struggled to gain support, he teamed up with Alexander Hamilton and wrote the *Federalist Papers*, a commentary on the Constitution itself. Finally, as a member of the

House of Representatives, Madison crafted and passed the Bill of Rights to ensure that the government could not infringe upon certain inalienable rights that Americans held.

The systems that both Madison and Ezra created have been remarkable for their longevity and their ability to shift and change to meet the new needs of Americans and Jews, respectively. (This comparison will be explored in more detail in the final chapter on the Torah and the Constitution.) Both documents were crafted in a style that allowed them to be "alive," and therefore accessible in new ways in each generation. Madison and Ezra creatively approached the big questions that each tradition struggled with and created the basis for the legal systems based on these two documents (explored in more detail in a later chapter). Together, these advancements enabled the creation of societies that did not depend on authoritarianism. Madison and Ezra were able to succeed because they were **the most prepared person in the room.** That preparation gave them the confidence to lead in particular moments, enabling both to create the framework for the foundational documents at the heart of the American story and the Jewish tradition. In this chapter, we will explore some of the history of these two individuals and their preparation work, culminating in the dramatic moments of the Constitutional Convention and the scene in Nehemiah 8 in which the Jewish people read from the Torah for the first time.

Introduction: The Father of the Constitution & The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah

<u>MADISON</u>

Madison was born in the rural, western part of Virginia to an agricultural family of means. However, Madison was not satisfied with the life of the rural farmer. He had deep interests in politics, religion and law that brought him to study at Princeton College in New Jersey. His general view of politics was greatly influenced by Aristotle as he believed that "politics ideally reflected

the human impulse to sociability, which in turn produced friendship and concord."[70] In his time at Princeton, he developed an expertise in matters of religion and state, something that would serve him throughout his life. Madison, an Anglican and therefore part of the majority in Virginia, found himself as a religious minority at Presbyterian Princeton. Yet he suffered no discrimination because of his status as a religious minority and the faculty "whom he respected were themselves dissenters, and that he was, in effect, a dissenter from their dissent, made the issue of religious liberty salient."[71] In his studies on the intersection of religion and the state, Madison not only became an expert on questions of church and state, he became an innovative leader in the field. This expertise would serve him later throughout his political career. Madison returned home from Princeton, and within a few years, he went from being "a recent college graduate living at home, unsure of his calling, reading without focus, unenthusiastic either about seeking a profession or maintaining the life of a gentleman farmer"[72] to one of the leading luminaries of a generation working on shaping republican democracy in the modern world. Madison owned slaves throughout his life and engaged in practices, like many other Virginians of his time, to ensure that his slaves would continue as his property despite spending extensive time in northern states that had outlawed slavery. Madison recognized the evil of slavery but was unable to desist from the practice himself. In speaking on the subject of factionalism at the Constitutional Convention (more on that below), Madison said, "We have seen the mere distinction of color made in the most enlightened period of time, the ground of the most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man."[73] While

[70] Feldman, *Madison*, 134. This could be contrasted with Alexander Hamilton, who followed the Hobbesian school of political thought and believed that politics was primarily about power and glory.
[71] Feldman, *Madison*, 12.
[72] Feldman, *Madison*, 27.
[73] Feldman, *Madison*, 121.

Madison understood and spoke about the flaws of slavery, he was willing to engage in the practice himself.

In the midst of the colonial rebellion against the British Monarchy, Madison was elected to serve as one of the representatives of Orange County to serve in the convention that drafted Virginia's State constitution in 1776. From there, Madison represented Virginia in the new Continental Congress, was sent by Virginia to negotiate at the Annapolis Convention to reform the Articles of Confederation (the governing system that managed the Continental Congress before the Constitution) in 1786 and eventually served as a delegate for the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. From there, Madison was elected to the House of Representatives, where he drafted the Bill of Rights. As a close ally of Jefferson, Madison became the leader of the faction in Congress that would eventually be called the Democratic-Republicans that would control the executive branch and run the country for 24 consecutive years under the presidencies of Jefferson, Madison and Monroe. Madison exemplified the factionalism of the Washington Administration, and on occasion attempted to manipulate the document he created in order to achieve certain political ends.[74] During the Adams Administration, Madison did not hold any official positions but served as a vocal opposition leader, before becoming Jefferson's Secretary of State and then, eventually, President. Madison was America's first wartime president and oversaw the government fleeing Washington, D.C. in the face of the British Army and their sacking of the national capitol. But the "draw" against Britain in that war established the United States as a permanent power in the Americas.

[74] When the Washington Administration was considering signing the Jay Treaty, an economic deal with England, Madison argued that the House of Representatives had the prerogative to approve foreign treaties as he believed he could kill the treaty in the House. Of course, the Constitution clearly specifies that only the Senate approves foreign treaties.

Throughout his life, Madison relied on complex relationships with people around him. Madison built a close friendship with Thomas Jefferson, who became an important mentor and guide for the younger Madison. He maintained more fraught relationships with James Monroe, who would run against him on several occasions but nonetheless serve as Secretary of State in the Madison administration, and Alexander Hamilton, who would stymie him throughout the Washington administration despite their close allyship during the Constitutional Convention and the drafting of the *Federalist Papers*. Madison was a bachelor until Aaron Burr (who later became Vice President, killed Hamilton in a duel, and attempted an insurrection in the far west) introduced Madison to the recently married Dolley Payne Todd, who had been convinced to marry John Todd against her wishes but before her father's death in 1791. Dolley and Todd had two children, but in September 1793, a deadly yellow fever hit Philadelphia. Dolley's husband, Todd, contracted the fever on a trip to Philadelphia and spread it to the entire home, killing her infant before dying of the disease himself. That winter, Madison returned to Philadelphia for the Congressional term. The main agenda item in Congress that winter had been about the federal response to the Barbary Pirates and protecting American shipping interests. Madison proposed a series of economic sanctions to try to alleviate the situation but was bitterly defeated and was not supported by Jefferson. "Abandoned by Jefferson and politically stymied, Madison then did something unexpected: he fell in love."[75] By September of 1794, the forty-three year old Madison married Dolley. Throughout their time in politics, Dolley set the standard for the role of the First Lady throughout American history, becoming the first leading figure of the Washington social scene. During Jefferson's Presidency, Dolley played the role of hostess in light of Jefferson's status as a widow, and she became a full-time professional political partner to Madison. "Dolley's specialty

[75] Feldman, *Madison*, 387.

was to downplay, minimize, and if possible resolve conflict. [Her] dictated memoir said that 'she felt that it was her duty to pour oil on the waters of discord, and draw malcontents into the fold of her husband.'"[76] Madison held center stage for over 40 years in American politics. His role between 1776 and 1816 shifted many times, as the chief drafter of the Constitution, the main partisan leading the Democratic-Republican wing in the Congress, and the first wartime president.

THE BOOK OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH

Before beginning an exploration of the literary character of Ezra, it is worth reviewing Ezra's place in the grand narrative of the bible.[77] In 722 BCE, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been defeated by the Assyrians and the northern tribes were scattered across the Ancient Near East. Nearly 140 years later, in 586 BCE, The Southern Kingdom of Judah was vanquished by the Babylonians and the leaders of the Judean Kingdom were exiled to Babylon, marking the beginning of Jewish presence in the area of the Tigris and Euphrates that would continue through the mid 20th century. While it is worth questioning the historicity of some specific events outlined in the bible, the main historical events in the bible are attested to archaeologically and from sources outside of the bible, paralleling the narratives in the books of Kings, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and some of the minor prophets. Unlike the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, in which the conquered people were scattered around the world and assimilated into various new communities,

[76] Feldman, *Madison*, 445.

[77] Throughout this section, I will refer to the land as Judah and the people as Judeans, rather than Israelites or Jews. Israelites properly refers to the broader unification of the 12 tribes. The only tribes that were exiled were the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Levi and possibly the scattered remnants of the other tribes that had been absorbed into the Southern Kingdom after the destruction of the North. Throughout the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah, the people are referred to as Judeans returning to Judah, and therefore I hold by that reading. The word "Jew" in every other language besides English and French matches with "Judea." While it might be proper to use the phrase "Jew" at this point in time, I am going to stick with Judean since this represents the period of national formation that led to modern Jewry.

the exiled Judeans had maintained some distinct form of identity. (For more information on this, see the section on Jeremiah and Wilson.)

The Book of Ezra begins in the postexilic period, in the year 539 BCE with the Persian King Cyrus taking over the Babylonian Empire. When the Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire, they allowed peoples to return to their own lands and restore the worship of their local gods in specific temples. The extra-biblical evidence for this can be found in the Cyrus Cylinder, an archeological find which attests to Cyrus' conquering Babylon and restoring the worship of local gods, including in Babylon.[78] For the particular group of Judeans who had been exiled in Babylon, this meant returning to the land of Judah to rebuild the House of YHWH in Jerusalem that had been destroyed fifty years earlier. The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah begins at this critical juncture and traces the restoration of the Judeans to the land of Judah and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The book covers a span of approximately 100 years, tracing the completion of the Second Temple and the reconstruction of the City of Jerusalem. The Persian Kings referred to throughout the books generally line up with the records from Persian history and archaeological evidence, placing the book of Ezra-Nehemiah in a very specific and realistic historical context.

Before exploring the structure of the book, it is worth noting the debate of what the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah consists of and why it is called by two names. In the JPS Hebrew Bible today, the table of contents lists two separate books: a distinct, ten-chapter Book of Ezra followed by a distinct, thirteen-chapter Book of Nehemiah. In the 19th and early 20th century, some scholars argued that Ezra and Nehemiah were two separate books because of the disjointed nature of the narrative, the repetition of one very large list, and the two distinct "memoirs." Since the memoir of Ezra came in the first half and Nehemiah came in the second half, scholars called the first part

[78] Rappaport, "Cyrus," 1186.

"The Book of Ezra" and the second part "The Book of Nehemiah." However, Ezra-Nehemiah should be understood as one unified book.[79] While the chapter numeration that I will use below will follow that standard (e.g. Ezra 7:11 refers to the seventh chapter of the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah 8:1 refers to the eighth chapter of the Book of Nehemiah), the unified book of Ezra-Nehemiah follows one narrative arc telling the complete story of the return of Judeans from Babylonia in the 5th and 6th centuries BCE. In the ancient Jewish and early Christian catalogs of the Hebrew Bible, these books were unified and simply called "The Book of Ezra," due to Ezra's unique role that he plays throughout both books. For example, in the Babylonian Talmud, the rabbinic tradition outlines the Book of Ezra as one book that was canonized just before Chronicles at the end of the Bible, (BT Bava Batra 15a).

In addition to the historical understanding, the literary structure of the books provides some evidence for the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah. As Tamara Eskenazi notes, "the divisions and fissures cease to be occasions to sever limbs but become, instead, clues to the book's overall intention."[80] The book of Ezra-Nehemiah features a narrative arc with a clear beginning, middle and end. The beginning, Ezra 1, introduces an Edict from King Cyrus stating:

> "All the kingdoms of the earth has the LORD, God of Israel, given me, and He has ordered me to build Him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. And whoever among you of all His people, may his God be with him, let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and build the house of the LORD, God of Israel -- He is the God Who is in Jerusalem. And whoever remains in all the places where they sojourn, let the people of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with beasts together with the freewill offerings for the House of the God who is in Jerusalem.," (Ezra 1:2-4).

[79] Eskenazi, *In An Age of Prose*, 11.
[80] Eskenazi, *In An Age of Prose*, 13.

While it is unlikely that Cyrus ever said these specific words, in which the Judean God charged him with rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, this fits with the pattern of Cyrus allowing peoples across the world to return to building temples and supporting local gods. Therefore, we can understand this section as the "Judean take" on Cyrus' broad calls for local worship of gods. In addition, this introduction addresses some of the key issues in the book including the relationship between Jews in Jerusalem versus Jews remaining outside the land, relationship between the returning Jews and non-Judeans who had remained in the land after the destruction, and the mixing that occurs between those groups. (Modern day Jews might find these issues resonant, as they continue to be some of the defining points of disagreement in the Jewish community 2,500 years later.) The first chapter continues with an execution of this Edict, as some Judeans prepared to return to Jerusalem and others donated wares and goods for the Temple sacrifice.

The "middle" section consists of the core narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah. It begins with the long list of names of people who had been exiled from Babylon and then returned to Judah as a result of Cyrus' edict in Ezra 2. This list is repeated verbatim in Nehemiah 7. Eskenazi argues that the repetition of the list of names frames the middle section of the narrative in which the people work on rebuilding the altar to God in Jerusalem, re-establishing the community in Judea, and completing the wall of the city of Jerusalem and thereby finishing God's house. Repetition as a framing device shows the unity of a book that tells a singular story, challenging the narrative that these are two memoirs with poorly constructed pieces attached haphazardly.

Within this "middle" section of the book, there are three distinct narrative scenes. First, Ezra 3-6 includes the story of the rebuilding of the altar in Jerusalem, conflict with the locals and the Persian government, and large sections of Aramaic text that appear to be taken from some other sources and repeated verbatim. Second, Ezra 7-10 shares the memoir of Ezra and the story of the

reconstruction of the people in the Land of Judah. And finally Nehemiah 1-6 introduces the reader to the character of Nehemiah, a leader in the Persian government and the eventual governor of Jerusalem, and his efforts to complete the wall of Jerusalem. As mentioned above, Nehemiah 7 repeats the list from Ezra 2, concluding the "middle" of the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah. Finally, the book concludes with Nehemiah 8-13, the narrative conclusion and celebration of the success of the Judeans in the mid-5th century BCE. (We will explore the conclusion in more depth below.)

The narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah consists of three main shifts from the norm espoused in the rest of the bible: a democratization of the tradition by shifting agency to the people, rebuilding the House of God and expanding it to include the entire city of Jerusalem, and the primacy of written texts at the expense of an oral tradition. The shift toward "the people" can be found throughout the narrative, especially with regard to rebuilding the Temple. In the narrative of the construction of the First Temple, Solomon is responsible for the idea and execution of the construction of the Temple. In this case, it is "the people" who do the construction. Ezra, in particular, focuses on what it means to rebuild the Judean people by demarcating who should be counted and who is outside the bounds. In the narrative of Nehemiah, we read about an expansion of the House of God to include the entire city of Jerusalem with the "wall" being considered an essential part of the completion of the project. But, most importantly, written texts play a unique role in the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Unlike other biblical books, "documents precipitate and guide the action."[81] The Judeans derive their authority to return to the land and rebuild the Temple from written texts and Ezra-Nehemiah consists of verbatim repetitions of Aramaic texts from the Persian Empire charging the Judeans with specific texts. All of this centers around the creation of a central

[81] Eskenazi, *In an Age of Prose*, 58.

text that justifies and legitimizes the Judean presence in the land: the redaction of the Torah in the form that we have received today.

EZRA: THE TORAH AND THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

Jewish life for the past 2,500 years has centered around the Torah. The Torah plays a central role in Jewish life both physically and spiritually. As a physical text, the Torah inspires both awe and fear in Jews across the generations. The double bound scroll that contains the Torah is paraded around the synagogue before and after it is read. People fast and make donations to charity if it is dropped. The literal words on the page -- the black ink on the animal-skin parchment – can overwhelm many Jews feeling the power of reciting this ancient text. One celebrates becoming an adult in the Jewish community by reading from the Torah. The script includes a particular calligraphy and no vowels, meaning that an individual must prepare before reading this book aloud. A reading must be done in the presence of a community of at least ten people. Beyond the physicality of the Torah itself, Judaism also places Torah at the center of spiritual life. "Its ways are pleasant ways and all its paths are peaceful. It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and whoever holds onto it is happy," (Proverbs 3:17-18) and "God's Torah is perfect, reviving the soul" (Psalm 19:8) are just two biblical examples exuding the perfection of the Torah. And the rabbinic tradition teaches that "On three things the world stands: On Torah, on Service, and on loving deeds," (Pirkei Avot 1:2), and "These are the things that are limitless, of which a person enjoys the fruit of this world… They are: honoring one's father and mother, engaging in deeds of compassion, arriving early for study, morning and evening, dealing gracefully with guests, visiting the sick, providing for the wedding couple, accompanying the dead for burial, being devoted in prayer, and making peace among people. But the study of Torah encompasses them all," (BT Shabbat 127a). The Torah is not just a physical document; it must be the central and unifying aspect of a Jewish

person's life, encompassing their entire being and the ways in which the Jew goes through the world. Engaging with the Torah is equivalent to, and even greater than, all of the other worthy *mitzvot* of the Jewish tradition. Most of the practices, holidays, and rituals are based on the Torah. It is the foundational document of the Jewish people.

But where did it come from? In the traditional Jewish understanding, the Torah was given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai after the Exodus from Egypt while leading the people through the desert. But the tradition consists of great debate about the origins of this document and what exactly Moses received on Sinai from God. The most extreme view, as argued in one place in the Talmud, says that the Ten Commandments, the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings, the Mishnah (a code of Jewish laws and ideas), and the Talmud (the interpretation of the Mishnah) were all given to Moses at the exact same time, (BT Berakhot 5a). One might naturally counter this argument by noting that the Talmud consists of vigorous debate by various rabbis in the common era and therefore had no connection to Moses whatsoever, but this argument represents the notion that the Torah is all-encompassing of the Jewish tradition. Other places in the Talmud argue that very specific human beings wrote specific books of the Bible: Moses wrote the Torah and the Book of Job; Joshua wrote the book of Joshua and the verses of the Torah about Moses' death; Samuel wrote Judges, Samuel and Ruth; David redacted the Psalms; Jeremiah wrote Jeremiah, Kings and Lamentations; Hezekiah wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes; the "Members of the Assembly" wrote the Twelve Minor Prophets, Daniel and Esther; and Ezra wrote Ezra and Chronicles," (BT Bava Batra 15a). These different viewpoints represent some of the early ways in which the rabbinic tradition sought to understand where the Bible came from and why it looked the way it did. That project continued in the medieval period, as commentators like Abraham Ibn Ezra (11th century Spain) and Baruch Spinoza (17th century

Amsterdam) made different arguments about the various contradictions in the Torah that indicated the human hand behind the document.

There are numerous contradictions in the Torah that have made people question its veracity as a document written by one author. The dueling stories of creation, for example, have mystified scholars of the Torah for centuries. Genesis 1:1-2:4a is one clear, distinct story of the creation of the world. In this narrative, the world is created in seven days, the text uses a distinct set of verbs like "create," "make," "said," "saw," and "called," and God is named "Elohim" in this text. Elohim creates the "earthling," Adam, as both male and female, and allows this person to have dominion over all of the other creatures and the land. Genesis 2:4b-2:25 begins a completely new creation story. In this version, the text uses a different set of verbs like "form," "plant," "blew," "command," and "took," and God is named "YHWH." The "earthling," Adam, seeks a "fitting helper," but is unable to find one among the animals, so God removes his rib and creates "woman." This version of creation includes a short poem and descriptions of natural phenomena like rivers and gardens. A textual analysis indicates that these are two distinct creation stories, written in different styles, focusing on different themes, and with different plots as they seek to describe the creation of the world. The Torah is replete with many other examples of dueling narratives that indicate different authorship through literary style, syntax and diction, and thematic emphasis.

Additionally, the Torah consists many textual contradictions. For example, in Genesis 11, Abram's homeland is identified as Ur of the Chaldeans, at the southern end of the Tigris and Euphrates. As the narrative proceeds, he and his family shift to Haran, at the northern end of the rivers near modern day Turkey. Then, Genesis 12 begins with YHWH telling Abram to leave from his "nativeland, from his homeland, from his father's house," (Genesis 12:1) to the Land of Canaan. God instructs Abraham to leave his homeland, Ur, when he has already left it and lives in

Haran! This is a clear contradiction in the text and is unexplainable. The problems become even more egregious a few verses later. “And Abram crossed through the land to the site of Shechem, to the Terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanite was then in the land,” (Genesis 12:6). This addendum to the verse, “The Canaanite was then in land,” is particularly perplexing, as it uses the Hebrew word “*Az*.” An accurate interpretation of this phrase might read like this: “We know that today there are no Canaanites in the land, but back then there were Canaanites there.” This clearly indicates that the text was written, or at least amended, in a post-Mosaic time period in which Canaanites were no longer present in the land. Ibn Ezra, in his commentary, notes that “it is possible that the land of Canaan was seized by the Canaanites immediately after this happened. But if that is not what happened, then there is a secret meaning to this verse. And the one who understands it should remain silent,” (Ibn Ezra on Genesis 12:6). This is one of the twelve “secret” verses that Ibn Ezra alludes to throughout his commentary on the Torah. In each case, they refer to a distinct moment in which the Torah appears to have undergone some redaction well after Moses lived. While Ibn Ezra was unable to explicitly state that in the 12th century in a world in which the veracity of the Bible as the word of God could not be doubted, he points the astute reader to this problem.

In the modern world, Ibn Ezra’s reader does not have to remain silent anymore. So how can the modern reader explain these contradictions, repetitions and difficulties throughout the Torah? Scholars in the 19th century proposed something called the Documentary Hypothesis, which argued that biblical books were assembled from various sources over centuries. “The idea of this hypothesis is that the Bible’s first books were formed through a long process. Ancient writers produced documents of poetry, prose, and law over many hundreds of years. And the editors used these documents as sources. Those editors fashioned from these sources the Bible that

people have read for some two thousand years."[82] While there have been some new takes on the Documentary Hypothesis as evidence emerged and new archeological discoveries were made, the fundamental framework established in the 19th century still nicely explains how the Torah was weaved together.[83]

The hypothesis argues that there are four "authors" or "schools of authorship" that were fundamental in shaping the Torah, each of which can be associated with a different letter. The "J" or "Yahwist" source comes from the Southern Kingdom of Judah which, among other stylistic differences, used the name "YHWH" for God. The "E" or "Elohist" source comes from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which used the name "Elohim" for God. While the J source only includes narrative, the E source includes both narrative and an early law code found in Exodus. In between the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem, J and E and were woven together by a redactor of these two more ancient Israelite traditions into JE. We can see this clearly in the repetition of one event in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. After his brothers tried to sell him into slavery, the text from the southern kingdom (J) purports Judah as the savior while the text from the northern kingdom (E) purports Reuben as the savior. The "E" source frames the story, saying "When Reuben heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, 'Let us not take his life.' And Reuben went on, 'Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out of the wilderness, but do not touch himself yourself' – intending to save him from them and restore him to his father," (Genesis 37:22). In this case, the source tries to attribute a brother *besides* Judah as the savior of Joseph, reflecting the focus on the Northern Kingdom. A few verses later, however, the text reads, "Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What do we gain by

[82] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 1.

[83] Despite growing calls that the Documentary Hypothesis needs to be revisited, scholars like Friedman and Alter recognize the fundamentals of the Documentary Hypothesis continue to be unchallenged.

killing our brother and covering up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let us not do away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh.' His brothers agreed," (Genesis 37:27-28). In this source from the Kingdom of Judah, the author "J" wants Judah to come across as the brother responsible for saving Joseph's life. Thus, we have two distinct explanations for how Joseph was saved: in one case he was thrown into a pit and rescued by a caravan and in one case he was simply sold as a slave. At some point, someone weaved these two narratives together into "JE," which include repetitions and contradictions like the one mentioned here.

The "P" or "Priestly" source most likely emerged from the Jerusalem Priesthood and is primarily responsible for the Book of Leviticus and other insertions throughout Genesis, Exodus and Numbers. While there is some debate about the timing of the "P" source, many scholars argue that P provided an alternative history to that told by the JE sources. For example, the story of Noah weaves together two separate narratives, one from E and the other from P. Unlike the other sources, the P source is very focused on the work of the priests in the Temple in Jerusalem. P is the only source to refer to a Tabernacle and avoids any references to dreams, magic, angels, or talking animals, subjects more common in other sources. Finally, the Torah concludes with the Deuteronomistic source, called "D." D includes the entire book of Deuteronomy and is connected to the "Deuteronomistic history" articulated in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. "Deuteronomy contains sources that are as old as J and E or possibly even older, but the formation of the work took place in the reign of King Josiah of Judah, circa 622 BCE."[84] We know this because the reforms in the book of Deuteronomy match up to the reforms of Josiah and Hezekiah in II Kings. The argument is further strengthened by a particular scene in II Kings in which Josiah discovers a "new scroll" that contains the word of God and the prophetess Huldah confirms its

[84] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 5.

veracity as a Mosaic source. Commentaries understand the "new scroll" to be the story behind the addition of the Book of Deuteronomy.

There are seven main mechanisms to test the veracity of the Documentary Hypothesis. First, there are clear linguistic differences between the sources. For example, the older sources use a specific style of Hebrew that is replete with words influenced by languages that existed at an earlier date, while the later sources, P and D, show influence from more "modern" languages like Aramaic, which proliferated during the time when P and D were constructed. Second, there are terminology differences throughout the Torah. The J and P sources, connected to Jerusalem, call the name of the mountain where revelation occurred "Sinai" while the E and D sources call it "Horeb" or "Mountain of God." Third, the sources have consistent content within them. We can see this most easily in relation to the name of God, YHWH, which J uses from the beginning but E and P only use after it is revealed to Moses. Fourth, scholars note the continuity of the texts. If one were to separate the two texts that were weaved together to create the Noah story, for example, the stories would be clear and consist as independent sources. Fifth, the sections of the Torah that were most heavily influenced by J, E, P and D respectively all connect to different texts in other parts of the Hebrew bible, giving us a clue to some of the stylistic differences. For example, Jeremiah and D are closely aligned while Ezekiel and P are closely aligned. Sixth, the sources relate to one another and, taken independently, each tells a part of the story of the Israelites over the period of several hundred years. The individual sources tell part of the story of the Israelites as they related to some of the key mythological events of the foundation of the peoples. Each source tries to place the narratives within the context of the debates that were resonant in their own time period, leading to four very different styles of text and argument found throughout Torah. Finally, harkening back to our example of Genesis 1 and 2, the Torah consists of over 30 doublets, "stories

or laws that are repeated in the Torah, sometimes identically, more often with some differences of detail."[85] Scholars recognize that this phenomenon of repeated stories within one text was *unheard of* in other Near Eastern poetry or history writing before the biblical texts. This unique construction, then, could only be the result of an attempt to marry two different traditions about one story together in one unified text.

The Documentary Hypothesis proposes one final source that brings together the entire Torah: the Redactor or "R" source. The presence of the Redactor argues that one final group of authors gathered the four primary sources and weaved them together into a document that we call the Torah. The Redactor made only scant additions to the Torah, to try to make things make sense or to provide some literary framing before and after stories. (You might recall the theory from above that the list of names in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 operated as a framing device for the narrative. The Redactor may have added similar framing devices to help the reader of the Torah understand where certain narratives begin and end in a text that included no punctuation.) If we understand the redactor as the source that compiled the Torah and tried to smooth out contradictions and make the Torah make sense as one unified document, it is clear that the redactor failed. As mentioned above, the Torah contains many contradictions, resulting from the various sources that were brought together into one document. If the redactor's job was smoothing out the differences, the redactor was a poor editor, improperly using the copy and paste tools to create a convoluted and clearly contradictory narrative. But a deeper look at the work of the redactor allows the modern reader to view the Torah as a very intentional piece of art. As Joel Rosenberg says,"

> "It may actually improve our understanding of the Torah to remember that it is quoting documents, that there is, in other words, a purposeful documentary montage that must be perceived as a unity, regardless of the number and types of smaller units that form the building blocks of its composition. Here, the weight of

[85] Friedman, *Bible with Sources Revealed*, 27.

> literary interest falls upon the activity of the final redactor, whose artistry requires far more careful attention than it has hitherto been accorded."[86]

Or as Robert Alter says more concisely, "the cryptic consciousness of biblical narrative is a reflection of profound art, not primitiveness."[87]

The biblical texts can be compared to other works of national myth or history of other ancient near eastern cultures via the medium of artistic portraits. Greek and Babylonian mythologies are more like standard portraits of people. If one looks at the Mona Lisa or another beautifully drawn portrait, the individual can spend some time analyzing the beauty of the art and thus understand the mood and nature of the subject of the painting. The Greek mythologies, in particular, are renowned for verboseness with regard to most simple descriptions of people or objects. The artist and the Greek mythologies, however, leave little room for the imagination as the individual can clearly discern that the person is forlorn, or happy, or wealthy and above the frivolity of whatever is happening around her. Like the great Greek mythological works which spend many pages describing particular details throughout the narrative, there is little room for interpretation as the text and painting provide the reader enough detail to understand what is happening.

A teacher of mine, Judy Klitsner, argued that the Torah is more like a cubist painting by Picasso. On the surface, a Picasso painting appears to be a disaster. The different facial features of the portrait are in the wrong position, have different sizes, colors and shapes. The number of body parts often mismatches the number we would expect in a portrait of a person. Cubist art seems like an ineffective attempt to actually get a sense of the person. However, by splitting the painting into

[86] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 21.
[87] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 18.

small chunks and moving them out of place, Picasso created portraits that had infinite possibilities for interpretation. Through that process of interpretation, the viewer can appreciate the painting in new ways and develop a deeper understanding of the person being depicted. In the imperfection and "unnatural beauty" of a Picasso, one can constantly evaluate and re-evaluate the intention of the artist. So, too, with the Torah. The redactor of the Torah artistically combined the different narratives of the sources and the "imperfection" and vagueness of the text makes it infinitely interpretable. Rather than seeing the Torah as a poorly edited text, the redactor wove together four sources to create a profound piece of art that has succeeded to the point of being the most widely read book in history.

I would argue there are two specific reasons why the redactor of the Torah weaved together these complex texts into a new and unique form. First, the redactor may have wanted to create a document that could be interpreted and re-interpreted over a long period of time, allowing the document to sustain despite traveling across generations, to geographically diverse places, and even being translated into various different languages. Just like Madison's constitution, the redactor recognized the beauty of creating a document that had some concrete specifics but was vague about executing them, giving the interpreters flexibility to make changes as the world around them changed. Both the Torah and Constitution as legal systems have great capacity to be interpreted and reinterpreted, one key to their durability over generations. But, second, the redactor recognized a beautiful truth about the human experience. The revolutionary Israelite theology had, at its core, a God that had a special relationship with the people. God had taken a people that had been slaves out of Egypt and helped them construct a government that limited the power of human beings by disbursing power across different groups, creating checks and balances, and ensuring that all people were subject to following the laws. Despite creating this new, revolutionary society,

the Israelites were defeated by the Assyrians and Babylonians, who governed using the tried and true norms of authoritarianism. The reality of the world was more complex and messier than any of the theological ideas that had been espoused in each of the individual sources and in light of the great destruction of the Israelites faced. For the D source, which believed that "bad things happen to bad people," the destruction of the Israelites was inexplicable. Through the medium of the Torah, the redactor expressed an all-encompassing Israelite ideology of God as the "God of History." The document purported to tell a historical story and thus was presented as history but, like much of history, the reality was messy. God's holy word needed to reflect the messiness of the experience of being an Israelite going through history and watching the people struggle in the face of the rise and fall of mighty empires. As Robert Alter notes,

> "The monotheistic revolution of biblical Israel was a continuing and disquieting one. It left little margin for neat and confident views about God, the created world, history, and man as political animal or moral agent, for it repeatedly had to make sense of the intersection of incompatibles -- the relative and the absolute, human imperfection and divine perfection, the brawling chaos of historical experience and God's promise to fulfill a design in history. The biblical account is informed, I think, by a sense of stubborn contradiction, of a profound and ineradicable untidiness in the nature of things, and it is toward the expression of such a sense of moral and historical reality that the composite artistry of the Bible is directed."[88]

The redactor sensed that history for the Israelites, both in the past, present, and future, would continue to be messy. New issues and challenges would arise in various situations, so the redactor tried to weave together a document that would reflect that messiness. Thus was born a document that could serve as the foundational text of a people and would survive their exile across the globe over millennia. The shared text and its complexity would bring people together despite frustrations with continued exile and destruction. The dual goals of the redactor, and the artistic medium

[88] Alter, *Art of the Biblical Narrative*, 192.

through which the redactor shared those goals, enabled the Jewish people and their holy text to survive myriad exiles, murders, upheavals, attempts at assimilation, and other challenges over 2,500 years.

While it would be difficult to name a specific person responsible for creating one of the four core sources, evidence abounds that Ezra and his colleagues were the final redactors of the Torah.[89] Ezra managed to weave these four historical sources into one document that reflected the theological challenges of Israel in his time period, unified the people in the return to the land of Judea, justified the construction of the House of God in a long history, and created the foundation for the Jewish people. Both chronologically and literarily, Ezra fits with the contours of the documentary hypothesis as the person who could have weaved together these different narrative traditions into such a profound document at a very particular time period. In the two sections below, I will lay out specific evidence for that in Ezra-Nehemiah and, in one case, drawing on the relationship between the Documentary Hypothesis and the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. As we will see below, Ezra achieved this because he was **the most prepared person in the room.**

Leadership Lesson: The Most Prepared Person in the Room

EZRA 7

Before analyzing the textual evidence for Ezra as redactor, it is essential to understand how and why Ezra was the **most prepared person in the room** and therefore succeeded in crafting the fundamental document of the Jewish people. Unlike most other books in the Hebrew Bible, we do not meet the namesake of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah until chapter 7. The text introduces Ezra to

[89] If one is uncomfortable with naming Ezra as *the* redactor, we can similarly understand Ezra as *representative* of the redactor. It is not explicitly stated that Ezra was the redactor, but we will see below there is ample evidence for the redaction of the Torah in the time of Ezra and it is clear Ezra played an outsize role in Torah scholarship during this period. Some academics also challenge this line of argumentation by arguing that Ezra's "Torah" was not the Torah as we know it but something else. I reject this argument based on the evidence below.

the reader by providing background on his lineage and naming Ezra as a priest. We also learn that Ezra's story begins during the reign of Artaxerxes, who reigned from 465-424 BCE. Since the events at the beginning of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah definitively took place between the years 539-516 BCE, we can determine that Ezra was either very young when the Judeans were granted permission to return to Jerusalem or not alive at all. From this, we can conclude that either Ezra or Ezra's parents had *not* been among the first group that went up to Jerusalem during Cyrus' reign, a surprising conclusion indicating that the heart of Jewish learning continued in Babylon despite some of the community's shift to Babylon. The text then shares a litany of praises about Ezra. "He was a scribe deft in the teaching (Torah) of Moses that the Lord God had given Israel," (Ezra 7:6). Furthermore, the community and the king had granted Ezra a certain level of leadership over the community because "Ezra had readied his heart to seek out the teaching (Torah) of the Lord and to do and to teach in Israel statute and law," (Ezra 7:10). In Artaxerxes' letter to Ezra, he is described as a "priest-scribe" (Ezra 7:11) and in that letter, Artaxerxes instructs the Judeans that "whatever Ezra the priest, Scribe of the law of the God of the heavens, asks of you, you shall scrupulously perform," (Ezra 7:21). Ezra is furthermore imbued with great authority: "And you, Ezra, with God's wisdom that you possess, appoint judges and magistrates that will judge all the people that is in Beyond the River, all who know the laws of your God. And him who does not know, you shall inform," (Ezra 7:25).

We learn a lot from these documents attesting to Ezra's brilliance as Artaxerxes designates him as the leader of the community. In addition to being a priest, Ezra is called a scribe, an unusual moniker in the bible. Through the Hebrew Bible, there are only a few other characters called scribes, almost all of whom were in positions of directly reporting to kings. The word "scribe" in Hebrew is *sofer*, related to the root word for "book" or "scroll." The responsibility of the scribe

was typically related to record-keeping in a formal capacity for a government and only appears in later texts like Kings, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the latter prophets. While there are other scribes in the Hebrew Bible, "their range of authority and expertise is not clear."[90] Ezra's role as a scribe appears to be unique. Ezra's status as a scribe makes him one of the most learned Judeans in Babylonia. Through all of the places in which Ezra is described in Ezra 7, we understand that he rose to his position of leader of the community *because* of his expertise in the study of the laws of Israel. Ezra's status as scribe and community leader is a direct result of the fact that he was **the most prepared person in the room.** Because of his deep knowledge of the laws of Israel, the people supported him upon returning to Judah and he was able to utilize that expertise to construct a document as powerful as the Torah.

In addition to his unique role as a scribe, Ezra-Nehemiah also has an added emphasis on the value of physical texts. While the previous texts of the bible do on occasion acknowledge other written texts or the value of people writing down the events as they happened, most of the Bible prioritizes and values the oral nature of the tradition. By the time of Ezra and the return to Judea, however, the world had undergone an extensive cultural shift. We can see these shifts most clearly in the functioning of the Persian Empire, which valued the written document above all else. For example, in the biblical narrative of the Book of Esther, the words of King Ahasuerus are promulgated throughout the kingdom via written text.

> "On the thirteenth day of the first month, the king's scribes were summoned and a decree was issued, as Haman directed, to the king's satraps, to the governors of every province, and to the officials of every people, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language. The orders were issued in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet. Accordingly, written instructions were dispatched by courtiers to all the king's provinces to destroy, massacre, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a

[90] Eskenazi, *In Age of Prose*, 74.

> single day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month -- that is, the month of Adar -- and to plunder their possessions," (Esther 3:12-13).

Unlike other ancient near eastern civilizations, the Persian kingdom operated on written orders and once those orders were sealed by the king, they could not be rescinded. Once Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews was foiled by the Jewish Queen Esther, the King could not simply send out new orders across the provinces rescinding the old ones. Rather, he had to send out new instructions allowing the Judeans to defend themselves from the Persians, leading to a bloody slaughter of 75,000 people. The written word of the Persian king was sacrosanct and could not even be overturned through other orders. Additionally, the text of the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah includes significant "photocopies" of Aramaic texts. As the authors were drafting their own stories, they felt compelled to copy, verbatim, the words as expressed by the Persian rulers in the language that they used. All of this highlights the increased use of the written form during the Persian period.

Scholars have recognized this in connection with the notion of the development of a written Torah in this time period. One theory is known as the "Persian Imperial Authorization" theory, which argues that, "the Pentateuch would be the 'imperial authorization' for the Jews living in the Persian Empire, especially in the province of Yehud (Judah)."[91] When the Persians helped re-establish the Jewish community in Judea, they needed the community to have some written legal code that would adequately represent the laws that people of the land had followed in the era before the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple. According to this theory, the scribes of the Judean community in Babylonia were responsible for constructing the narratives and laws of the ancient Israelites into one succinct document that could be presented to the Persians as the "local law" for the area and people of the Persian province, Yehud. If the federal government followed the Persian

[91] Ska, "Persian Imperial Authorization," 163.

laws, these would represent state or local codes, guiding people who lived in a particular region as they tried to follow the customs and laws established about local gods, local agricultural practices, and local sacrifices. In this case, "The Pentateuch reflects the legal mentality of the Persians, for whom a written law could not be abrogated."[92] There are several obvious challenges with this theory that are similar to the questions that modern readers ask of the Torah. If this law were meant to be Persian law, why does it include narrative? If it was meant to be a law, why is it so difficult to follow? Why does it contain so many contradictions? Why does it have a theology that says there is no human authority above it? And, most of all, why was it in Hebrew and why are there no concurrent Aramaic translations of the text? While the specific conclusion -- that the text was authorized by the Persian government – has some challenges, this lesson proposes one explanation for why the Torah could have been redacted during the Persian period. It highlights the emphasis on written text and the potential legal implications of writing in the Persian Empire, and justifies why the Judean community naturally elevated its scribes to a new status. Chief among those scribes was Ezra, who was willing to transform the distinct narratives of the ancient Israelite tradition into one unified text.

It is worth noting that the Midrashic tradition of the rabbinic period viewed Ezra the Scribe as playing a significant role in the transmission of the Torah. While the rabbinic tradition does not outright call Ezra the redactor of the Torah, there is great evidence that Ezra played a significant hand in creating the document that the rabbis revered. For example, the rabbis wonder why Ezra was not part of the initial group that went back to Judah in the first few chapters of the book once people were allowed to return. "Why did Ezra not go up at that time? Because he had to clarify his grasp of Torah, which he learned from Baruch ben Neriah. But should not Baruch ben Neriah

[92] Ska, "Persian Imperial Authorization," 163.

himself have gone up? Yes, the sages said, but Baruch was so old and so enfeebled that he could not travel even in a litter," (Song of Songs Rabbah, 5:5:1).[93] This understanding provides evidence for Ezra being **the most prepared person in the room**. The sages cannot fathom why *the* quintessential hero of this period did not immediately jump at the opportunity to move back to Jerusalem and partake in the process of rebuilding the Temple. They justify Ezra's staying in Babylon because he had to sharpen his skills as a scribe and as a student of Torah, a reason that would augment these sages' status as Jews living in the land of Babylon outside of Israel. The rabbinic sages also teach that Ezra was so learned that he was worthy of receiving the Torah directly from God that they say: "Had Moses not preceded him, Ezra would have been worthy of having the Torah given to Israel through him," (BT Sanhedrin 21b).[94] Furthermore, Ezra is described as one of the three characters responsible for ensuring that the Torah would not be forgotten among Israel, alongside someone like Rabbi Akiva. Just as Rabbi Akiva famously helped Judaism transition from practices rooted in worship at the Temple to more localized worship in any location, Ezra's effort to codify the Torah was essential at preserving the tradition of the Israelites, (Sifrei Deuteronomy 48).[95]

The rabbinic figures recognize the unique role that Ezra played in managing the script of the Torah and even the literal redaction of the Torah. On the coin for the New Israeli Shekel, the Israeli government included the ancient Israelite script for the word Judah. However, Hebrew speakers have not used this script for over 2,500 years. At some point, Jews adopted the Assyrian script, which continues to be the font used for Hebrew today both in the Torah and in the modern world. According to one rabbinic teaching, Ezra was responsible for changing the lettering to

[93] Bialik, *The Book of Legends*, 152:7.
[94] Bialik, *The Book of Legends*, 152:9.
[95] Bialik, *The Book of Legends*, 223:143.

Assyrian writing forms but maintaining using Hebrew, as opposed to Aramaic, as the primary language for the holy documents. While this contrasts with teachings that argue that the transition occurred because of the "sins" of Israel, the rabbis have an additional appreciation for Ezra ensuring that the Torah would be drafted in Hebrew rather than Aramaic, (BT Sanhedrin 21a-b).[96]

Lastly, the rabbis recognize the unique role that Ezra played in transmitting the Torah through the confusion about the mysterious dots over certain letters in the Torah. In a written Torah, there are ten words scattered throughout that have a dot placed over the words. In attempting to explain the dots, the rabbis argue that Ezra placed them there because he was unsure if the word was supposed to be there or not. In explaining these ten dots, the rabbis write: "Because Ezra said: if the prophet Elijah comes and asks me, 'Why did you write it thus?' I will reply, 'But I did put dots over the letters to indicate my uncertainty about the text. If, however, he says to me, 'You wrote out the text correctly, I will remove the dots,'" (Avot de Rabbi Natan, 34:5).[97] Despite being **the most prepared person in the room**, Ezra had some uncertainty about whether or not certain words belonged in the Torah. This rabbinic tradition traces the moment of the Torah's redaction to Ezra and argues that the dots explain his uncertainty about whether a certain word belonged in the text or should have been excised. From this tradition, it sounds like Ezra used caution and included the words, placing a dot over them to let readers in the future know that he was whether a word should have been included. Taken together, these rabbinic texts understand the unique value of Ezra as a scribe who stayed back in Babylon in order to become the best possible student of the laws and traditions of the ancient Israelites. With the new world order and the primacy of the written word, his role as a student allowed him to serve as the quintessential redactor of the written text of the Torah, and the rabbinic tradition recognizes the immense value that this

[96] Bialik, *The Book of Legends*, 449-450:450.
[97] Bialik, *The Book of Legends*, 444:406.

redaction played in allowing the Jewish people to survive moments of struggle and persevere in the face of uncertainty. Ezra could only play that role because he had worked hard and been **the most prepared person** in the Jewish community under Persian rule.

MADISON: FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN THE VIRGINIA CONSTITUTON

Madison had two significant moments in his life that exemplified the leadership value of being the most prepared person in the room. In both instances, Madison found himself thriving in a legislative capacity as a group of people sought to build constitutions through complex conventions. And in both cases, Madison had utilized large, dedicated times for studying that enabled him to become the architect of two significant documents. While the latter achievement deserves more attention and gave Madison the title "Father of the Constitution," the former was Madison's first foray into constitutional work and invariably taught him the importance of being **the most prepared person in the room**. Madison emerged from this first Convention with a confidence to succeed in a legislative setting and outmaneuver some of the most respected minds of the enlightenment era, tools that would help him achieve success in Philadelphia in 1787.

The first case of Madison's expertise and preparation came in his first legislative session in which a Virginia Convention crafted a new Virginia Constitution. The Virginia Constitution of 1776 was the first major document of its kind and was influential across the world in its time for establishing rights and liberties for a republican government. While Madison was mostly silent according to the public record throughout the convention, there was one instance in which Madison had a significant impact and it was one of the remarkable innovations of the Virginia Constitution: religious liberty. Madison's expertise on questions of religious liberty emerged from his time at Princeton, where he was a religious minority at Princeton in an institution that thrived on diverse opinions when it came to matters of religion.

Before exploring Madison's record at the Virginia Convention in 1776, it is worth taking a moment to understand and explore the status of religion and the state in the early modern period. In the world before the tumultuous end of the 18th century, religion and the state were deeply interconnected in Christian Europe. The state ruled with the sanction of and authority from God. Initially, this was expressed by a relationship to the Catholic Church and the Pope, but after various reformations and breakaways, the local ruler across Europe would select a church that would receive ecumenical support from the government. As a result, the state favored one particular religious institution, supplying them land and ensuring that localities would each be provided with churches and pastors. Individuals' views on their government were directly connected to their own religious beliefs, an effective tool for keeping the population compliant with matters of state in the autocratic monarchies of the medieval and early renaissance period. It is worth noting that Jews had a complex and unusual role in this setup throughout Europe, operating as a corporate institution within the framework of the state. The Jewish community typically paid one collective tax to the state as part of abiding by a contract signed by the local government and the Jewish community.[98] As a result, the Jewish community completely regulated its own affairs, ensuring that everyone was financially and physically cared for and managing cases of Jewish law internally. With the Protestant Revolution, this corporate structure started to crack. The Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, became the home of some of the earliest societies in which the church and the government had some separation. In the 17th century, Amsterdam became the center of religious toleration in the world and was one of the few places in which an individual could operate as an individual outside the direct auspices of any religious institution. In 1656, for example, Benedict Spinoza was excommunicated by the leaders of the Jewish community, a board that was officially

[98] Examples of medieval Jewish contracts include the Charter of Bishop Rudiger of Speyer or the Charter of Boleslaw the Pious for Polish Jews.

sanctioned with power by the local government and ensured that the entire Jewish community was provided with wages, a place to live, schooling for children, and other basic civil needs. However, rather than converting to Christianity in order to support his livelihood, Spinoza was able to continue living agnostically. This radical shift, in which Spinoza as an individual did not have to associate with any particular religion, was fully shattered across Europe during the French Revolution in 1789, in which individual Jews were granted citizenship and autonomy across much of Europe.[99] But in the 100 years between, including the formidable decades for James Madison, questions of the relationship between religion and the state were at the forefront of the enlightenment.

The Americas provided an unusual testing ground for different ideas of how to establish a relationship between church and state. In 1619, Virginia was established as the first colony under the direction of the British Crown and, like Britain, it was officially designated as an "Anglican" colony. The Church of England operated in Virginia as the ecumenical arm of the British government. Over time, Virginia became a religiously diverse colony, but the only religion that was officially supported by the state was the Anglican church and the government could subjugate leaders and peoples of other Christian sects at will. Thus, if a religious group were to support a rebellion against Britain, the local government would have the right to jail those non-Anglican religious leaders for speaking out or compel Anglican religious leaders to support the government. Other colonies, however, were established with a different and revolutionary set of religious principles. In particular, the New England Colonies (particularly Massachusetts) and Pennsylvania were set up by religious minorities that had fled persecution in Great Britain, stopping in Amsterdam on their way to the New World. When the colonists set up governments in New

[99] For more information on this, see Michael Meyer's "Response to Modernity" on the structure of medieval Jewry and the transitions that the Jewish community underwent during the shift to modernity.

England and Pennsylvania, influenced by their persecution in Britain and the toleration they found in the Dutch territories, the leaders divorced the connection between religion and the state, allowing individuals to practice different religions without persecution from the government. New England had more homogeneous and devout religious societies than Virginia, but had managed to separate the institutions of church and state in a new and unique way. Madison watched the more diverse Virginia colony jail priests as religious dissenters while people could practice religion freely in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.

Madison was responsible for two new insights from this unusual experiment in the colonies. First, Madison was the first person to compare the outcomes of the heterogeneous but strict religious society in Virginia and the homogenous but religiously tolerant colonies of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Madison noted that the willingness to overthrow the yoke of the British Monarchy began in Massachusetts and flourished in Pennsylvania, while Virginia was more tepid in its support for revolution, only willing to go along with the other colonies already in full rebellion. He wrote that, "if the Church of England had been established and general religion in all the northern colonies as it had been among us here and uninterrupted tranquility had prevailed throughout the continent, it is clear to me that slavery and subjugation might and would have been gradually insinuated among us."[100] Madison understood that, because individuals' taxes and affinity for the government were not connected to their church institutions, there was a greater willingness to challenge the government and its powers of taxation. An individual could still go to their church and believe in their God while also pushing the government to make certain changes (e.g. lower taxes or create some sort of representative government). Virginians, he argued, were much less likely to rebel and much more likely to sheepishly support anything that the autocratic

[100] Feldman, *Madison*, 10.

government asked because of their affinity for their churches and the connection between the two. He equated this with slavery, as he recognized that even the white individuals in the colonies would be convinced, via the church, to maintain a colonial relationship to the mothership. In that relationship, the colonists would continually be exploited by the central government in England, and would have none of the rights that people in England had via Parliament. Meanwhile, the Anglican church would ensure that the yoke of subjugation and exploitation stayed on the neck of the Virginians by tying their affinity for the government to that of their church. Furthermore, the priests at the churches were more likely to sanction and support the government that provided them with their welfare, while the churches in Massachusetts could openly support the rebellion. Madison came to recognize that a group of people were more willing and likely to rebel in a society in which religion and the state were not deeply tied to one another.

Madison had a second significant takeaway based on seeing these differences between Virginia and the agnostic northern and mid-Atlantic colonies. Madison understood that the freedom of religion was integral for the creation of a republican government. If the American colonies were trying to create a new, republican form of government in which people played a role in choosing their own leaders, freethinking individuals must be able to participate in the various mechanisms of government without feeling beholden to a state-sanctioned church. A government in which people held direct levers over power but which gave a certain religion monopoly over government power, as had been the norm in Europe for centuries, would not allow free thinking individuals to execute the duties of government. For republican government to work, Madison recognized that society needed to be structured in a way that would allow people to have freedom of religion and a separation of church and state.

This takeaway would animate Madison's contributions to the Virginia Constitution of 1776. Section 16 of the Bill of Rights in the Virginia Constitution reads:

> "That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other."[101]

Yet the text proposed initially looked differently. As one of the youngest members of the convention that was full of luminaries of a generation, Madison was mostly silent throughout the convention. But on the topic of religious liberty, an area he felt that he had more expertise and experience on due to his time studying at Princeton, Madison felt confident contributing to the discussion. The original proposal by George Mason, read that "all men should have the fullest toleration in the exercise of religion."[102] Yet Madison felt this statement of "fullest toleration" was insignificant, and he lobbied successfully for the language to be changed to "equal entitlement." Madison recognized the importance of ensuring that freedom of religion was an inherent right for citizens of a state.

In his estimation, the ability of the individual to think freely was the core of what would make republican government work. Madison's ideology can best be understood by looking at the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, a text that Madison constructed. The five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment are, in order, religion, speech, press, assembly and petition. In Madison's style, the order of the amendments tells a story about how to build a republican form of government rooted in the individual's ability to express themselves freely and without coercion from other institutions. Freedom of religion, Madison understood, was the core principle of being

[101] "Virginia Bill of Rights," Section 16, *United States Constitution,* 83.
[102] Feldman, *Madison*, 26.

able to "think your own thoughts" without coercion or influence from some ecumenical institutions. In a society with guarantees on the freedom of religion, people would be guaranteed to have an independent conscience that would dictate their own decision making. The following freedoms of the first amendment cascaded out from there: once people could think freely, the Bill of Rights would guarantee their ability to express those thoughts (freedom of speech). From there, the individual could publicize their thoughts (freedom of the press), gather with likeminded people about those thoughts (freedom of assembly) and finally go before their representatives in government and encourage them to adopt their thoughts as government policy (right to petition). The First Amendment was the finest expression and the legislative enshrinement of Madison's understanding of the importance of freedom of religion.

Madison's ability to have an influence on the Bill of Rights, and write the Constitution as we will see below, emerged from his initial innovation on the question of the freedom of religion at the Virginia Convention in 1776. On the issue of religious freedom, Madison recognized that he was an expert and **the most prepared person in the room** despite being alongside people like Thomas Jefferson and George Mason. He understood that his views on religion and the state were innovative and necessary for the successful implementation of religious toleration, so he had the *chutzpah* to speak up and introduce a change to the Virginia Constitution Bill of Rights. In the initial proposal, the Convention had proposed at Jefferson's behest to protect "the fullest toleration in the exercise of religion."[103] Madison, through his expertise on studying this issue at Princeton and his own innovative thoughts on the matter felt that "religious toleration" was insufficient in the quest to create a Bill of Rights. The authors of the Virginia Constitution knew their document would be utilized by others around the world, and Madison felt compelled to speak up and suggest

[103] Feldman, *Madison*, 26.

a change to "equal entitlement." In his understanding, a "toleration" of a religious minority would still mean that a republican state would have the capacity to support one religion at the expense of others and would therefore stifle the freedom for individuals to think freely about their government. By changing the language to "equal entitlement," Madison ensured that the government would not be able to support one particular religious group at the expense of another. The Virginia Bill of Rights would follow the lead of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania by separating the bounds of church and state and ensuring that individuals would develop the freedom to influence the government without fears of ecumenical influence. Jefferson, George Mason and others recognized Madison's expertise on this subject and the brilliance of his innovative thoughts on the matter of religion and state. But, as a leader, Madison came to understand the value of the confidence he had when he recognized that he was **the most prepared person in the room**, a lesson he would carry to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787.

MADISON: THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS

Madison's second moment of success as the **most prepared person in the room** became the harbinger of one of the most significant documents in world history. After defeating the British at the Battle of Yorktown, the American colonies united together under the "Articles of Confederation," an unwieldy form of government that preserved the states' individual rights. The Articles of Confederation allowed each state veto power over the decisions of the central government, ensuring that the Congress would be greatly limited in its ability to govern as a national institution. In the ten years between his time at the Virginia Convention and the Constitutional Convention, Madison recognized the importance of developing an area of expertise on a certain issue. Before his first Congress in 1779, Madison recognized that war debt would be the big question on the table. "But an exceptionally cold and snowy winter kept him home until

March. Stuck in Montpelier, Madison turned to his books."[104] Madison tried to become an expert on economic issues, but in this instance was outdueled by Washington's secretary, Alexander Hamilton, himself a student of economics who was already crafting his grand vision for a national government brought together through the assumption of state debts. Madison had been stymied on economic issues by Hamilton, but would make sure to be the **most prepared person in the room** on future issues.

By the end of Madison's term in the Congress (term limits sent him back to Virginia), it was clear that the Articles of Confederation needed significant revision. "Madison used the spring and summer before the September 1786 Annapolis meeting to study in anticipation of the fight. For two years he had been asking Jefferson to send him books about ancient and modern confederations. Two trunks of books on the subject finally reached Madison in January. Now, he wrote Jefferson, he 'had leisure to review the literary cargo for which I am so much indebted to your friendship.' Working steadily through the spring, Madison drew on these works to produce a detailed analysis of the fundamental issues at stake."[105] Madison prepared for Annapolis by drafting a detailed analysis of twenty-eight democracies and republics that were either currently extant or known through historical sources. In this analysis, Madison studied the nature of the makeup of Greek and Roman democracies and modern confederations and governments like those in Amsterdam and Poland, analyzing the structures that were in place. As Aristotle did in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Madison analyzed the origin and authority of each form of government and studied the vices that emerged as a result of each system. (In his research on ancient confederations, Madison was frustrated that the ancients provided little detail about their process for arriving at certain forms of government, and he dedicated himself to helping future historians and creators of

[104] Feldman, *Madison*, 33.
[105] Feldman, *Madison*, 74.

constitutions by taking detailed notes at the Constitutional Convention.) Through his detailed analysis, which he annotated with copious notes and citations, Madison became *the* leading expert on constitutional governments in the New World. He followed up his analysis of other democracies with a work on the "Vices of the Political System of the United States."[106] In this document, he analyzed all of the challenges that beheld the government under the Articles of Confederation.

Like it did in the case of religious liberty at the Virginia Convention, Madison's research allowed him to develop critical innovations in theories of republican government. Madison had a clear understanding of the form of a republican government in the Americas before the convention and articulated them in letters to the other members of the Virginia delegation: George Washington and Edmund Randolph, and to his mentor Jefferson who was in France during the Convention. Madison recognized that the ultimate problem with republicanism was the tendency of faction to dominate and eventually oppress the minority group within the ranks of a republic. A majority group, with the backing and support of the broad populace via direct elections for representatives, could overwhelm and subjugate the rights of a minority group. Madison's innovation was simple and brilliant: "As a limited monarchy tempers the evils of an absolute one; so an extensive republic meliorates the administration of a small republic."[107] Madison recognized that the new government in the Americas would have an opportunity to test a radical new idea. The challenges of republican government could be solved by an "expansion" of the republic to the point that no one faction would be able to dominate. In addition, the government would include different branches of government with various checks and balances to ensure that the majority could not simply steamroll the minority and preserve an element of minority rights. While Madison wrote *Federalist #10* after the Constitution was passed, it is worth exploring at this point as the clearest articulation

[106] Madison, James, "Vices of the Political System of the United States."
[107] Feldman, *Madison,* 100.

of his innovative approaches to the problems of republicanism.[108] "Liberty is to faction, what air is to fire, an ailment, without which it instantly expires. But it could not be a less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency."[109] To Madison, the new Constitution of the United States would need to develop various mechanisms to limit the power of one faction to dominate another by *expanding* the power of republican government. This solution would have two critical parts. First, democracy would be limited in that there would be a small cadre of citizens elected from the body of the population to execute the duties of governance. And, second, the greater number of citizens involved in the project would ensure that no one faction could come to dominate. By creating a federal system in which states were subservient to a national government, people would be limited to letting certain ideas spread like wildfire.

> "The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular states, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other states: a religious sect may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it, must secure the national councils against danger from that source: a rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project, will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the union, than a particular member of it; in the same proportion as such a malady is more likely to taint a particular county or district, than an entire state."[110]

[108] The Federalist Papers were a series of essays written by Alexander Hamilton and James Madison in the aftermath of the Constitutional Convention to sell a wary populace on the value of the document crafted in Philadelphia. As we will see shortly, Madison and Hamilton both walked away from Philadelphia frustrated with the results as the new system that emerged did not fully align with either of their ideas. Yet both recognized that the Constitution as formed was sufficient and actively sought to build support for it, particularly in their home states of Virginia and New York.

[109] Madison, *Federalist Papers*, 43.

[110] Madison, *Federalist Papers,* 48.

For Madison, concentrating power in the federal government by giving the federal government a "veto" was the solution to the problem of factionalism. This was a remarkable proposal for a Virginian, the state that had the most solid basis for a republican form of government with its declaration of human rights. At the Convention itself, Madison would become the biggest champion of creating a federal government with power and various different layers despite the fact that this proposal was not necessarily popular in Virginia and that his state would be one of the last to sign onto this document. With this creative analysis and study of the history of republics and their various woes, Madison showed his understanding as *the* expert on republican government. His creative and innovative responses to the challenges would form the basis of the constitution and gave him the confidence to go to Philadelphia as the de facto leader of the Convention.

By becoming the expert in the room, Madison's confidence on the federal scene was undeniable. At Annapolis, he was able to point to the dire challenges of the system of government of the Articles of Confederation and supported Hamilton's call for a new constitutional convention in Philadelphia to take place in 1787. (At this point, Hamilton and Madison were closely aligned and developed a deep friendship that would be severed during the Washington Administration.) When the Convention started in Philadelphia, Madison quickly took charge. The Virginia and Pennsylvania delegations were the first to arrive in Philadelphia and for eleven days, while there was an insufficient quorum, Madison developed what would eventually be called "The Virginia Plan." In this plan, the federal Congress would be divided into two houses, would be elected based on population rather than giving each state equal power, and would turn the confederation into a national government. As part of that, Madison envisioned a national veto, in which the federal Congress would have a direct veto over states. Once the Convention hit a quorum and elected

George Washington as its president, "Madison placed himself front and center," literally sitting next to Washington in the front of the room.[111] Madison had the confidence of being **the most prepared person in the room** to take charge in the early days of the Convention and set the tone for the proceeding five months. In addition, Madison, took "copious notes of the proceedings [and his] notes remain the best record of the convention,"[112] a sign of his confidence and his recognition that future historians and builders of republican government might look to his notes to understand the process that went into creating the United States Constitution. Madison understood that he would be creating a historical document, which he later called "gratification promise to future curiosity."[113]

Madison's initial plans about the Congress and aspects of the nature of the Executive were executed, and the Congress regularly adopted small proposals that he made like the appointment of the Supreme Court by the president with the ascent of the Senate. But the structure that he created in the Virginia plan ran into two main obstacles. First, Madison's plan for the "national negative" or the federal prerogative to veto any piece of state legislation eventually failed in the form that he intended. The delegations were not yet willing to abrogate state power entirely. After the Constitution had passed, however, Madison understood that the judicial system as constructed had the potential to create the "veto" over state legislation and, indeed, the innovations of Supreme Court Justice John Marshall had just such an impact. Marshall established the notion of judicial review, not explicitly stated in the constitution, which would eventually stabilize the three-legged stool of government and provide the federal government with a mechanism to check state power and ensure their laws passed the muster of the U.S. Constitution. On the second issue, however,

[111] Feldman, *Madison*, 107.
[112] Feldman, *Madison*, 107.
[113] Feldman, *Madison*, 107.

Madison lost in the most intense debate of the convention. The smaller states were worried that their power in the Virginia Plan would be overshadowed by the larger states in a proportional system and that Delaware and New Jersey would become meaningless as compared to the much larger states of Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York. Furthermore, the southern states (besides Virginia) feared that their interests would be overshadowed by the much more populous northern states. In June of 1787, William Patterson's New Jersey Plan sought to address some of these challenges. After raucous debate that nearly split the Convention apart, a compromise eventually emerged between the two: the House looked like the Virginia Plan while the Senate held onto some of the principles of state equality in the Articles of Confederation and ensured that each state had equal access to support and pass bills in the federal legislature. Madison had "imagined a constitution that extended the republic from individual states to a general government -- and that conclusion had been achieved."[114] And while Madison left the Convention downcast about his lack of a national negative and the success of the New Jersey plan in limiting some of his ideas, he eventually teamed up with Alexander Hamilton to draft the *Federalist Papers*, a series of essays written under the pseudonym *Publius* to convince people to support the new Constitution. While the Constitution became official on June 21, 1788 with New Hampshire's ratification of the document, Virginia and New York ratified it only after it took effect. Madison and Hamilton's efforts in the *Federalist Papers* have been widely attributed as being responsible for shifting public support in favor of the Constitution, particularly in front of their home states that would have certainly benefited from continued confederation in which they were the two centers of power. While Hamilton was responsible for writing more Federalist Papers than Madison (or John Jay, who wrote a few), Madison's contributions were more significant and compelling. My teachers in

[114] Feldman, *Madison*, 175.

both High School and College courses assigned *Federalist* readings from Madison and the quality of Madison's contributions are more succinct and focused than those of Hamilton's. This is not surprising, considering that the federal constitution had been Madison's brainchild. His own expertise on the notion of republican government, and his confidence emerging from **being the most prepared person in the room** allowed him to thrive at the Constitutional Convention and eventually become the "Father of the Constitution."

EZRA AS UNIFIER: NEHEMIAH 8

If I could ask modern Jews to study any text of the Bible, I would choose Nehemiah 8. I am going to reproduce the text in its entirety here and then discuss the text in order to shed light on the argument that Ezra was, indeed, the redactor of the Torah. As mentioned in the introduction, Nehemiah 8 begins the conclusion of the narrative of Ezra. The Judeans had succeeded in rebuilding the House of God, restoring the nation to the land of Judea, and building the wall of Jerusalem. This scene depicts the moment of celebrating the final success in the restoration.

"[1] And all the people gathered as one man in the square that is in front of the Water Gate, and they said to Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Teaching (Torah) of Moses with which the LORD had charged Israel. [2] And Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the assembly, men and women and all who had understanding to listen, on the first day of the seventh month. [3] And he read from it before the square that was before the Water Gate from first light until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who had understanding, and the ears of all the people were [listening] to the Book of Teaching. [4] And Ezra the Scribe stood on the wooden tower that they had made for this purpose, and by him stood Mattithiah and Shema and Ananiah and Uriah and Hilkiah and Maaseiah on his right, and on his left Pedaiah and Mishael and Malchijah and Hashum and Hashbaddanah, Zecharia, Meshullam. [5] And Ezra the scribe opened the book before the eyes of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it, all the people stood. [6] And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered 'Amen, Amen!' raising their hands, and they bowed and prostrated themselves on the ground to the Lord. [7] And Jeshua and Bani and Sherebiah, Jamin Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah and the Levites were explaining the Teaching (Torah) to the people and the people kept standing. [8] And they read from the book, from the Book of God's Teaching, expounding and giving reasons, and they explained what was read.

The text shares with the reader the first-ever public reading of the Torah in Jewish history. In the ensuing 2,500 years, Jews have mimicked aspects of this event in the service around reading the Torah in synagogue on Monday, Thursday, on Shabbat and holidays. People rise during the procession that welcomes the Torah, one individual reads it while others listen, and the Torah is placed on a wooden tower while it is being read. (Any Jewish synagogue in the world contains a wooden lectern for Torah reading to this day.) Finally, when the reader completes reading the particular section of the Torah for that week, someone (called the Hagbah) lifts the Torah in the air, opening the scroll so that the people can see a few columns of the text of the Torah while they stand. The rituals associated with the reading of the Torah during the Torah service come from this specific section in Ezra-Nehemiah, indicating that the "Book of Teaching," that Ezra presented here was the Torah itself.[115]

Yet there are remarkable features in this text that indicate that this represents the moment in which the Torah is brought to the people and the Torah is the ultimate creation of the period described in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah. The entire Book of Ezra-Nehemiah is very "people-oriented." Unlike earlier books which have a particular focus on leaders, priests or kings, Ezra-Nehemiah focuses on the "people" more broadly. While Solomon was responsible for building the First Temple, the people are responsible for building the Second Temple. When it comes to access to this foundational document that Ezra created, the people similarly have a central role in the creation of the document, the celebration of it, and the study of it. The Torah is marked here as something that should be accessible to all Jews no matter their age, gender, or position in society. That being said, the text also acknowledges that the Torah may have been difficult to follow and

[115] I will note that the technology to wrap all of the scrolls into one large document did not exist at this time, while it is fanciful to imagine a Torah scroll exactly as we see today in the synagogue, it most likely looked differently. Some scholars would note that the Torah spoken of here did not actually look like the Pentateuch as we know it today.

we are introduced to a group of leaders who know how to "understand it" and therefore explain it to people around them. Whether these named leaders were part of the editorial team that Ezra led, or members of the "Constitutional Convention" that drafted up the Torah, or simply people that Ezra had taught methods of legal interpretation to, this group of "understanders" helped explain the complex text of the Torah to the people. This text signifies the recognition that the Torah *is* difficult to understand and that there was some intentionality to that difficulty, as discussed above. But with trained individuals who know how to understand the text at hand, people can look to interpret it in various different ways. I read the beginning of Nehemiah 8 as a testimony to the brilliant artistry of the Torah that had been redacted by Ezra (with the help of a committee) and showing the people that, while difficult to understand, it is possible to interpret.

Across the board, scholars recognize a "Persian period setting for the redaction and publication of the Pentateuch."[116] This was in line with a long history of merging together texts in a redaction process and this moment represented the "final stage in a complex process of bringing together and negotiating between various traditions about Israel's origins before the conquest of the land."[117] In particular, the creation of the Torah represented a compromise between two priestly families or even possibly two wings within the same family, culminating in this moment of Ezra lifting the Torah before the entire nation. In this understanding, a council of elders from these two competing wings directed a group of scribes to merge together these two traditions as part of the unification of the Israelites under Persian rule. The text above describes a group of leaders sitting on Ezra's right and left. If we read their seating placement polemically, we might recognize that these were two distinct councils of elders who compromised and brought Ezra in to unify their separate traditions into one document. There is great precedent in human history for people sitting

[116] Nihan, "The Emergence of the Pentateuch as Torah," 354.
[117] Nihan, "The Emergence of the Pentateuch as Torah," 355.

in a great assembly by faction: our modern political terms "right" and "left" come from the French National Assembly, in which more conservative members who supported the Monarchy sat on the right side while those who supported the revolution sat on the left. Similarly here, we can understand the specific list of names on each side of Ezra as the people responsible for calling for the redaction of the Torah or participating in the process, while Ezra, at the center, enabled the compromise to happen.

Before moving to the next section of the text, it is also worth noting that these events occurred on the first day of the seventh month. There are scant other biblical references to this day, which Jews across the world celebrate as Rosh Hashanah, and one might understand the Rosh Hashanah holiday as a celebration of the moment of the final redaction of the Torah and other events in Ezra-Nehemiah that happened that day.

[9] And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and the Levites, explaining to the people, said to all the people, 'Today is holy for you to the Lord your God. Do not mourn and do not weep,' for they were weeping when they heard the words of the Teaching (Torah). [10] And he said to them, 'Go, eat delicacies and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has none prepared, for the day is holy to our Master, and do not be sad, for the rejoicing of the Lord is your strength.' [11] And the Levites were silencing the people, saying 'Hush, for today is holy. Do not be sad.' [12] And all the people went to eat and to drink and to send portions and to make great joyous celebration, for they had understood the things that had been made known to them. [13] And on the second day the patriarchal chiefs of all the people, the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe, to ponder the words of the Teaching (Torah). [14] And they found written in the Teaching (Torah) that the Lord had charged through Moses that the Israelites should dwell in booths on the festival in the seventh month [15] and that they should make it heard and pass about a proclamation in all their towns, and in Jerusalem, saying, 'Go to the hill country and bring back leafy boughs of olive trees and leafy boughs of evergreens and leafy boughs of myrtles and leafy boughs of palm trees and leafy boughs of thick-branched trees to make booths, as it is written.' [16] And the people went out and brought them, and they made booths for themselves, each on his roof and in their courtyards and in the courtyards of the house of God and in the square of the Water Gate and the square of the Gate of Ephraim. [17] And all the assembly of those returning from the captivity made booths and dwelled in the booths, for the Israelites had not done this since the days of Joshua son of Nun till that day, and there was great rejoicing. [18] And he

read from the Book of the Teaching of God one day after the next from the first day to the last day, and they made a festival seven days, and on the eighth day three was a convocation, according to the law," (Nehemiah 8:9-18).

The text continues once the people have begun to interpret the words of the Torah. After initial fears about what the Torah teaches and, most likely, a recognition that the people had completely abrogated the law that Moses had received at Sinai, the people focused in on the next holiday that the Torah proscribed: Sukkot. However, this is more than just the recognition of a holiday. The presence of Sukkot here proves that a post-exilic redactor heavily edited some of the texts and thus was the final redactor. As noted above, the redactor's primary task was weaving together four different sources, but in several places, the redactor changed certain language in order to try to make the Torah make sense. For example, it seems likely that the redactor added the words "YHWH" to "Elohim" in Genesis chapter two. It is one of the few places in the Torah in which God is called "YHWH Elohim" and possibly indicates an effort by the redactor to unify the two texts more. In some cases, the redactor created more problems by reconciling two opposing traditions. In the aforementioned text on Genesis about the challenge of Abraham's birth, the redactor added the section of Abram's family moving from Ur to Haran in Genesis 11 to solve the problem that "in P Abram comes from Ur while in J he comes from Haran."[118]

The most blatant introduction of text into the bible comes in the middle of Leviticus, a book placed strategically at the center of the Torah. In Leviticus 23, the P source lays out their understanding of the major holidays throughout the year with instruction to the people to celebrate those holidays. The text begins with Shabbat, continues with Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah (possibly an insertion by the redactor as well), Yom Kippur and Sukkot. The instructions for

[118] Friedman, *Bible with Sources Revealed*, note on Genesis 11:31.

Sukkot begin normally, describing the sacrifices to be made at the Temple and the length of the holiday. But at the end of the chapter, the text adds on an additional section about Sukkot:

> "Yet on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the yield of the land, you shall celebrate the Lord's festival seven days -- on the first day a sabbath and on the eighth day a sabbath. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of a stately free, fronds of palm trees, and a branch of a leafy tree and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord seven days in the year, an everlasting statute for your generations. In the seventh month you shall celebrate. In huts you shall dwell seven days. All natives in Israel shall dwell in huts, so that your generations will know that I made the Israelites dwell in huts when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your god," (Leviticus 23: 39-43).

There is no other evidence in the biblical record that the people celebrated Sukkot with a lulav and etrog except in Nehemiah 8.

> "The passage in Nehemiah states that this commandment had never been followed in Israel's history in the land ('since the days of Joshua'). This indicates that the commandment about booths was not established together with the other laws of the holidays and that this passage was composed separately and then added to the list. This fits with the conclusion that the redaction of the Torah took place by the time of Ezra."[119]

The connection between these two verses, found nowhere else in the Torah, helps cement the idea that the redaction of the Torah took place during the time of Ezra. There are, of course, many other theories about the potential redaction of the Torah, but it all points to a final redaction right around the time of the events as they are recounted in Nehemiah 8.

Taken together, the evidence throughout the text points to the clear fact that Ezra the Scribe was the leader of the community that compiled the four sources of the Israelite tradition into one unified work of the Torah. The evidence in both the rabbinic understanding of Ezra and the literary character that is developed in the book indicates that Ezra was the leader of this group that was

[119] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 228-29.

responsible for redacting this document, which included an artistic weaving together of sources and the addition of a few texts to help the narratives flow together more easily. The redaction process including the construction of some framing mechanisms to help the reader understand the literary value of distinct units of text within the Torah. The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah regularly includes lists of names of people besides Ezra who were involved in the process of the final redaction of the Torah. But because Ezra was **the most prepared person**, we can connect Ezra directly to the process of the redaction of the Torah and these individuals, like the others at the Constitution Convention, were responsible for working on pieces of the redaction under Ezra's direction.

Conclusion

Ezra and James Madison both worked hard at particular points in their lives to learn what they needed to learn to succeed. They exemplified leadership in particular political systems through their own learning and then applying what they learned to conventions and gatherings that created very particular texts. In Ezra's case, it was his study of the laws and sources of the ancient Israelite tradition that enabled him to become the leader in the process of the redaction of the Torah. In Madison's case, it was his study of republican forms of government that enabled him to draft the framework for the Constitution. Both can be understood as having an added confidence at a particular moment that enabled them to be the leaders of the groups that created these foundational documents. Madison's confidence can be seen in marching up to Washington and sitting next to him throughout the Constitutional Convention at the front of the room and Ezra's confidence can be seen as he lifted the Torah scroll above his head for all to see at the celebration of the creation of the Torah. These two characters share a lot in common, but the evidence points to the ultimate value of the lesson of **being the most prepared person in the room.** For leaders

across fields, the confidence that can result from great detail in preparation and study gives one the capacity to have success in tasks as large as redacting the Torah or writing the constitution or as small as the everyday activities of a local lawyer in court.

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