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THE ATTITUDE OF ISAAC MAYER WISE TOWARD
BIBLICAL-HISTORICAL CRITICISM

by

N. William Schwartz

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of the requirements for Ordination

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Referees:
Professor Samuel Sandmel
Professor Ellis Rivkin

TO
MOM AND DAD
AND TO
ELAINE

One of the early giants in Reform Judaism was Isaac Mayer Wise. This Bohemian Rabbi, who was to found a rabbinical seminary and to create the apparatus for its successful operation, had a great impact on the American Jewish scene. This thesis is devoted mainly to one of the many facets of his teachings - his attitude toward Biblical-Historical Criticism.

In the opening short chapter, a brief account of Wise's life, his accomplishments and achievements is presented. Short as it may be, we can readily see that the life of Wise was full and fruitful. David Philipson aptly wrote of him: "More than any man he (Wise) shaped the liberal institutional development of the liberal Jewish movement called Reform Judaism...."

As the leader of a rabbinical seminary where Bible was taught, it was only natural for Wise to have reacted to the so-called science of Biblical Criticism. To see vividly what Wise was reacting to, a brief history of Biblical Criticism is presented leading up to the formulation of the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis. The facts presented in this chapter were available to Wise. How he reacted to them and what he presented to counteract them constitutes the main body of this work.

In general, Wise reacted quite antagonistically toward the adherents of the school of Higher Criticism. Throughout his writings, he attempted to show that the critics build their theories on air and that with the coming of the first wind they

collapse into nothing. Wise further notes that this does not discourage the critics. As soon as one theory collapsed, another is formulated to take its place and it too accepted as law. Wise was particularly disturbed by the critics because they based their history of Biblical Judaism on hypotheses and then accepted them as fact.

The attitude of Wise toward the Pentateuch was on the whole traditional except for some minor divergencies. Wise accepted the Elohist document as an older source utilized by Moses, and he rationalized the miracles of the Bible. Other than this, Wise accepted the Pentateuch as we now have in the traditional Masoretic version.

To prove the authenticity of the Pentateuch, Wise utilized three types of evidence - direct, indirect and silent. From this evidence, Wise concluded that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and transmitted it to us for eternity. Regarding errors and later editions to the Pentateuch, Wise commented that this was because of the fact that the Pentateuch was copied and re-copied many times over the centuries. However, these additions are few in number and substantially the Pentateuch that we now have in our possession is the one that was written by Moses. So goes the thinking of Isaac Mayer Wise.

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CHAPTER I

ISAAC MAYER WISE, HIS LIFE

The history of Judaism is replete with the lives of great men. Each generation has looked, with pride, to the giants of its day for guidance and for leadership. One of the giants of the latter half of the past century was a Bohemian by birth, an American by choice - Isaac Mayer Wise. Wise was born in the city of Steingrub in Bohemia in the year 1819. He received his education from his father and from his grandfather and later continued his studies in Prague. For two years he officiated as rabbi at Radnitz, Bohemia and in the year 1846 he emigrated to the United States.¹ The first congregations that Wise was to serve in his new land were in Albany, New York, Congregations Beth-El and Anshe Emeth for a total of four years. After Albany, he was elected to and held the pulpit of Bene Jeshurun in Cincinnati until his death.

During his lifetime, Wise had a great impact on the American Jewish scene. He was a forceful pulpiteer, and a popular lecturer. That he might have a platform from which to advocate his ideas and plans, he created the "Israelite" (now the "American Israelite") in 1855, and its supplement the "Deborah" in German. In these journals, Wise acquainted his reading public with his point of view on many different subjects.

Almost from the very first day of his arrival in his new land, Wise desired to create a union of the Jewish congregations of the country so that they might achieve some degree of togetherness. In 1848, he addressed an open letter to all the rabbis of the land urging them to join in the forming of a union of their religious forces.² Though this attempt failed, he persisted in his efforts until twenty-five years later he succeeded in organizing the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873. Besides this congregational union, he was also instrumental in founding a rabbinical seminary, the Hebrew Union College in 1875 and fourteen years later, in 1889, he brought into being the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Because of his boundless efforts he has well been termed the master builder of American Judaism. Though he toiled against great odds, he knew no such word as "fail". When he died in 1900, he was the acknowledged leader among the reform rabbis of the country. David Philipson has aptly noted: "More than any one man, he (Wise) shaped the institutional development of the liberal Jewish movement...."³

A firm believer in adaptation, he introduced a great number of reforms in ritual and service. One of his monumental efforts was his prayer book, the *Minhag America*, which was used by reform congregations until the end of the past century. Yet, in spite of his enthusiasm, he could not sacrifice old traditions to pure theory. To accomplish

reform, he fought the conservatives; to maintain traditions glorified by age, he fought the radicals.

As practiced in Europe, Wise felt that Judaism could not survive in America. Among his early reforms were the elimination of the piyyutim from all but the High Holy-day services and the reduction of the number of "mi sheberachs" to two. At a public debate in Charleston, when asked whether he believed in a personal Messiah and bodily resurrection, his answer was most emphatically in the negative.⁴ This marked the beginning of a long series of attacks on Wise, each of which he met with honor and with dignity.

As an individual, Wise prided himself on being a citizen of the world. He was a product of the liberal movement that swept the world following the French Revolution. As such he endeavored to adjust both himself and his religious way of life so that freedom could have meaning for him and so that the religion of his fathers could have meaning in a modern day and age. To this end, the tireless life of Isaac Mayer Wise was dedicated.

CHAPTER II
A SURVEY OF THE FIELD OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM
AT THE TIME OF WISE

As this transplanted Bohemian rabbi founded a seminary in the new land to which he emigrated where Bible was taught, it was necessary for him to take a stand in the controversy between the traditionalists and those advocating Higher Criticism. Did he accede to the dissection of the Pentateuch or did he side with those who held that the Pentateuch was written entirely by Moses at one time and place?

Before answering this question in all of its ramifications, some glimpse into the nature of Bible scholarship in the time of Wise is necessary to appreciate what Wise was reacting to. This scholarship is largely both traditional and anti-traditional though it does have some roots in the remote past. For the purpose of convenience, I will summarize in two parts some of the relevant portions of this scholarship. Again, for the purpose of convenience, if there was one man and one date which marks the division between the pre-modern and the modern periods, it is deWette (1817-1849). The significance of deWette is, whereas before deWette scholars still believed in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, many had theorized that he used sources in his compilation while others denied it. With deWette we have the beginning of the end of negative denials and the start of the

construction of hypotheses which would explain not only the literature but also the history of the Israelite nation.

The traditional view of the Pentateuch current at the time of Wise is the one to which Orthodox Jews have always subscribed. The Pentateuch was revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, all at one time, and Moses himself wrote it down as we now have it. There have been no changes in it, no modifications, no additions. Every word of the Pentateuch as we now have it is exactly as Moses wrote it.

On the other hand, the field of higher criticism cannot be stated so simply. Its history is involved and often various. Its point of departure has been the suspicion that the Pentateuch, as we now have it, was not the product of Israel's earliest age and that it is a work which must have undergone various modifications and additions before it assumed its present form.¹

Ibn Ezra was among the first to note the problem. In his comment on Deuteronomy 1.2, he threw out some doubts as to the Mosaic authorship of certain passages such as Gen. 12.6; Deut. 3.10,11; 31.9; the answers he left as mysteries beyond his power of comprehension.²

Yet, it was not till the close of the seventeenth century that scholars in the introduction to their works began to take the trouble of mentioning the authors of Biblical books and dates of their writings. They followed either traditional views without criticism or deviated from them in

entire unconsciousness of offering offense to the orthodox faith.

Textual criticism in a sense paved the way to the untraditional scholarship. Beyond the interest taken in textual criticism by such men as Origen, in the third century, and Jerome, in the fourth century, and by the Antiochene school, in the sixth century, none appears until after the reformation (sixteenth century). The Reformers accepted the Massoretic text as infallibly inspired and the Jewish tradition of its having been kept singularly pure since its origin. This notion in the post-Reformation period (beginning of seventeenth century) was intensified by some on dogmatic grounds into the theory of the Mosaic or Ezraic inspired origin of even the Hebrew vowels. This, however, was refuted by Cappellus (1658) who with Morinus (1671) showed not only that the Hebrew vowel points were of a relatively late origin, but also that the present Massoretic text is open to emendations by the use of the ancient versions.³ It was one step from the externalities of text into the internalities of content.

Spinoza (1670) set himself boldly to controvert the received authorship of the Pentateuch. He alleged against it: (1) later names of places, as Genesis 14.14 compared with Judges 18.29; (2) the continuation of the history beyond the days of Moses, Exodus 16.35 compared with Joshua 5.12; (3) the statement in Genesis 36.31, "before there reigned any king

over the children of Israel."⁴

In 1685, Simon, a Roman Catholic began to apply historical criticism to the Pentateuch in a systematic manner. He presented the historical books as a collection of ancient writings of the prophets who were public scribes and who wrote down the history in official documents from the time of Moses and onward so that the Pentateuch as we now have it could not be the work of Moses. As evidence that Moses did not write the Pentateuch he called attention to (1) the double account of the deluge, (2) the lack of order in the arrangement of the laws and narratives, and (3) the diversities of style.⁵

Men like Huet (1679), Heidegger (1700) and Carpzov (1721) who followed Simon sought to remove these difficulties by their theories that the anticipations of later history are predictions, that diversity of style is due to the inspiration which would have it so, and that to find defective arrangement is to make a charge against the Holy Spirit.⁶ Witsius (1692) and Adam Clarke (1810) recognized essential Mosaic authorship but also editorship by Ezra. Vitranga (1722) presented the theory that Moses himself was an editor of older documents which he incorporated into his history.⁷

In 1753, Astruc, a French physician gave new direction to the field of Biblical Criticism. He maintained that Moses made use of earlier documents in the compilation of the Pentateuch and that large portions of those documents were incorporated wholesale into his work. By their use of

different names for the Divine Being, one document using exclusively the name Elohim while the other preferring to employ the name Jehovah, the documents were easily distinguishable from each other. Besides these two principle documents, he supposed Moses to have made use of ten others in the compilation of the earlier part of his work.⁸

Astruc's work, termed the documentary hypothesis, though in some respects too mechanical and somewhat defective and needing ratification, was a great contribution to the field of Biblical scholarship. One of his main difficulties was a heavy reliance upon the different use of the divine names and too little upon variations in style, language and narrative.⁹

All the writings heretofore mentioned were preparatory to the work of Eichhorn. In 1780, he combined in one the results of Simon, Astruc, and others, embracing the various elements in an organic method which he chose to call Higher Criticism.¹⁰ Eichhorn separated the Elohistie and Jehovistic documents in Genesis, recognizing besides as separate documents 2.4-3.24;14;33.18-34.31;36;39.1-27. This analysis has been the basis of all critical investigation since his day. Eichhorn regarded Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers as having grown from the collection of particular writings which the redactor connected by historical narratives. With the exception of the last chapter, he thought that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy, He further noted that the Pentateuch

only claims Moses as the author of particular sections and that the middle books are not cited in the Old Testament under the name of Moses. This he explains from the fact that they constituted the priest's code. Eichhorn admits many glosses by a late hand but in general abides by the authorship in the Mosaic period and chiefly by Moses himself.¹¹ A fault of Eichhorn was that he could not transcend the limits of his age and adapt himself to future discoveries.¹²

In 1792, Geddes proposed what has been called the fragmentary hypothesis to account for the structure of the Pentateuch and Joshua. Geddes holds that the Pentateuch in its present form was not written by Moses. He is inclined to believe that the Pentateuch was reduced to its present form in the reign of Solomon and that it was compiled from ancient documents. Some of which were coeval with Moses, and even anterior to Moses. He joins the Pentateuch and Joshua into a single work, because he conceives of them as having been compiled by the same author, and because he felt that Joshua is a necessary appendix to the history contained in the Pentateuch.¹³

Up to this point in the history of higher criticism, the critics had no real mark in history upon which they could hand their theories. There were almost as many central historical points chosen as there were authors. This made for a rather haphazard effort by the critics as a whole, for there was little if any order to the mass of their theories.

The man who saw the defects of the various hypotheses on the Bible was deWette. DeWette pressed for the unity of the Pentateuch in its present form as the plan of one mind. In his quest for history, he noted the correspondence between the contexts of Josiah's reformation in 2 Kings 23 and the legislation of Deuteronomy. Assuming that the Book of Deuteronomy was in some way bound up with Josiah's reformation and that it was a product of that period, he had a definite fixed point in history upon which to base his analysis of the Bible - 621 B.C.E.¹⁴

In the study of the Bible and its history, this theory was of great importance. Up to his discovery, the Bible was chopped up according to many theories, by many individuals with no real fixed point in history. Each writer was almost a law unto himself. When deWette formulated his theory, the field of higher criticism was given a firm peg upon which to base its studies. With Deuteronomy and the reformation of Josiah linked together, the Bible was now approached from a new angle by the critics. At last there was some agreement in the field and the go ahead sign was given to those who wished to delve into the Bible in order that they might attempt to unravel its history.

By 1824, Bleek gave shape to what he called the supplementary hypothesis. He held that the death of Moses was not the proper place to close the history of the Pentateuch but rather that it be linked together with the book of

Joshua and considered as a Hexateuch. According to the thinking of Bleek, the Elohist was an original document and the Jahvist was the supplementer.¹⁵

Ewald in 1831 attempted to show that the Elohist and Jahvistic documents extended through the entire Pentateuch. This was found to be the case with Joshua and thus in the midst of a diversity of documents, the unity of the Hexateuch was manifested.¹⁶

Analyzing the book of Genesis, Hupfeld, in 1853, made it clear that there were the following sources in it: Elohist, 2nd Elohist, Jahvist and Redactor; the latter differing from the other three in that he is distinguished for the conscientiousness with which he reproduced the ancient documents, word for word and the skill with which he combined them.¹⁷

Up to this point Higher Criticism had resulted in the discrimination of four documents, each of which used earlier sources. (1) An Elohist writing (P) which extended throughout the Hexateuch. In the main this document is of priestly character and contains priestly legislation. (2) A Jehovistic writer (J) which extend throughout the Hexateuch. Written in the prophetic spirit, this document contains the code called the little book of the covenant. (3) Another Elohist writing which extends through the Hexateuch. This contains the greater Book of the Covenant. (4) The

Deuteronomist (D) whose work is confined to Deuteronomy and Joshua.¹⁷

The developmental hypothesis was propounded in 1835 by both Vatke and George. It was sharply criticized and then fell into disrepute. Though he did not publish his views so early, Reuss, in his lectures since 1833, had called attention to the fact that the history of Israel set forth in Judges, Samuel and Kings contains much which conflicts with the theory that the laws of the Pentateuch were in force among that people. He further maintained that the Mosaic code was utterly unknown to the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries. Reuss' "Geschichte" appeared first in 1864, afterwards in 1881 and 1890. Previous to their appearance, Graf, a former pupil of Reuss', published essays in which similar views were expounded in 1855, 1857 and 1866. He maintained that almost the whole of the legal portion of the Pentateuch was post-exilic and of a later age than the historical narratives. He presented strong arguments for the priority of Deuteronomy to that of the priest-code of Leviticus, holding that the latter was from the prophet Ezekiel and that in the time of Ezra other legislation was added. He still held to the priority of the Elohist narrative. When this inconsistency was pointed out to him, Graf was forced to make the Elohist narrative post-exilic.¹⁸

Kuenen (1880), a Dutch scholar from Leyden, advancing under the influence of Graf took the most radical of

positions. Rejecting the historical character of the Hexateuch, he regarded it not as composed of ancient documents but of unreliable legends and myths. He was unwilling to ascribe to Moses more than a fragment of the Decalogue. The Deuteronomic code he considered as being a program of the Mosaic party in the reign of Josiah, and the priest-code, the program of the hierarchy at the restoration under Ezra.¹⁹

The most able exponent of the theory of Graf unquestionably was Wellhausen whose work on the text of Samuel, published in 1871, excited great attention. His views were extremely radical in that he did not acknowledge even the Decalogue to be Mosaic. He held that the book of the Covenant was given to a settled agricultural people. The Jahvist is of the golden age of Hebrew literature just prior to the Assyrian captivity. Deuteronomy was composed shortly before the eighteenth year of Josiah and then contained only chapters twelve to twenty-four. By the second revision of D, the work of the J and E writers were united together and this combination, marked JE, is what Wellhausen terms the Jehovist as contrasted with the earliest Jahvist. He further regards the body of laws in Lev. 17-24 as post-exilic originating between Ezekiel and the Priest's code, not composed by that prophet, but nearly related to him. With a few exceptions, the priest's code embraced Ex. 25-31, 35-40, the book of Leviticus, Nu 1-10, 15-19, 25-36. The Pentateuch formed by

the combination of all these elements was finally published by Ezra in the year 444; for, according to Wellhausen, there is no doubt but that the law of Ezra was the entire Pentateuch.²⁰

So much for the analysis of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis. Its synthesis would be as follows: (1) the pre-exilic period was one of free religious expression and primarily was prophetic with an as yet unorganized cult; (2) the exilic period marked the beginning of cult and the beginnings of the disappearance of prophecy; and (3) the post-exilic period was one in which prophecy had become the handmaiden of priesthood and the entire religious structure declined into the hereditary priesthood of the priestly code.²¹

The theory thus proposed by Graf and Wellhausen would reduce a large portion of the history of Israel up to a short time prior to the Exile to a mass of legends and uncertain traditions. In short it would remove much of the traditional authority ascribed to the Torah and in its stead give a vastly different outlook to the development of Judaism.

This then was the state of Biblical-Historical criticism that Wise had to confront. To what extent was he cognizant of this material? Where did he stand in relation to these theories? Was his attitude one of warmth or one of hostility? The remaining portions of this thesis will attempt to discern Wise's position, attitude and reaction to the higher critics of his day.

CHAPTER III

WISE'S REACTION TOWARD BIBLICAL-HISTORICAL CRITICISM

The depth of Wise's knowledge of the field of Higher Criticism as can be ascertained from the available literature was not exceptionally great. Approaching the field with preconceived notions as to the authorship of the Bible, he was in many respects intolerant of dissident opinions. Ofttimes his attitude toward positions differing from his ranged but from the sarcastic to acidic. Let us then look into the writings of Wise and attempt to see what his attitude really was.

One of the earliest writings of Isaac Mayer Wise was the History of the Israelitish Nation. In "The World of My Books" we find his reason for attempting this work:

Shortly after the appearance of the first articles in "The Asmonean", I began to write history. My intention was to write the complete history of Israel in four volumes.... I made the mistake of beginning my history with Abraham and adding a great deal of exegesis.... I entered into all the details of national life and attempted to show origin, causes and results, and that took up a great deal of space.

My position in English literature at least, was new and unique. I treated Biblical history as secular history, establishing in the preface that only God creates miracles from a rationalistic viewpoint, and this diluted my history with exegesis.... This was not only new but also strange and surprising, in Jewish history, which had always been approached and presented as history of religion.¹

Wise' intention then was to write a history of the Jewish

people using the yardstick of reason. In addition to the original sources, he consulted such authorities as Josephus, Philo and the ancient rabbis "because they were so much nearer in time to this period of history, were better acquainted with the manners, customs and circumstances of that age...."² Regarding the field of Biblical Criticism, he further notes, "We have not neglected to bestow attention on the Bible critics of the modern schools, both orthodox and rational; but we were led exclusively by none, having always exercised our own judgment where the authorities differed."³

In distinguishing between history and religion, Wise notes that history deals with man, while religions treat of God. Therefore, it follows that miracles do not belong in the province of history. History reveals the acts of men; miracles can be wrought by God only. Although the historian may believe in miracles, he has no right to incorporate them in history.⁴ Following this line of reasoning, Wise utilized only such facts as were able to stand the test of criticism. Wherever he was unable to find a natural reason, he did not record the incident. In regard to the miracle of the plagues described in Exodus, he asserts that they are usual in Egypt, and that it was their simultaneous appearance which terrified the people.⁵ As to the slaying of the first-born of the Egyptians, he states "It would appear to us, as Aben Ezra already remarked, that parties of the army of Moses at Avaris or Raamses, were sent to the country to kill the first-born

of defenders, of all those who were opposed to the departure of the Hebrews."⁶ Whereas the pious believer of the Bible may conceive of the crossing of the Red Sea as a manifestation of the Deity on behalf of Israel, Wise notes that there is a possibility that the crossing of the Red Sea really occurred in accordance of the laws of nature.⁷ Thus, in these few cases, we have seen how Wise, in his writing, dealt with the problem of miracles in the Bible.

In the "Israelite" Wise quoted a comment from the "Occident" on the History of the Israelitish Nation. The "Occident" stated: "He has succeeded in stripping our history of all those splendid miracles which have been the sanctified food that has ever supplied the spirit of Judaism with its revivifying and reinvigorating elements."⁸ On the other hand a quote from the "Christian Register" notes, "Miracles he (Wise) regards not as the province of history but rather of theology.... We do not understand him to deny the miracles of the Old Testament but only to deny that they belong in the province of history. The main facts he records, suggesting when he can natural causes."⁹

For those who are of the opinion that the Bible must be taken at face value because it was given to us by God himself Wise writes: "Regarding the view that the historical part of the Bible is divine, the Bible does not contain one sentence to this effect. The Talmudic statement that says, 'God said every word and Moses repeated and wrote

it down' was made only many centuries after the Biblical books were written by a man who did not pretend to be a prophet and did not support his assertion by evidence."¹⁰

In an editorial later in his life, Wise attempted to refute the higher critics by pointing out that God taught Moses only general principles and that the Jew was not expected to believe all miracles cited in the Bible. He writes:

... some of the apostles of higher criticism quote passages from the Talmud and Midrash to discredit completely the authority of the Biblical books. That Dr. Eisenstadt frequently misunderstood the passages which he quotes.... The doctor also forgets to prove that the Talmudists believed in any of the post-Mosaic miracles, or considered such belief essential to Judaism, which he ought to have done, especially as Moses Maimonides considers no belief in miracles as essential to Judaism.... The Jew was never expected to believe all miracles; it is expected of him however to know and believe the absolute dominion of God over nature's forces and man's powers.... 'Only general principles did God teach Moses'. This is intended to prove that the rabbis of old did not maintain that Moses wrote the whole Torah.... If Dr. Eisenstadt had opened his Bible... would have found that what it is maintained there was said to Moses on Mount Sinai is nothing else but general principles, categories of laws, general maxims of morality. What Moses said or wrote later on does not at all belong to that which God taught him on Mount Sinai.¹¹

Thus, we have a definite statement by Wise as to his stand on miracles and his rationale for excluding them or reasoning them away in his history.

Wise's Attitude Toward Higher Criticism

The problem concerning Wise's attitude towards higher criticism is by far more complex and involved than his treat-

ment of the miracles in his writing of history. In the "Israelite" of May 28, 1886 Wise cited the following parable: "If a gardener would carefully plant and nurse a tree and cut every day a piece from its roots, he would be called a fool; and yet men who plant and nurse carefully the tree of religion and undermine the authority of the Bible, which is its root, consider themselves wise."¹² The import of this parable requires no explanation.

An editorial appearing in the "Israelite" six years after the founding of the Hebrew Union College gave the gist of the attitude that Wise held throughout his lifetime anent higher criticism:

As far back as authentic history reaches, up to Cyrus, to the time when Herodotus and Xenophon wrote, the Torah was venerated as the Law of God. The Samaritans accepted it, the Egyptians translated it, the Greeks lauded and venerated it, as early indeed, as the time of Alexander the Macedonian.

Then the words of the prophets had not yet been uttered and the poetical strains of the psalmist had not yet reached the heart of the people, the Law was already its might and song. All combinations of modern criticism cannot change the fact that the Torah is as old as Israel and will be the most holy book as long as there will exist any remnant of our people.¹³

Further on in the same editorial, he notes:

The critics, however, are gentlemen and scholars, most of them Protestant professors, who certainly are men of research and earnestness. They go as far as they can to undermine the authority and antiquity of the law, with which they try very hard to make Moses smaller in order to make Jesus greater. This is certainly the avowed object of Mr. Kuenen We speak to Israelites in behalf of Judaism, which we think will last as long as the Torah is

forgotten.... If you will uphold the Torah it will uphold you.¹⁴

Wise then points out that from the most distant point in recorded history up to the present, the Torah was first and foremost in the minds of the Jewish people. With the object of belittling Moses, certain critics have delved into the field of Bible criticism. Yet in spite of all such machinations, the Torah will continue to have authority as long as it is known to the people.

The fact that Bible criticism proved to be enticing to certain individuals among the Jews was distasteful to Wise. Whereas in former centuries, Christians learned from Jewish expounders of Scriptures and searched the Hebrew sources for information and enlightenment, he notes that now young Israel sought information from non-Jewish critics, making no reference whatsoever to Jewish sources. He cites Dr. Kohler as one leaning in this direction: "I, (Kohler) simply follow the school of modern theologians, which is daily gaining ground all over Protestant Europe."¹⁴ As Protestant Europe runs religion into atheism this fact alone should be sufficient reason for us to reject theories of the higher critics. Wise questions the conception that Protestant theologians understand the Bible better than the Jewish expounders.

As to the rabbis who have taken to following this school, Wise has no kind words: "...it looks inconsistent to persistently refer to and rely upon the theories of antagonistic theologies. If you have no means to understand

antagonistic theologies. If you have no means to understand the Bible and must go to school to your antagonists, we can not see why you should not submit to your masters and teach that new edition of religion which calls itself Christianity among Christians, Judaism among Jews."¹⁵

If from the book of Joshua to Chronicles, the entire history of the Jewish people was a succession of errors and the central pillar of Israel's faith - which was always Sinai - is a myth, then Wise feels he must pity those Christians, Mohammedans and Jews who for so long a time heroically stood up for their convictions. He holds out hope that one day the Jewish people will see the wrongs of higher criticism.

Wise believes that the school of higher criticism took its start with two fixed intentions: (1) to turn the attention of the radical critics away from the New Testament which they had nearly demolished to let it alone and exercise their destructive tendencies on the Old Testament.... (2) another class of critics started out with the intention of overthrowing Judaism altogether by proving its sources a conglomeration of fraud and forgery, containing crude and inadequate notions of religion and morality, God, man and the universe; in order to emancipate Christianity and to establish the Christian revelation as the origin and beginning of all truth and ethics."¹⁶ Thus what the higher critics meant to do was to apply the dissecting knife to the Old Testament, but not to the New. It is for this reason that Wise feels

he must counteract the teachings of this school whenever the occasion merits his attention.

Throughout his writings, Wise did not have a kind word for the advocates of Bible criticism. He notes that "down to Wellhausen, that which is called Bible criticism is actually a shapeless conglomeration of hypotheses in which there is vastly more error and unwarranted assumption than truth, more philological quibbling and self fabricated historical items than grains of facts. Words, facts and books have been distracted, tortured, perverted and disfigured in favor of certain hypotheses upon which new and outlandish ones were piled so long, that not one passage of the Bible tells any longer that which the honest reader finds in it."¹⁷ In the same source, Wise continues to ridicule the methods of the higher critics: "Words which you have believed all the time to mean something, signify the contrary thereof, or anything else, on account of similar sounds of Sanscrit, Mongolian, or Zulu terms, as used in a manuscript which nobody has deciphered, historical data which you imagine to stand before you in the Bible as plain as daylight are symbols of some unknown cult of Moloch or the celebrated Madam Venus. Then one inherits the hypotheses of the other and builds on it fresh cobwebs until the whole Bible appears to you illegible and unintelligible, a compendium of ridiculous fragments checkered with the languages and follies of all nations. This is the result of the so-called modern Bible criticism."¹⁸ As can

be discerned easily, Wise gave little credence to the adherents of this movement.

In the development of the field of higher criticism, many of the hypotheses that were made had to be discarded in favor of newer theories which seemed to hold more validity. Wise was quick to note the ease with which one theory was discarded in favor of another: "The masters of higher criticism ... always heroically admit their defeat... are almost as quick in admitting their blunders as they are in forging theories upon the pinpoints of their speculations. Up to a few years ago they are sure, and the Encyclopedia Britannica made solid facts of the vague speculations, that the entire Bible history up to and even beyond King David has fabulous, mythical, legendary, or a falsehood by any other name; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua... were all myths, without any underlying truth.... All those books were written in Babylon at the end of the sixth century B.C., and all of them were fictitious, the works of pious priests with nothing to base upon."¹⁹ Reflecting upon this situation Wise thinks aloud: "It is rather strange, that those Jews, otherwise clever fellows, lived nearly a thousand years in their own blessed country, as uncivilized heathens, produced nothing in literature besides a few speeches of their eleven prophets, who stood solitary and alone in a tumultuous sea of pagan ignorance and corruption.... You must know that speculative history is no record of facts.... Scholastics with a little

wit, a mite of induction and deduction, can prove anything, however unlikely it may appear to ordinary common sense."²⁰

In order to discredit the Bible, the modern critics attempt to show that there is nothing new in the teaching of Moses. In their long national life, the Hebrew picked up those ideas and laws which are contained in the Bible and some pious imposters wrote and shaped them so that one would think that Moses of old had written these very books. Such is the position of the adherents of Biblical criticism. Wise is of the opinion that up to the time of King David, it is easy to prove that Moses wrote the Bible making use of extant sources. The critical expounders, however, always point to Egypt and India as the pre-Mosaic sources, although Egyptian²¹ historians down to Brugoch-Bey have no knowledge of them.

In an editorial in the "Israelite," Wise cites the method utilized by a modern historian in writing history and conjectures as to what the Biblical critics would have done had they written this particular account.

Mr. Prescott went to Madrid to study the archives he wrote his books on Spanish and Mexican history. Why did he not stay at home and speculate on what those archives might contain as ever so many modern writers speculate on the supposed fact out of which they construe a Bible history? The sources from which the history is to be taken are first construed to suit modern theories and then thrown aside to clear the way for a new history of Israel which is not in the sources but in the author's fantasy.... That is plainly and simply the case with all modern critics of the Jewish sources.... They draw on fantasy and call it criticism.²²

As he was wont to do upon every occasion, Wise

emphatically pointed out that if we accept Biblical criticism, then Judaism has no basis for existing. To bolster his point of view, he cites a remark by one of the Tana'im to a Samaritan; "You have falsified your Law and gained nothing by it," or "nothing is left to you."²³ Criticism which starts with the flat denial of revelation and prophecy, and by an ingenious combination of hypotheses produces the negative result of declaring the historical portions of the Bible factional, and the Mosaic legislation the fraudulent invention of cunning priests, may be of some value to schoolmen to prove the frail basis upon which those critics erect the bulwark to shelter their unbelief. Wise then comments that when the results of such efforts are put before the public they sound like the madman's song.

Wise holds that the unsophisticated man upon viewing the results of the higher critics naturally will say: "If the Law of Moses is a fraudulent invention and the historical portion of your Bible is fictitious, who are you to expound it? What use have we for you and your eloquence, if the sources of your wisdom are a conglomeration of falsehoods and pious frauds? What kind of Judaism can you teach us, if the fountainhead is not only purely human but purely fictitious and deceptive? What religion will you teach us and what evidence can you give us of its truth, to replace our Judaism, which is based on the belief of the divinity and authenticity of the Bible?"²⁴

In the same article, Wise goes on to note that we as Jews have been surrounded for centuries by enemies who have sought our destruction, or at least the destruction of Judaism. Yet in spite of the fact that the enemies of Judaism have sought to destroy it, "we always had also our friends, cordial and warm friends and admirers, who, with the help of God, protected and loved us; and why? Because Israel is the bearer of the divine truth, the covenant people. It is this which commanded the respect of the best men, moved many to admiration, and earned us the love of countless friends. If those sophomore teachers of that ruinous criticism succeed, they will destroy that supposed superstition of our friends, and then the friends will be lost and the enemies remain.... Judaism is lost within and without if it departs from its basis, which is the divinity and authenticity of the Bible; it commits suicide... we cannot see the benefit the cause of humanity might derive from the suicide of Judaism which stood in a... centuries of authentic history as a tower of strength against all priests of darkness and the prophets of Baal."²⁵

After much reading in the field of Biblical criticism, Wise states that it is indeed a pity that those critics of the Bible do not read the original, but almost always are guided by translations and thus err on many points. He further declares that it is ridiculous to blunder so grossly in making of one's ignorance in Hebrew grammar a contradiction in the Bible. He concludes that if one cannot read the text

of the Bible in its original form, he ought not appear before others in the role of the critic.²⁶

Wise was much disturbed because of the fact that those expounding the Bible from the pulpit had taken so strongly to the teachings of the Bible critics. In an editorial in the "Israelite," he attempted to show that criticism accomplishes nothing:

The most recent phase of sensational preaching is to denounce the Bible and undermine its authority. It is a sort of self glorification showing how much wiser the preacher is than the authors of the various books of the Bible, and at the same time it flatters the vanity of those who are told that they are so much better than those ancient worthies. Besides it is very easy to deny. It takes very little study to find faults and hardly any reflection to be negative. Any person can deny in one hour more than all savants built up in centuries What sort of religion do those sensational gentlemen preach who denounce the Bible which they claim to expound and undermine its authority? It is not Judaism. It is not Christianity. It is not philosophy. It is negation. Of what benefit can that sort of preaching be to an audience? It cannot make them better. It cannot make them wiser. It cannot possibly impart piety and morality to any person. It cannot provide anybody with a standard of rectitude or any hopes of salvation. It can only destroy the moral hold which every person finds in his religious belief. It is immoral and impious to ruin souls by negations, where positive lessons are required.²⁷

To Wise, it has always appeared self-evident that the body of doctrine and assumed data laid down by the potentates of Old Testament higher criticism cannot be called justly a science in the sense of the German Wissenschaft. It can be no more called a science than the hermeneutics of the Midrash and the exegesis of the Babylonian Haggada can lay claim

to the scientific method.²⁸ Wise claims that he has not been convinced in any point. He states: "They maintain to prove propositions where logical proof is impossible and call that proof which is in fact poetical effusion or ingenious invention, good enough for believers, but worthless to reasoners free of that scholastic bondage. Then they repeat each other's wisdom as school boys repeat the multiplication table....

The more one reads of that literature, the more it reminds him of the scholasticism of the Middle Ages."²⁹

Wise has remarked that if someone who had less to do than he compiled an account of the hypotheses and theories assumed and maintained for years as irrefutable by these critics and yet overthrown and relinquished by their own co-laborers, he would convince the most enraged critic that the whole system is erected in dreamland. As an example of the theory of one group being completely overthrown by another, Wise cites the following:

"... we point to the fact how almost all those magnates, Renan, Volzhausen and the British Encyclopedia included, maintained as an undoubted fact, that the ancient Hebrew up to the time of the prophets or even up to Babylonian captivity were rank pagans and polytheists of the very worst description. But, when in 1888 the book of Dr. Fredrich Baathgen 'Der Gott Israels und die Goetter der Heiden' appeared in Berlin, that entire fortress built on sand, began to shift and sink, and today none of any reputation can pick up courage enough to sink in that air castle."³⁰ Wise concludes that though it may be higher criticism, it is by no

means the highest.

In his tirade against the higher critics, Wise maintained that it was highly irrational to maintain that pre-exilic Israel was altogether idolatrous, immoral and illiterate except for the few prophets whose literary fragments these gentlemen admired. Wise further maintained that it is impious because they give the lie to history. Since they rob Israel of a thousand years of glorious history, Wise holds that he surely would quarrel with those violent critics.³¹

Wise's reasons for protesting against higher criticism were not because they contradicted the world's traditions nor because they degraded and debased our ancestors and not even because they threatened to shake the very foundation of our religion. He opposed and protested against their whole system because it is not true and because there existed not a shade of evidence in the authentic sources to justify any of those hypotheses. Wise maintained most adamantly that there was no passage in the Pentateuch of which it could be proved that it was written ten years after the death of King Solomon. He held that there were not ten passages in the five books of Moses of which positive proof could be produced that they were written after Moses.³²

Not only did radical criticism upset and destroy the theology of Judaism, but according to Wise, it destroyed theology in general, replacing it by personal and individual speculation. Radical criticism, Wise stated, is but an

attempt "to subject and amend historical Judaism to harmonize it with what is called modern thought."³³ If the subject under consideration did not lend itself to easy adaptation, through mechanical means it was made to fit even at the cost of destroying the original idea or ideas.

How did the system of higher criticism build itself up to the point where Wise found it in the year 1890? In another editorial in the "Israelite," Wise attempted to show how he reasoned that it came about. He was of the firm conviction that the positive results aimed at by the different groups of critics were so radically contradictory that the whole system could be called only a negative science. This is how they build and succeed in muddying what was once clear water: "A starts out with a hypothesis which is beyond the possibility of logical evidence, but A shows that this hypothesis proves or rather explains something not explained before.... The legitimate reason will say this can only prove a possibility and no more.... But this does not prevent B from adopting A's speculation as a fundamental fact upon which he builds another hypothesis, something beyond the possibility of logical evidence. This gives to C two fundamental facts, to D three, to E four and so on ad infinitum, till X comes and constructs thereof a system of Biblical criticism, which, honestly investigated, culminates in laws basing upon no facts whatever, and which, at best, in the aggregate can prove no more than possibility, which demonstrates nothing in

contradiction to documentary and traditional testimony. A system of possibilities based upon hypotheses is not a science in the common acceptation of the term."³⁴

According to Wise, there are a number of motives for negative criticism. Some engage in it because of fashion and a desire to submit to the word of one's master in knowledge. Others because of a desire to produce sensation and furnish evidence of ingenuity and originality in fields not under the common man's tillage. Then there are the motives of those whom Wise calls the camp followers. These individuals have not made the so-called science but have seen fit to follow in the works of others. Their motives may be summarized thus: (1) To disqualify the Mosaic law and discredit the Pentateuchal narratives... the whole Bible being a series of forgeries... they take passages of these forged or interpolated books to prove the Pentateuch a forgery, as for instance in the case of the City of Dan. If this is not a vicious circle we do not know what is. (2) To extinguish all ideas of and belief in revelation, inspiration, prophecy, miracles and everything supernatural. The Bible, however, means all these things literally as narrated, and narrates in many instances the literal fulfillment of prophecies. Says the critic: All things were written post festum and all that is supernatural is mythological or legendary.... All this wisdom being flatly contradicted by the Bible and especially by Moses, it became to those critics a necessity to

disqualify and discredit the latter by hypotheses of their own.... We mean to maintain that if it had not been for this unbelief they would never have hit upon their hypotheses, of which radical criticism consists. (3) Enthusiastic Christians, led to believe that commandment means slavery, that the law is a curse... adopted the same hypothetical means... to upset the authority of the Old Testament, and especially of Moses, in order to center all religious authority in the New.... When they find that Paul also with all his opposition to the law and circumcision, still acknowledges the authority of the Old Testament and bases most all his arguments on it, they say Paul was a Pharisee.... (4) With some skeptic Christians it was the destructive tendency exclusively which led them to the adoption or invention of those ingenious hypotheses. Their object was the abolition of Christianity. This, they maintained, was the abolition of Christianity. This, they maintained, had its roots in Judaism. Unless you destroy the roots the tree will not perish.... They did not hide their intention of uprooting Christianity.... (5) The last and most dishonest motive leading one class of writers on this radical criticism is Judaphobia. They tried various means to rob Judaism of its glory. The monotheism they maintained was not Jewish, it was Semitic.... The tabernacle of Moses and Moses himself are myths. David was a chief of the banditti.... Having thus come into existence (without the aid of Judaism), modern civilization owes nothing to the Jews."³⁵

To show where Bible criticism might lead, Wise cited an incident in the "Israelite" concerning a Mr. Weisman who wrote a pamphlet which was published in Vienna on the presurable time when the various books of the Bible were written. Many ingenious hypotheses were advanced and argued. One stated that the book of Isaiah was written by Heschiah the father of Jesus the Galilean about the year 40-50 B.C. Wise notes that the most marvelous of all these hypotheses is that the Pentateuch in our possession is a Hebrew translation from the Greek Septuagint. This hypothesis Wise considers too absurd to merit even a moment's consideration. His reasons for citing the work of Mr. Weisman are twofold: (1) to show what absurdities that species of criticism leads to, and (2) in a short time someone will take the Weisman theory as an established fact, and build further upon it.³⁶

To bolster his position, Wise saw fit to quote or cite other authorities who were also against the school of the higher critics. One such person was a Miss Amelia Betham Edwards of London, who did much to counteract adverse criticism of early Biblical records. Regarding her work Wise wrote that she "not only gave the lie to all those perverting critics, but gave it to them in so popular and attractive a form that it took hold also upon the ordinary reader and could not be gainsaid by the critical reader."³⁷

Then the new discoveries of the day, according to Wise, were constantly voiding much of the critics' teachings.

The Dutch and German Bible critics of the radical or negative schools, notes Wise, were hit hard by explorers and discoveries of these later days. Almost daily new evidence is uncovered which points to the genuineness of the Biblical records; yet, it was not too long ago that the critics banished them into the land of myths and fables. Wise was ever confident that the radical critics, with whom the Bible stories are fictitious, soon would be forced to abandon their positions.³⁸

In reviewing a book by Rabbi Levi ben Gersom containing a systematical presentation of Banolas' ethics, Wise shows that the reader will also find therein the scripture upon which it is based. He then notes that "it is a disease of the age that quite a number of our rabbis study the Bible in the books of Protestant critics, whose main object is to reduce the Old Testament to the legendary value of the New Testament and make both of them a depository of modern doctrines and antiquated abuses. Gersom's book give the quintessence of this ethics. We think our rabbis would be much more successful preachers if they would pay more attention to our own literature than to Protestant Bible criticism, which in the pulpit is not only worthless but a disturbing element, while the Jewish commentaries are full of spirit, thought and sap. Dry bones produce no living effect."³⁹

In the "Congregational Review," Wise found a lecture by the Rev. Edward White, Professor of Homiletics at New College, on "The Influence of Spiritual States on Biblical

Criticism." He cites that lecture as a source backing up his opposition to the entire field of Bible criticism. He writes, "The Professor's argument is that the knowledge of God in our souls is the best guide to a true conception of Biblical truth. The most victorious defense of the Bible against the destructive view of superficial critics, says the lecturer of the Bible, is entirely inconsistent with elaborate theories concerning Elohist, Jehovist and Sacerdotalist dealers to folklore and imposture. Your mere verbal critic misses what lies on the surface and proceeds to search for something which lies deeper but is really far less valuable. The books of the Old Testament were not the work of any rogue, literary or ecclesiastical, as is irresistibly evident from the tone of holiness and elevation of spirit which pervades the Bible from the first chapter to the last."⁴⁰

Wise states in no uncertain terms that Bible criticism is far from being scientific, for no fixed result has been reached by any school or individual writer that could be called scientific. He goes on to note that on the whole we are no better informed today than we were fifty years ago as to when and by whom the various books of the Bible were written. That which has no fixed laws cannot be called scientific, nor is that scientific labor which aims at no fixed laws and starts from no established facts. "The whole school has this in common with Darwin that it starts with a number of hypotheses, none of which is founded on fact, and the combination thereof is like $0 \times 0 \times 0 = 0$, and that cipher is the some-

thing which explains the origin of species. That is called science now, exactly as the canon and apparatus of Biblical criticism are. That is one kind of scientific research, from the standpoint of those who call it so. Others, however, call it the attempts at harmonizing the principles and doctrines of Judaism with the dominant schools of philosophy or rather with the writings of Mill, Spencer and other British savants. Will that be called scientific work? All scientists maintain it would not."⁴¹

In an editorial in the "Israelite" of March 13, 1883, Wise was definite in informing his reading public that all Biblical criticism had no basis whatsoever. He was scornful of the members of that school because what was accepted today as final truth would tomorrow be discarded for a "truer" truth. In this editorial Wise states:

We do protest most emphatically against the alleged results of that negative Bible criticism which uproots the veracity and integrity of the inspired writers and reduces the ancient history of Israel to a record of mere barbarism. We do so not because that negative criticism is injurious to Judaism, although we believe it is a death blow aimed at it and religion in general, especially if those alleged results are carried into the pulpit or the Sabbath school, where they can do harm only and no good at all; because we firmly believe that truth must take care of itself. If that upon which we have based our faith proves not to be true, we must adjust our faith as facts are unchangeable. We protest loudly and emphatically against those alleged results because we know them to be false and we protest against every falsehood. There is not one essential position taken by those negative critics from Spinoza down to Dr. Maybaum which we can not controvert with better arguments than they bring to support it. Just think of the numerous

positions they have taken and abandoned since deWette advanced that Moses did not know the art of alphabetical writing when it is known now that in the time of Abraham the cuneiform characters were an old science. Think of the EJ theory and what Ewald made of it, and remember that no sensible Bible reader now thinks of taking any notice of it. Read Bornstein's Genesis or even Graetz's volume I of history and do not laugh, if you can. We could write large volume on those abandoned theories. Must we not finally open our eyes to the fact that all those ingenious conjectures and combinations do not weigh a straw opposite the Massorah, which is as old as the post-Biblical literature and the Massorah, which is as old as the post-Biblical literature and the traditions of the Hebrew people older and more faithful than both? Must we not finally come to the conviction that we, who were, so to say, born with the Hebrew Language and grew up with the commentaries on our lips, understand the Bible better than those few Protestant clergymen who are the authors of that negative criticism? May be we are too proud, too self-conceited, to yield the palm, to abandon the Kether Torah, to admit that all our fathers and forefathers, and among them the most powerful and independent reasoners, were blind, and all of us were purblind, till those few Protestant clergymen came to open our eyes. Maybe we are all that; still we are used to see with our eyes and no others to judge with our reason and not with that of Kuehnen or Wellhausen. We imagine that we can read the same original sources precisely which they read, and have as straight and logical an understanding as they have; hence we must stand by our flag and can not serve under theirs. We maintain that our reason is clearer and less biased than theirs, and we prove it by the fact that they believe in Christianity and we do not. You say they do not believe in Christianity? Then they are hypocrites, for they profess belief in it and we have no cause whatever to place any confidence in them. The hypocrites mental production can amount to falsehood only. They are honest, you say, they say what they think? Then we pity them that they can not think more correctly and protest against imposing upon the community the unripe fruits of an unripe thinking.⁴²

Events in the lifetime of Wise made him ever certain that his position in regard to Biblical criticism was the only

valid one possible. In an editorial on October 7, 1897 headlined, "The Wellhausen School of Bible Criticism Damaged," he stated that "Halevi referred to the fragments of Scripture and other Assyrian inscriptions lately deciphered, as among others the fragments of the book of Zachariah which demolish completely the position of the Wellhausen disciples.... There is no absolute certainty in any one of the various hypotheses which in their conglomeration make the system of Bible criticism."⁴³ It is interesting to note that here as in other writings, Wise merely refers to the hypotheses which he is refuting and yet never actually states them in any detail.

In citing a paper delivered by a Julia Wedgewood which asserted that the oldest book of the Mosaic Scriptures is the book of Deuteronomy, Wise refers to his Pronaos (see below for Wise's explanation) to show that this is not so. He writes: "This new admission of the critics is another proof how worthless their statements in general are For a long time Leviticus was the oldest book with them till Kuehnen put it into the time after Ezekiel.... So they guessed about and guessed yet without the shadow of evidence, and so does Julia Wedgewood most slavishly without a relieving ray of originality or logical evidence."⁴⁴ Thus we can see that what troubled Wise most was the never ending changing, modifying and discarding of hypotheses.

Wise also attacked the view that the book of Daniel is a work of fiction. On this he comments that even if it be

proven so, it is the only Essenean book which we possess and wonders what influence it could have on the other books of the Bible. He holds that if this book be spurious, it does not follow that all or any of the others are likewise. The Daniel argument as a justification for surrendering the Church methods to those of the undefined higher criticism is, says Wise, a failure. He notes that the main object of that school is to overthrow Judaism in favor of Christianity. "A main point in Judaism against the Christian dogma of redemption is the Day of Atonement. This makes all other modes of atonement superfluous." Further on he notes that they claim that the Book of Leviticus is late because "in it the Day of Atonement is ordained, and in it only, outside thereof there is no mention of it; it follows that the book itself is of a later origin and the Day of Atonement is no divinely appointed institution of atonement." To refute this argument, Wise recalls the fact that the Day of Atonement is mentioned at three different places in Leviticus, viz: chapter 16, 29-34; chapter 23, 26-33; and especially 25.9. He states: "There is no man in the world that could prove this twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus to have been written by anybody besides Moses or at any time except there and then before entering the land of Canaan.... It was not intended to be a popular fast, the priests in the sanctuary only performed the ceremonies of the day. Therefore it is not mentioned in early history."⁴⁵

Being a traditionalist, Wise was opposed to any

author other than Moses for the books of the Pentateuch. He took cognizance of the fact that the critical school tried to invent the author of the book of Genesis. To prove that Moses could not have written this book they cited a few words occurring here and there without considering that a book copied so often might contain a few words of later origin. In his History of the Israelitish Nation, Wise maintained over and over that Moses must have been the author of Genesis: ".... and with the help of God, he (Moses) compiled the rest of the book of Genesis."⁴⁶ Wise also cited Genesis 13.10 in which he says he has proof that the author of book was better acquainted with Egypt than with the plains of the Jordan, "for in order to explain an unknown another unknown subject can not be used; the contrary is always true."⁴⁷ Because of the use of the word **מִן** in connection with **בְּרִית** instead of **כְּרִית**, Wise is convinced of the fact that Moses wrote the Book of Genesis. His reasoning is that the same terminology is used in Genesis 9.8-17 in the record of the covenant between God and Noah. The same is the case throughout the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. He then points out that this phrase is nowhere used by Moses except in this chapter, because here Moses referred to a well known document. Wise, therefore, feels that he has shown that the book of Genesis was written in the days when Israel sojourned in the wilderness. He then notes: "We are not aware that anybody maintains that someone else might have written it in the days of Moses,

because there is too much nonsense in this hypothesis,"⁴⁸

Wise's treatment of the different names applied to the Deity is indeed interesting. He makes reference to the statement of Wellhausen in the Encyclopedia Britannica that Astruc had the merit of being the first to recognize in Genesis two documents of distinct authorship, which are defined by the different names which they apply to the Deity. He then notes that a Mr. Neubauer wishes to give the credit of the discovery to Kalonymos of Arles who wrote that "This strange use of the names of God (in Genesis) cannot be accidental, but gives, according to my opinion, some hidden hints which are too wonderful for me to understand." Though Kalonymos may have wished to hint that Genesis was not all written by the same author, Wise would require more evidence to convince him that the vagaries of modern Biblical criticism can be traced back to a Jew in the fourteenth century. He states: "There is too much evidence in Genesis showing that its material did not come from one and the same hand. The most likely result at which we can arrive is that the author was a 'Jahvist,' and it may have been Moses - we think it was - who embodied and expounded in the book ancient documents from the 'Bible of the Patriarchs,' as we call it, the oldest of which are the Elohim passages and the genealogical tables up to Abraham. The El Shaddi passages are naturally of a more recent date, as the history of Joseph in Egypt is undoubtedly of a still more recent date. The Jahvist compiled, supplemented

and expounded, especially the various names which were given to the Deity at different stages of history are contained in the nomen proprium of God in the Mosaic records and ever thereafter. This theory does not make Genesis a less inspired book, if it is admitted that the author accepted more ancient documents in their proper places, because those ancient documents may also have been written by prophets like the patriarchs...."⁴⁹ This treatment by Wise is interesting, for although he rejects Biblical criticism almost in toto, he is willing to state that the Elohist sections of Genesis were incorporated by Moses from older documents.

In a similar editorial in the "Israelite," Wise attempted to state the opinion of the modern critics regarding the book of Genesis. They are convinced that the book of Genesis is a compilation of documents more ancient than the compiler who joined the fragments and put in his own explanatory notes and remarks. However, Wise points out that the older documents, especially of the first eleven chapters are without date and without points on which reference might be based to ascertain the approximate time when they were written. He comments: "It is evident that the Elohim passages are documentary and the Jahve or Jahve Elohim passages are additions by the compiler whoever that may have been. We think it was Moses. All the hypotheses based on the difference of names given to the Deity do not establish that those eleven chapters were written at any time after Moses;

consequently, we may maintain that the Elohist passages in those eleven chapters are older than Moses. This appears to be evident also from the Genealogical tables; the fact that Resen (Genesis 10.12) is mentioned as the capital of Assyria and not Nineveh; that none of the Egyptian cities is named although the compiler did not know them well (Genesis 13.10) The first chapter of Genesis certainly announces itself as a revelation since no man by any other channel of information could arrive at the knowledge conveyed in that chapter. With all the progress of modern science we have arrived at hypotheses, necessary evils to explain that which we know not.⁵⁰

Among negative Bible critics, according to Wise, it is accepted as a fact that the passages of the Pentateuch in which the Tetragrammation is used, are by one author, and those in which the Elohim is used are by still another.... Besides these two authors, they make note of one or two more authors of Pentateuchal passages but are not certain as to how many. Regarding the Jahvist and Elohist they agree and consider that hypothesis established. Some of the critics go so far as to maintain that the Jahvist passages must have originated in Judah and the Elohist passages in the kingdom of Israel; therefore, the JE passages must belong to a third and much later author who doubtless flourished after the fall of Samaria. Thus we can see, notes Wise, how one theory was built upon another and so forth until at last nobody can tell whether the Pentateuch was written or amended in the time of the

Tana'im as Dr. Graetz has suggested.⁵¹

Later in the same article, Wise wrote:

If we find in one chapter Elohim and in another Jehovah, either predominate or exclusive, and we know that both are of that same author and both interchange with other names of God, as in the case with the Davidian Psalms, it can no longer be maintained that in any other book the Elohist and Jahvist chapters must be of two different authors. We are only entitled to inquire after particular reasons which the author may have had to use this name of God in this connection and another in another connection.

Not only do we consider the Davidian Psalms as an irrefutable argument against the Jahvistic and Elohist hypotheses, but we also consider them as proof positive that the Pentateuch existed and was popularly known as the Law of God in Israel.... Had the Pentateuch been written or amended any time during the reign of David or after, the terms Zebaoth, Melech hak-kabod, Salli, Misgabbi and similar expressions would occur in it.... No Israelite can consistently subscribe to the J and E hypotheses when the Decalogue begins Onochi Jehovah Elohecha, his faith tells him Jehovah Eloheni, and thou shalt love Jehova Elohecha. As Israelites whose belief in Judaism is genuine, we have nothing to do with those hypotheses; and as critics, we can only denounce them as false in every particular, false from the beginning to the end.⁵²

In his writings Wise took cognizance of the fact that one of the modern Bible critics stated that Elohim or ha-Elohim signified the national God of the Hebrews. To this, Wise remarks that it is strange that the national God was also the Creator of heaven and earth; and the etymology of Jehovah points to the eternal and universal God. Wise wonders why the critics cannot get themselves out of their demi-kabbalistic whims, when any concordance must convince them of

the utter fallacy of their theories. He goes on to state: "Because some Jews were too narrow in their conceptions to comprehend the One God of the universe, therefore the Bible must be maltreated and disfigured to state that self-same thing. But it does not, absolutely not. The Bible knows but one eternal and universal God whose name is Jehovah, and all other names given to the Deity are appellatives, except Elohim, which is older than Judaism or Mosaism or Abrahamism. It is a plural contradiction of El and Elovah, the masculine and feminine powers.... The whole hypotheses of modern critics on Jehovah and Elohim are whims, caprices, which the Germans call 'Schrullen', which have positively no value and lead only to an entire misapprehension of Bible texts. The terms El, Elohim and Jehovah signify, "The Almighty God" or as we would say, the great immense Deity. The Elohim portions in Genesis are ancient documents or traditions which the Jehovah writer quotes, expounds and supplements. So, for instance, is the second chapter of Genesis nothing else than a commentary and supplement to the first, to introduce the history of man, notwithstanding all the quibbling on that subject. These extraordinary theories must be dropped by all who wish to understand the Bible."⁵³

In October 29, 1896, Wise was of the opinion that deWette started out with the idea that nobody could read or write in the time of Moses. However, since deWette, discoveries in Assyriology and Egyptology proved that there existed

literature prior to the time of Abraham. What angers Wise is the fact that the critics refer to deWette when they speak of the book found in the Temple in the time of Josiah because deWette maintained that it was the book of Deuteronomy although in the original sources it is referred to as the Sefer Habberith, "The Book of the Covenant". The same is the case, Wise points out, with the Elohist and Jehovist pieces in the Pentateuch on which the French physician advanced the hypothesis that this points to two different authors. In the hands of Ewald this grew to twenty-two different writers whose products were compiled by Ezra. The higher critics thus expand the fragment hypothesis to an infinite number of Torah authors, in negation of all written statements in the very sources which they attempt to expound. At the foundation of that higher criticism which they call a science, Wise points out, there are a few dozen more such illegitimate hypothesis. "Let none be mistaken, it is no science."⁵⁴

The modern critics, Wise cavils, who claim to know the history of Israel better than the authors of the sources advance a priori the most absurd hypotheses and then base upon these their history of the Hebrew. One of the points to which Wise was referring was the allegation that the Jewish New Year on the first day of the seventh month and the Day of Atonement was not of Mosaic origin. This he claims in undeniably false because the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus is without question Mosaic. In it are contained the laws

concerning the Sabbath and Jubilee years. Concerning these two institutions, he states: "The Jubilee year was certainly a prospective legislation, which it appears, was never carried into practice. Ezra and Nehemiah would certainly not reintroduce it, because not all Israel was then in Palestine. In the exile no such law could have been invented.... Before that period none can lay his finger on any passage in Scriptures to show when and where or why such a law might have been enacted. It appears necessarily to be one of the prospective laws of Moses, which was never reduced to the practice, although the laws of property and of personal freedom largely depend on the Jubilee Year institution. In the very twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, however, which is beyond a doubt of Mosaic origin, both the civil New Year of the first day of the seventh month and the Day of Atonement are particularly mentioned in connection with the Sabbath and Jubilee Years, and cannot be separated from them by any process of criticism It appears that the whole canon of criticism is as worthless as the Jahvist Elohist hypotheses, which has at last been abandoned; and with it Ewald's theory falls to the ground."⁵⁵

Another item of the higher critics that troubled Wise was their implication that the God of Israel was a low Deity because of the many anthropomorphic expressions found in the Bible. However, the hypercritics want it so in order to prove that the God of Israel as taught by Moses was a low conception of Deity. Wise points out that these gentlemen

overlook two facts: first, that the absence of metaphysical terms is a proof of high antiquity; secondly, that most all our metaphysical terms are borrowed from concrete examples. What the higher critics must have expected was for Moses to invent a metaphysical terminology. Since he spoke in concrete terms, his conception of Deity must necessarily have been low. A better argument on their part would be - if the conception of Deity was with Moses as sublime and perfect as Aristobul, Philo and the Jewish metaphysicians of the Middle Ages, it must have originated in a philosophical and post-prophetical age. To rebut this argument Wise would point to the concrete language used by Moses to prove its antiquity.⁵⁶

For Wise, the idea of a Hexateuch was without any foundation in fact or speculation. The higher critics in their teaching point out that the Five Books of Moses were not written by Moses, and also that the Book of Joshua belongs to this same class of literature and that, therefore, there must have been six books of the same kind. Wise notes, however, that in the Biblical sources there is no mention of the "Five Books" of Moses; rather it is referred to as the Torah of the Lord. As the existence of five books cannot be proved from Biblical sources, certainly six cannot be proved or even presumed. The source for their being five books Wise found in the Septuagint, Ben Sira, and the Mishnah. The source for a Hexateuch he finds in the unexplored regions of the fancy of the higher critics.⁵⁷

The book of Joshua is simply chronography without any law and without any reference to any new institutions; whereas, the Torah includes many laws and the origins of various institutions. Thus, Wise concludes, they are two entirely different books. There are no more similarities between them than those which one would expect between master and disciple. "The Hexateuch chimera has no foundation in any known document or legitimate speculation or anything. It is auxiliary hypothesis to prop another groundless hypothesis, viz: Moses did not write anything. But here is the testimony of history that he did; here is the Book of Joshua. Well, that was written by the same author or authors with the Torah and was a portion of it. With the first hypothesis the second also falls to the ground...."⁵⁸

Some critics went to the extreme of denying absolutely the authenticity of the Pentateuch and made Ezra its author. For the most part, states Wise, these critics are but superficially acquainted with Jewish literature. As their authority for doubting the authenticity, they usually point to Ibn Ezra. Wise wonders what these critics would have done had they seen "Zafnath Paneach" by Joseph ben Eliezer who went far beyond Ibn Ezra. He surmises that had they read this work they would have built mountains of hypotheses upon it.⁵⁹

In an editorial answering the charge that the Torah and most of the Bible were written by Ezra the Scribe who

took it from the Greeks, Wise wrote:

... still when you come to think over it, you will find that this is hardly more absurd than the common place hypotheses taken for granted by most of the radical critics that Deuteronomy was composed or rather forged in the time of the Prophet Jeremiah, for which there exists not the shadow of a proof; and then in the same breadth almost, it is maintained that the other books of the Torah, at least the three middle books were written by Ezra Logic and historical or documentary evidence do not go together with that radical Biblical criticism.⁶⁰

As a whole the economy of Moses' time was one primarily concerned with agriculture. The taxes were payable in the produce of the land and both the rich and the poor were required to work the land. Because of this fact, Wise was convinced of the antiquity of the Mosaic legislation. Therefore, he finds it most absurd to maintain that this legislation originated with Ezra.

In the book of Leviticus, Wise finds many portions that have their origin in the wilderness. In addition to those dealing with agriculture, the book has a simple primitive theology. Yet many of the higher critics are unclear as to the existence of the Torah prior to Ezra. They claim that each prophet called his revelations a Torah and that it was these fragments that were compiled by Ezra and called "Torath Mosheh". In unmistakable terms, Wise calls this hypothesis false because it is based on no documentary information, and because it is opposed to all of the documentary evidence in our possession. In order to accept this hypothesis, the

following must first be accomplished: (1) the entire historical part of the Bible must be overhauled, (2) the prophetic literature with quotations from the Torah must be considered false, (3) the Psalms must be placed in times when no Psalms could have been written, (4) I and II Chronicles must be called priestly deceptions, and (5) the Massoretic rules and laws in the Mishna and Talmud have to be classed as rabbinical inventions.⁶¹

To further portray the confusion of the higher critics regarding the books of Ezekiel, Wise takes note of the fact that one party maintains that the author of Leviticus had no knowledge of the Decalogue, which they claim was composed later and was perhaps from Leviticus. Another party maintains that Leviticus must have been written later than the Decalogue because in it the Decalogue is expounded and enlarged upon. Here we indeed have a dilemma in the field of criticism, for the book of Leviticus could not possibly have been written both before and after the Decalogue.

Ibn Ezra has established that the Book of Leviticus is and was one consecutive book. He attempted to explain away its problems by noting that it was a book for the priests exclusively and was to define their limits and circumscribe their duties. This, according to Ibn Ezra, is the cause of its numerous details. After informing the priests of their duties, the priests are told to teach the people with the charge "Speak to the whole congregation of Israel." Utilizing

this explanation, Wise is of the opinion that there exists no reason whatever to maintain that the Book of Leviticus was written long after the Decalogue; nor does it admit the supposition that the Decalogue was written later. Either argument, holds Wise, must be abandoned as not in keeping with the facts.⁶²

In another editorial Wise dealt with the attitude of the critics toward Leviticus and Ezekiel. He branded as false and absurd the hypothesis regarding the authorship of Leviticus, viz: that it was written by Ezra, who was the heir of Ezekiel's Torah. He writes: "There is not the least evidence on record either that Ezra had any knowledge of Ezekiel whom he never mentions or imitates in style or diction, or that Ezra and his contemporaries were capable of writing a Hebrew book so pure and original that the geographical and topographical divisions and the proposed sacrificial policy, as laid down in the appendix to the Book of Exodus was never introduced in Palestine, which could not possibly have been the case if Ezra, guided by Ezekiel had written Leviticus.... Besides it is evident that all that part of the Pentateuch from Exodus 21 to Leviticus 25 is undoubtedly one consecutive book.... Any fair critic will admit that it takes a very telling amount of indirect evidence to overthrow the direct evidence of the book under consideration. In Leviticus there are a number of excellent criteria to show its origin in the Wilderness of Sinai. There is no reference in it to the

Levites as assistant priests, to any high priest or chief priest besides Aaron, and to no priest at all besides 'his sons'. There is no reference in it to any place besides the wilderness, or to any event besides those of the first year after the exode. It offers not one sure point by which its latter origin could be proved."⁶³

Most critics, comments Wise, read little more than the index or table of contents of the books which they read. This, in large measure, accounts for much of the misinformation that they spread. He refers to the science called Modern Bible Criticism as Negative criticism because on the strength of unscientific methods it maintains that the Pentateuch is not composed of original Mosaic material, that no Psalms are Davidian, no Proverbs Solomonic, that the historical books are unhistorical, that the prophecies were written 'post festum' and that there was no revelation, inspiration or prophecy. If the Bible is a compendium of deceptions, and unscrupulous misrepresentations, Wise wonders where the Biblical truths that they speak of come from. His conclusion seems to be that they are perhaps pulled out of thin air.

Regarding the non-existence of a Torah prior to Josiah, Wise wrote:

Without knowing of one another, deWette and Volney based upon II Kings 12 the hypothesis that prior to King Josiah (642-611) no written Pentateuch or Torah existed. It was found or rather written by the High Priest Hilkiah, the prophet Jeremiah, Shaphan the scribe and other conspirators, from

existing traditions or fragments and presented to the King as the law of Moses. The fraud was perpetrated, they maintain, in order to counteract more effectively the existing idolatry and to establish the worship of Jehovah.

From the purely critical standpoint, both deWette and Volney are guilty of a gross error and their hypothesis is one of those impossibilities which no unbiased mind can adopt.

In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, Hilkiah being the High Priest and Shaphan the scribe, the temple was being repaired... Hilkiah the High Priest said to Shaphan the Scribe: ~~The~~ Book of the Law have I found in the house of God; not a book or copy, but the Book of the Law, the High Priest said he had found in the Temple.... It appears that the authors of the narrative in question in Kings intended to convey the idea that Hilkiah had found the original copy of the Book of the Covenant which had been read to the children of Israel at the foot of Mt. Horeb.⁶⁴

From this account it appears that Wise draws a number of conclusions. He is of the opinion that the Torah certainly existed in the eighth century B.C. and was known as the Divine Law; and that the original copy of the Book of the Covenant came into the possession of King Josiah.

In the prophetic and hagiographic sections of the Bible, Wise found over twelve hundred Hebrew roots that do not occur in the Five Books of Moses. Among those he detected as missing in the Pentateuch are such as refer to water and pools of water, cities and city life, handicraft tools, commerce, plus a number of others.⁶⁵ This he believes to be fatal to the school of criticism which places the origin of the Pentateuch posterior to the Prophets. Their absence in the Pentateuch is almost conclusive evidence of the antiquity of the book.

The critics, in their study of the Pentateuch, overlook many telling data recorded in the book, observes Wise. One of these is that the Law of Moses takes no cognizance of the worship of Baal and Astartarta while it does denounce most viciously the worship of Moloch. Except as the name of a place in Egypt, the word Baal is not mentioned in the Pentateuch. Thus the worship of Baal certainly was later than that of Moloch. If the Mosaic law had been post-exilic when Baal worship was common, Moses would have legislated against it as he did against Moloch. It was not until after the death of Joshua that we find the worship of Baal mentioned.⁶⁶ Therefore, Wise concludes, we have another reason for rejecting the theory of the higher critics that the Pentateuch was post-exilic in origin.

If the book of Genesis had been written after the Law of Moses as some of the critics maintain, we would not find written therein the fact that Abraham married his half-sister Sarah and the fact that Jacob married two sisters and other events similar to these. Acts such as these are forbidden and denounced as capital crimes by Moses. As Wise has often referred to the critics as writers of fiction, he is no different in this case: "A writer of fiction acquainted with the Law would have glorified the fathers and not stigmatized them as criminals in the estimation of his contemporaries."⁶⁷ Therefore, because we do find such events mentioned, the work is an attempt by the author, Moses, to present as authentic

an account as possible.

We have seen above that, according to Wise, the Jahvist and Elohist theories for the origin of the Pentateuch are valueless. Like the allegation that Ezra was the compiler of the Pentateuch, so also these must be given up as a forlorn hope. However, in Genesis, Wise is of the opinion that its Jahvist author made use of Elohist documents and traditions and used the term wherever he found it in the documents; Jahveh where He Himself narrates the traditions, and Jahveh Elohim where he wants to explain that the Elohim known to them signifies the God Whose name is Jahveh. It is for this reason, Wise points out, that the author of Genesis lets Abraham use the word Jehovah although we find it stated in Exodus that God was first made known to Moses by that name.⁶⁸

In the Book of Genesis itself, there is proof to show that the main portion of Genesis was not written in Egypt prior to the Exodus. Wise remarks that: "The whole tenor of the history of Joseph and the sojourn of Abraham in Egypt points to an Egyptian author, at a time when those stories were yet fresh in the memory of that people. It is certainly remarkable that from the time in the narrative (Genesis 31.27) of Jacob's departure from the house of Laban to the end of the Book of Genesis, God is called El, Elohim, El Shaddai, or Shaddi, and never Jehovah except in the story of Judah and Tamar and the next following introductory remarks to the story of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 37.1 - 38.6)."⁶⁹

In addition, he cites several other passages which point to an Egyptian author. One is in the thirteenth chapter of Genesis, verse ten: "And Lot lifted up his eyes and he saw the whole plain of the Jordan that it was full wattered, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gemorrah like a garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt where thou camest to Zoar." This verse, he feels, shows that the author was either in Egypt, or wrote this shortly after his departure from that land. Also Genesis 21.21 points to an Egyptian author: "and his mother took him (Ishmael) a wife from the land of Egypt." From these verses Wise concludes that the Elohist document was written by an author outside of the land of Canaan, or that he added these explanatory notes at a later time.

In searching his mind, Wise cannot see why it should not be regarded as plausible that the Book of Genesis was written either by Moses or a contemporary of his and that he incorporated therein the Elohist document.

In answer to the charge that there are passages in Genesis of a later date, Wise confesses that he cannot find them. One of the suspected passages is: "when Abram came into the land of Canaan (Genesis 12)", "and the Canaanite was then in the land." The critics are of the opinion that this was written after the Canaanites were expelled from the land, thence after the death of Moses. Wise here states that the critics misunderstood the term "oz" rendered "then".

However, this term, notes Wise, is used in Hebrew as of an action that took place "then and not now". He, therefore, concludes that the critics knew not whereof they were speaking.

In their attempt to invalidate the account found in Scripture, the critics were ever-ready to manufacture hypothesis after hypothesis. One such hypothesis, Wise notes, pointed out that the ancient Jews were left-handed because they wrote from right to left. Wise finds it strange that anyone would lecture or write on the Jews without knowing the Bible in which he finds over and over the expression "right arm" and at no time "left arm". This he concludes is a further method of manufacturing hypotheses by the critics, a procedure which one day could run away with them altogether.⁷¹

Thus as we can readily see, Wise was violently opposed to the teachings of the school of higher criticism. He felt that it was meritless, groundless and absurd. Except for the fact that he believes that Moses used the Elohist document as a source, and except for his rationalization of the miracles that occur in the Bible, Wise for the most part appears to have been a traditionalist. In order to ascertain this point thoroughly, the following chapter will be devoted to the attitude that Wise himself espoused toward the Pentateuch.

CHAPTER IV

WISE ON THE PENTATEUCH

Much of the original work that Wise did in the field of Bible may be found in his Pronaos to Holy Writ, published in 1891. To find his reason for writing this book, the article "The World of My Books" provides a likely source. In it he states that he was provoked to write because of the flood of misinformation spread by Pentateuchal and Hexateuchal criticism. He depicts their writings as portraying the Book of Moses as a late creation and a patchwork put together by deceitful priests. He writes: "I was seized with fear for historical Judaism on the one hand and on the other hand I had to speak against this to the students of the college. If the Pentateuch was a lie on which all of historical Judaism based itself, then all our great spirits were either deceived deceivers or despicable hypocrites." This troubled Wise very much. He then wonders almost aloud:

If this is so, why is there Judaism in the nineteenth century? Why all the sacrifices offered on the altar of our faith, so often with bleeding hearts, not only by our fathers, but also by us? If this is so, whence do I know that there is an only, unique and eternal God, who is just, merciful, loving and true? Whence do I know that there is a moral order of the universe and immortality, when all the world has gone off into materialism...? It took a long time for me to work through the constantly growing critical literature. It took me even longer to oppose the apparatus (of biblical criticism), rich in hypotheses and contradictions with a system of my own? When I found out how to confront the documentary hypotheses with a priori proofs, I went to my desk and produced the

introduction to the Holy Writ under the title
Pronaos to Holy Writ.....¹

Thus we can see readily that Isaac Mayer Wise, head of a rabbinical seminary, teacher of Bible, leader of the Jewish community, was forced by pressing circumstances to produce an answer to the charge of the critics who termed the Bible a book of forgeries and false information.

The views presented in the remainder of this chapter will be those of Wise to the exclusion of all others. They contain his answer to the critics regarding the various sections of the Bible and his attitude towards Scripture in general.

Once the veracity of the post-Pentateuchal records is established, the arguments against the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch falls by the wayside. At no time can a priori or a posteriori evidence, which can prove probability or possibility only, stand up against documentary testimony of authentic records. Wise remarks that "if the advocates of negative criticism urge that the author's arguments are insufficient to establish certitude, they must admit their sufficiency to contravert their own."²

The Talmud consistently makes mention of the division of the Torah into five books. For instance, in Sotah 5.6, we find: "Moses wrote the five books of the Torah and then again he wrote the section of Balak and Balaam." We note also references to this division into five books in the Greek,

Syriac and Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch and in Josephus and Philo. All such references to five books of the Pentateuch refer to the same five in the opinion of Wise.³ It is no less certain that the subdivisions of the various books into major and minor paragraphs were ever fixed and noted carefully by the ancient scribes. For this reason it seems impossible that the text could have been amended or interpolated at any time within the two thousand years of Hebrew post-Biblical traditions and documentary records.

In the Bible itself, Wise finds no passage or intimation which justifies the hypothesis that Jeremiah or any other prophet committed literary forgery. He notes that Kings and Chronicles both expressly inform us of "The Book of the Torah", that is the main book of the Torah was found in the Temple and which in both sources is called "The Book of the Covenant". In Exodus 24.4-7 we are informed that this was the principle book written by Moses. No reason exists for us to maintain that it was any other book but the original one written by Moses. Up to the time of Samuel and the oldest prophets, Wise is certain that he can trace the existence and authority of the Torah. In these works, the main events narrated in the Torah are noticed and quotations are made there-
⁴from.

Of the historical books of the Bible, Wise is of the opinion that they are synopses of official and contemporary records. At no time were they rewritten or corrected

by any one man or group of men because, except for some errors which might have crept in through copying during the thousands of years, they would have been uniform and correct. Had they been rewritten they could not differ so greatly as does Judges from Joshua or Kings from Samuel.

In the Canon, the Prophets and Hagiographa are accepted as divine, though supplemental. It was the Torah that occupied the highest position in the estimation of the people, and it had been venerated in Israel long before the other books of the Bible came into existence.

Try as they may, the critics were unable to disqualify the historical sources in the Bible. Yet it is precisely these sources that Wise believes established the facts narrated in the Pentateuch and attested to its Mosaic origin. At no time did the radical critics attempt to invalidate these sources by internal evidence. Having started out with the theory that no Law of Moses existed prior to Ezra or King Josiah, they sought means to disqualify the historical books because they testified to the existence of the Mosaic law prior to Joshua. Yet, when confronted with the testimony of history, such hypotheses and speculation collapse and with them all of the structure of radical criticism.

In the Pentateuch, Wise cites five scrolls that must be attributed to Moses because of their content and makeup:

1. Story and poems of Balaam (Numbers 22 and 23)

concerning which it is maintained in the Talmud, "Moses wrote five books of the Torah and then again he wrote the chapter on Balaak and Balaam.

2. The Book of the Journeys. Here it is specifically mentioned that Moses also wrote by divine command the history of the exodus from Egypt and the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness, as stated in Numbers 33, "And Moses wrote the goings out according to their journeys at the command of Jehovah.
3. In Numbers 21.14, there is noticed "The Book of the Wars of Jehovah" and a passage from it.... This, the critics maintain, must be a book older than the Torah. We have maintained that no war of Jehovah could have existed prior to Moses, and Moses was particularly commanded to write or rather start such a book right after the first war of Jehovah which was waged against Amalek, as recorded in Exodus 17.14, "And Jehovah said, write this as a memorial in the Book," which could mean a special book only, a book for that purpose, viz: to record the wars of Jehovah. It stands to reason that Moses obeyed the divine command, consequently, he was the author of the Book of the Wars of Jehovah, as far as his time was concerned.
4. Another ancient book "The Book of Jashar", quoted in Joshua 10.12-13 and 2 Samuels 2.17-27, which also appears to have been started by Moses or found by him among his people and continued. According to the extant quotations from that book, it must have been a collection of the people's didactic and epic poems, to which the song at the Red Sea, beginning 'Oz Yashir', as does the quotation in Numbers 21.17 and another in Joshua 10.12 may have given the name Jashar.
5. Book of Generations. This book is mentioned first in Genesis 5. The term Safer could have been added at that particular place only to inform us that the Israelites prior to Moses, possessed a written genealogy reaching back to Adam or that Moses started also this official book; anyhow it is of Mosaic or pre-Mosaic origin as are other documents accepted into Genesis.⁵

Wise did not infer that these scrolls which were incorporated by Moses remained unchanged and are in the Bible in their

original formulation. Rather, Wise informs us that from time to time Moses may have added to these scrolls. He is somewhat uncertain as to when or how Moses added the Book of the Covenant. It may have been in the last days of his life or it may have been afterwards.⁶ He continues:

The documentary evidence not merely entitles but compels us to maintain that all these manuscript scrolls preserved and zealously guarded in the national sanctuary may have been connected with the Mosaic books of Genesis, ... and shaped in the present form of the Five books of Moses, if not Moses himself performed this task in the last days of his life; and that material, which, after Moses, was added to any of these books or scrolls was incorporated in the latter books of Joshua and Judges, although some of it may have been retained in the Pentateuch as for instance Genesis 14.14, 36.31, and Exodus 16.35,36.⁷

Wise states emphatically that no reason exists for supposing that the compilers of the Pentateuch accepted anything into it which they did not believe to have come from the hands of Moses or his immediate disciples. No reason exists for suspecting fraud where the object of any book is the greatest good of mankind. It is a self-contradictory assumption to state that any individual whose sole object is truth should resort to fraudulent means to reach his aim. Thus to be honest with ourselves, it is necessary that we give no heed to the higher critics who suspect fraud in the compilation of the Pentateuch.

Wise admits that a few passages in Genesis show traces of coming from a later writer; yet in view of the fact that they are so few in number, they cannot counter-

balance the evidence of the rest of the book. Wise, therefore ascribes these passages to those who compiled the canon and to later copyists who confounded glossary notes with the original text.⁸

Regarding the book of Deuteronomy, Wise is of the opinion that it was originally written and delivered by Moses to the priests and all the elders of Israel according to the reading of Deut. 31.9. To refute one of the assertions of the critics, he wrote:

The assumed difference of diction which critics suppose to distinguish Deuteronomy and characterize it as a work of later origin than the former books of the Torah is imaginary only. The Laws in Deuteronomy differ in nowise from those in the former books. Whenever any former law is repeated, it is amended with some additional provision. But suppose there was such a difference, it must be admitted that forty years' literary and oratorical practice changes the diction of every man of genius. Besides all that the critics possess no reliable standard by which to fix the age of any portion of the ancient classical Hebrew.

For this reason, Wise strongly opposes non-Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy and holds that it was written by Moses.

Having given his reasons for the Books of the Covenant, the various scrolls mentioned and the Book of Deuteronomy being Mosaic, Wise now gives us the reasons why he thinks that the Book of Genesis must also be Mosaic. He writes:

1. It is no more and no less than a historical introduction to the Mosaic Scriptures, as the first eleven chapters are the introduction to the history of the patriarchs.
2. The next object of Genesis is to establish the title of the children of Israel to the land of

Canaan which is the very foundation of the Mosaic polity.

3. The whole plan of Genesis is to present the regular development and steady progress of the revelations of Deity in the human consciousness and the consequent generation of the ethical principles from the progressive cognition of God's nature and will.
4. Without this introduction, this knowledge of preceding development, the doings and writings of Moses would appear an unintelligible mystery, inexplicable and incomprehensible, a state of culture and a stage of reason and ethic issuing suddenly from dead rocks, and Moses would appear like a wizard wrapped in the deceptive mantel of darkness.
5. In all his writings, Moses continually points back to the events, doctrines and promises recorded in Genesis.⁹

Further on, Wise refutes the contention that the Book of Genesis might have been written by someone else by reason of the constant use of the Tetragrammation in the book, which he strongly maintains is of Mosaic origina. Those portions in which God is called Elohim or El Shaddai are, in the opinion of Wise ancient documents, the author of which accepted and incorporated literally. However, the author of Genesis is ever ready to state that Elohim or El Shaddai is identical with Jehovah. As the whole of Genesis is Jehovistic except for the ancient documents, Wise emphatically states that it could not have been written prior to Moses.

Wise also cites a number of points of circumstantial evidence to prove that Moses wrote the Book of Genesis after the Exodus. Since the author of Genesis never explained

Egyptian names such as Pharaoh and Potiphar, they must be of Egyptian origin. If perchance there occur passages in Genesis of a supposed later origin, they must be accounted for from another standpoint than the Jahvist or Elohist hypotheses or any other theory which places the authorship of this book later than Moses.

The theory that the school of modern criticism teaches which states that the Pentateuch was written at or near the close of the prophetic millenium is precluded by the traditions of the Hebrew people. Before Ibn Ezra, no one doubted the fact that the books of the Pentateuch were written by Moses, except for the concluding portions of Deuteronomy. Ibn Ezra himself merely suggests that a few historical notes may be of later origina that the body of the book. Though there were men after Ibn Ezra, like Nachmanides who pointed out other similar passages, no one challenged authenticity of the Pentateuch.¹⁰

The documentary evidence that Wise presents to bolster his case is of three types: direct, indirect, and the argument from the silent. To present his arguments under the various categories mentioned, let us first investigate those that would come under the direct classification. In Genesis 5.1, one notices the statement 'Sepher Toledoth', and Wise notes that Sepher usually signifies a book, something written. The word Toledoth usually is translated as genealogies, but also signifies the birth of historical events. Thus Wise

concludes that there can be no doubt that the author of Genesis intended to inform us that he had before him written records of genealogies and events which he adopted or adapted. According to Exodus 17.14, we are informed that Moses began to write the "Book of the Wars of Jehovah". In Exodus 24.12 and 34.1 we are told that God wrote for Moses the inscriptions on the two tables of stone. In Exodus 24.4, we note that Moses wrote the Book of the Covenant. We note also that in Exodus 31.11 Moses was commanded "to read" this Torah publicly; that he wrote Deuteronomy and delivered it to the priests and all the elders of the people (Exodus 31.9-24); and that he wrote another Book of the Torah which he delivered to the Levites, the bearers of the ark of the covenant (verse 25).¹¹

In Exodus 31.19,21, we are further informed that Moses began to write the "Book of Jashar" and commanded the people to copy and commit to memory his last song. Wise then states: "These statements of fact cannot legitimately be explained away as metaphoric or symbolic language. They cannot be disposed of as interpolations, as they are not in contradiction with the known origin of Alphabetical writing and literature among the Semites of Asia or Africa."¹²

All these passages must be declared fraudulent if we were to bring the Pentateuch down to post-prophetical times. This, Wise holds, is entirely wrong because the whole book treats of the loftiest ideals of humanity and spirituality,

without any selfish motive, and without any contradiction to reason.

Wise takes cognizance of the fact that the word 'Torah' occurs frequently in the historical books: in the Prophets from Amos to Malachi, in Psalms, Proverbs and Job. He admits that in some cases it may not refer to the written Torah; nonetheless, he concludes that something real and authoritative must have always existed which was known as the Torah.¹³

When it appears with the word Sepher, we are informed that "Torah" is a written book. With Mitzvah or Chukkim or Mishpatim, we know it is a book in which also commandments, statutes and ordinances occur. He then writes:

If this written book qualified as the Torah of Jehovah, the Torah of Elohim and the Torah of Moses, we know that this term referred to a known book which contains also commandments, statutes and ordinances, which according to the records was always known and believed to be of God and written by Moses.

If in any special case the word Torah refers to the teaching of any prophet or psalmist, it must be proved, in every instance after we know generally it means the Torah of Moses.¹⁴

For Wise, the fact that no mention of "Torah" is made in Judges and Samuel makes no difference in validity of the Torah. He finds that the revelation on Sinai is mentioned in the Song of Deborah. He attaches the first and second parts of the third chapter of Kings to Samuel and finds the word Torah mentioned there explicitly (I Kings 2.4).

In Joshua, the word Torah is mentioned all too often to doubt its legitimacy. Though Psalms and Proverbs do not mention the word Torah often, they nonetheless testify to its existence and Wise concludes that the absence of the word in these two books is accidental. Wise thus concludes that these extra-Pentateuchal sources lend weight to his argument that there was a Torah, that it was written by Moses and that it was well known to the people.¹⁵

For Wise, the fact that only in the Torah can we find the origin of the fundamental institutions demonstrates the existence of the Torah prior to all the other books of the Bible. He cites the following as testimony to his conviction:

1. Division and origin of the nation in 13 tribes, the sons of Joseph as two tribes, each with its own Nassi or prince of the tribe...located in their exact districts to the very end of their national existence
2. The fundamental institution of the 70 Elders with all the ideas of the federal and representative form of government, which according to the unanimous testimony of the Bible, Josephus and the Talmud always existed in Israel
3. Continuous existence of the prophets from Moses to Nehemiah for one thousand years with precisely the same pretensions of being the messengers and mouthpieces of the same God and with the same religious principles and ethical doctrine
4. The Sameness of the polity with the same Levitical priests, upon the Bamoth or heights, as prescribed by Moses (Ex. 20.19,23) and in the national sanctuary (Nu 28) in Shiloh, Nob, Gideon, and Jerusalem from the days of Joshua nearly fifteen hundred years, without any intimation anywhere or of any one having introduction or changed the same - points undeniably to an authoritative Torah prior to Joshua

5. The ark of the Covenant containing the two tables of stone, the Testimony covered with the golden lid and the two cherubim was there and is noticed in the Biblical books at all times from Josh to Jeremiah; and yet outside of the Torah the origin of this historical monument, is noticed nowhere by statement or intimation.¹⁶

As for the indirect evidence of the authenticity of the Torah, Wise takes note of the following:

1. The laws and institutions on which the critics agree that they were adopted into the Pentateuch from the Egyptians, as is also the case with the Egyptian words and names in the book, and the fact that its author and the people to whom he spoke new more of Egypt than of Canaan.
2. There are in the Pentateuch a number of laws and narrations which could have been written only during the sojourn in Israel in the wilderness prior to taking possession of the land of Canaan; as the laws concerning the Year of Jubilee and the Year of Release (Leviticus 25). In no land and among no people in possession of the soil such laws of possession could be ordained with any prospect of success. They could be prospective only and ordained before the Israelites possessed the land of Canaan ... (Lev. 26.33-35,43).
3. Among other chapters of Leviticus and Number which refer especially to the sojourn in the wilderness, Lev. 17 contains the plainest evidence of having been written there and even in the beginning of that period, soon after the tabernacle had been erected which applies also to chapters 18-20 wherein the peculiarity of addressing the commandments to "esh" and "esh esh" recurs frequently.

...There are also a number, especially of Penal laws in the Pentateuch which if tested could have been intended for Israel's sojourn in the wilderness only. To this class might be taken the thirty-six cases in the Torah the commission of which to be punished by Kareth. Conveyed idea of cutting off from the tribe or from the main body. This was a severe punishment in the wilderness only....

4. Only the Pentateuch alludes to the fact that the Hebrews were descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The facts of Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the remaining years in the wilderness re-echoes from most of all the books.¹⁷

The final group of arguments that Wise presents defending the authenticity of the Pentateuch are those to which he refers as "e silentio". In the later books of the Bible, many Hebrew roots occur which are not found in the Pentateuch. Wise takes this as alluding to the fact that the Hebrew language developed considerably since the five Books of Moses were written. Because the history of the Hebrew language was unknown to the critics, they were unable to fix with certainty the time when the Pentateuch or any part of it was written. A further argument from the silent that Wise employs is the absence of any fixed doctrinal formula of the immortality of the soul or the resurrection of the body which are limited to future reward and punishment. This he accepts as proof positive that the Pentateuch is an ancient document. A final argument from silence utilized by Wise is that the three middle books of the Pentateuch were not edited in the time of the Kings of Israel or Judah. These books are democratic-theocratic in all their provisions and narrations. Such a code could not have been written or edited in any country governed by a king.¹⁸

In rethinking Wise's attitude toward the Pentateuch, we may wonder: If Wise accepts the Elohist document as being a source utilized by Moses, why then does Wise not yield to the theory of the fragmentist who hold that the Torah is composed of a number of fragments from various authors? Wise's answer to this query is: (1) because no evidence exists to

prove that there ever were such fragments, but there is evidence of the origin and existence of the Mosaic documents; (2) because the whole Torah is of one spirit in principle, doctrine, precept, and law, which shows that it must have come from one author and not many; and (3) if such fragments had existed the Biblical records would have taken notice of them, which is not the case, while the Mosaic records are specifically mentioned.¹⁹ If one were to accept the theory of the fragmentist, then it would be possible to split the Pentateuch into at least twenty-five slices, each by a different author. This in itself proves the fallacy of that method. This method, like all others seeking to prove that the Torah was not of Moses and the historical books were re-edited, started originally from the Jahvist-Elohism hypothesis. Wise feels that having refuted this hypothesis, all the rest of them along this line fall with it.

Wise thus feels that he has successfully refuted the critics and has upheld the validity of the Torah as having come from Moses. One may then sum up his reasons for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch thus: (1) the style in which it was written points unmistakably to the time of Moses; (2) whereas none of the ancient writers asserted that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, there are traces of the Pentateuch in all the canonical and apocryphal books; (3) many of the laws contained in the Pentateuch were directed against Egyptian superstitions, while others were accommodated

to the conceptions of a people just coming from Egypt who were imbued with Egyptians notions; and (4) the author of the Pentateuch manifested an intimate acquaintance with the geography, history and moral and physical state of Canaan and the adjacent countries (for example: "as a garden of the Lord, as the land of Egypt when thou comest towards Zoar" - Genesis 13.10; "And Hebron was built seven years before Zoar of Egypt" - Nu 13.22).²⁰

Thus we have examined the record of the attitude of Isaac Mayer Wise toward Biblical Historical Criticism. His major conclusions include the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, a complete rejection of the teachings of the schools of higher criticism, a rejection of the miracles of the Bible per se in favor of a rationalistic approach, and the utilizing of the Elohist source as an older document in his writing.

CHAPTER V

ALLOCATION OF WISE

In the preceding chapters, we have seen the position of Isaac Mayer Wise toward the school of Biblical-Historical criticism, and we have delved into his own attitude toward the Pentateuch. In this final chapter, we shall attempt to pinpoint Wise as to his stand on some of the facets of Bible study.

For the most part, Wise was a traditionalist in his outlook on the Bible. Although he rationalized away the miracles of the Bible in his History of the Israelitish Nation, he nonetheless held out strongly for the Mosaic authorship of the Bible and the integrity of the present text. He admits that it is possible that some changes may have occurred in the text over the centuries because it was handed down through human beings. However, substantially, the text as we now have it is the text that Moses wrote and gave to the children of Israel.

According to Wise, Moses used one source in writing the Pentateuch - the Elohist document. This Wise believes to be older than Moses, but also to be the equivalent of the Jahvist. Wise further believes that Moses may have referred to various chronological records and to various tribal traditions in order to insure the accuracy of his text. The Pentateuch as a whole, in the opinion of Wise, was spoken to Moses by God. He looked upon it as a sacred work that was not to be tampered with in the fashion of the higher critics.

One could say with much justification that Wise rejected the teachings of the school of higher criticism in its entirety. Throughout the years of his writings, he did not have one kind word to say concerning the critics. In his opinion, they were dishonest, misleading, and of no worth whatsoever. Their systems were built on air and collapsed with the first wind. At every opportunity, he attacked the the higher critics with much vehement dislike, referring to them as destroyers of religion and propounders of absurd theories.

As can be discerned from his available writings, Wise knew the teachings of the school of higher criticism only superficially. His chief attack on the system was to say that at a glance one can notice that they have no worth. However, at no point in his writings, can one find a detailed rebuttal of the various theories propounded by the higher critics.

He was cognizant of the theory that Deuteronomy was discovered during the reign of Josiah, but he rejected it as baseless. To prove his point, he cites various phrases and references which could have been written by Moses only. He explains the repetitions that occur in Deuteronomy by noting that wherever a supposed repetition does occur, it adds to an existing law.

Wise rejects completely the Ezraic authorship of the Pentateuch. He cites the high antiquity of the various

passages in the Pentateuch and states that it is absurd to maintain as do the radical critics that this legislation originated with Ezra. In his writings he gave a number of proofs which he believes show positively that Ezra could not have been the author of the Pentateuch and that Moses was its author just as tradition has informed us.

The writings of Wise in the "Israelite" cover a period of approximately fifty years. From the very beginning of his writings to the end, one can notice no change in the opinion of Wise regarding the higher critics. Throughout, he was intolerant of them and ascribed little, if any, worth to their teachings.

If Wise were alive today, his outlook on the Bible might well be classified as neo-Orthodox. The fact that he rationalized the Biblical miracles prevents his being placed in the Orthodox classification.

He accepted the Biblical text as he had it before him and was unwilling to make any changes in it whatsoever. Those who saw fit to change the text encouraged his wrath.

In summation, Wise was a traditionalist in his outlook on the Biblical writings. At all times he was ready to fight for their authenticity in the face of all odds.

Letter from Rabbi Harry H. Mayer depicting Wise's attitude toward those who accept higher criticism.

December 29, 1954

Dear William Schwartz:

The facts as stated in your letter to me, which I just received in which you asked me for information concerning the invitation extended to Professor Louis Ginzberg to come to this country and teach at the Hebrew Union College are in the main correct but need to be amplified and explained in order to be useful for an understanding of Dr. Wise's attitude with regard to the events connected with the entire incident.

A short time after Ginzberg was given his degree as Doctor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, he wrote to me that he would like to come to America if an academic position at an American University could be found for him. We had been fellow students together at Strasbourg under Noeldecke and Budde.

I then wrote to a friend of mine who was on the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College and recommended Ginzberg for the post left vacant by the resignation of Max Margolis. As a result of my recommendation and with the approval of the Board, Isaac M. Wise invited Ginzberg to come to this country and teach at the College, but when Ginzberg reached New York, he received word from Wise that the action of the Board extending the call had been cancelled. So far as I know Dr. Wise said nothing in this letter of revocation which had any bearing on the cause of the Board's reconsideration and withdrawal of their call to Ginzberg.

I have, however, been told by my friend, now deceased, who was on the Board, that Wise had heard a rumor that Ginzberg accepted Higher Criticism of the Bible, a rumor which I can state was entirely false, since, on the contrary, Ginzberg during the time that I knew him at Strasbourg and subsequently throughout his life, utterly rejected Higher Criticism.

The date of Prof. Ginzberg's arrival in America on his way to Cincinnati was late Spring or early Summer of the year 1899 or 1900.

You are at liberty to use this foregoing account as you may see fit.

With all good wishes and my congratulations to you on the interesting and needed treatment of the subject of your thesis.

Sincerely yours,

Signed: (Rabbi) Harry H. Mayer

CHAPTER I

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14. Samuel Sandmel. Lecture notes.
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10. Ibid., Sept. 8, 1854. p. 67.
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21. Ibid., Jan. 9, 1880. pp. 4-5.
22. Ibid., Oct. 29, 1880. p. 140.

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