

# How the Torah of the Jews Became Corrupted During The History of Banī Isrāʼīl: The Captivity in Babylon and the Two Torahs: Part 4



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The scholar of al-Andalūs, **Ibn Ḥazm** (d. 456H) (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) describes how the Torah became corrupted in his work *al-Faṣl Fil-Milal wal-Niḥal*. In the first three parts in this series based upon this work, we covered **the 500 year period** from the time the Torah was revealed to Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) until the Banī Isrāʼīl became united under their own kingdom. This was a period that witnessed **seven wholesale apostacies**, with disbelief, idol-worship, and following the ways of the nations. Then after the era of Dawūd and Sulaymān (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام), the Banī Isrāʼīl split into

two kingdoms due to differences that arose between them. As for the Kingdom of Judah and Benjamin, in a **400 year period**, all but 5 of 20 of their kings fell into disbelief, apostacy and idol-worship before their kingdom was sacked and they were taken captive to Babylon.<sup>1</sup> Their small kingdom was also raided a number of times prior to this by the Assyrians a few times and then by the Egyptians and whatever was in their temple was taken. As for the Kingdom of Israel (Samāria)—that of the remaining ten tribes—then they lost faith altogether and not a single one of their rulers was upon Tawḥīd **over a 271 year period**. Rather, they—rulers and subjects—proclaimed idolatry and did not abide by the law because they did not possess it. They were eventually taken captive by the ruler of Mosul.

As for the prophets that were sent to the Banī Isrā'īl in this period to call Banī Isrā'īl back to Tawḥīd, piety and observance, they were ignored, and some feared for themselves and either fled or were killed.

This raises the obvious question as to how can revelation have remained intact among a nation with a history such as this. Somewhere within in this period of wholesale apostacy, idolatry, sinfulness and utter neglect of the religion, the Torah of Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) was lost. We know from the Qur'ān that Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) was

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<sup>1</sup> There were three types of Judaeans after this, a) Those who went to Babylon, b) those who went to Egypt, and c) those who remained in Judea, as not all of them were taken captive.

given tablets (7:154, *alwāḥ*) and also had scrolls (87:19, *ṣuḥuf*). And we find that beyond a certain point in time in the authorship of their scripture, the mention of these tablets and scrolls is no longer found, and that is because they were lost.

In this fourth part of the series we discuss the circumstances in which the “Torah” came about, that which is in the hands of the Jews today. It was written by Ezra (d. 440 BC) and others during and after the Babylonian captivity in the 6th and 5th centuries BC and evolved over the next couple of centuries. The political and social circumstances are highlighted in this article so as to provide a context for the environment in which the new Torah came about.



So we are now in the setting of Assyria and Babylon, the empires of the day, and the Banī Isrā'īl (of both kingdoms) spent periods of time in exile after a history of renegeing on Islām, Tawḥīd, the law, wallowing in *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (polytheism) and being punished by the sacking of their kingdoms and having been taken captive. As for the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes (Northern, or Samaria), then they were sacked much earlier—between 740 and 720 BC—and dispersed to various places in the Assyrian empire, their rule only lasting for 271 years. As for the Kingdom of Judah, then

they were sacked in 586 BC after a 400 year rule, and were taken to Babylon. Whilst in exile, the two parties, Judeans and Samaritans, **developed a longing to return back to the land they inhabited**. They also picked up many influences in this **melting pot of civilisation** they found themselves in. They mixed with the Babylonians, married into them, acquired their culture, and even worshipped their gods, and picked up new ideas that they never had before.

Also, they would have come across the histories and stories circulating among the nations containing details of Nūḥ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) and the flood for example and other affairs, which would have found their way into the Torah they wrote. Since we do not have **the original tablets and scrolls** and there is no **connected chain of upright, trustworthy narrators** between Mūsā and those who became known as “Jews” or “Samaritans” a thousand years later, then we do not know how much has been added of details, stories and embellishments to what are definitely some remnants of the original Torah in its teachings and laws.

Likewise, they picked up **numerology, astrology and magic** as well as the **tajsīm** and **tashbīh** of the polytheists and idolators who would represent their gods as men, with human features and qualities.<sup>2</sup> Upon

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<sup>2</sup> During this time of exile and return, there were some Prophets raised among them, such as Daniyāl and Ḥazaqyāl who would call them to Allāh and to abandon the ways and customs of the nations so

analysis, these influences are manifest in the altered Torah in the hands of the Jews today, and in the “Oral Law” whose existence—from the time of Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ)—they began to claim thereafter, and which later became known as the Talmūd. Likewise, they learned from this higher civilisation how to organise and manage society, and so their leaders saw how—to their own benefit—they could organise and manage the Jews and Israelites beneath them, as other nations managed their people.

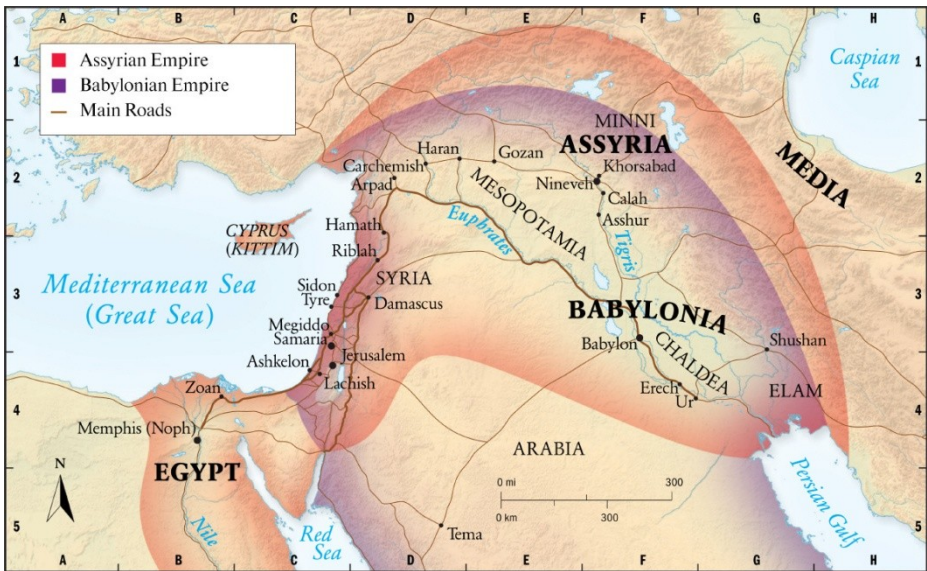
One can now start to envisage the emergence of the reconstructed Torah with these types of influences and appreciate the nature of much of its content, as well as its horrendous portrayal of many of the Prophets and Messengers.<sup>3</sup> We will discover the crafting of a new religion based not on Islām and Tawḥīd and the obligation of taking this to the idolatrous nations with da‘wah and jihād—which is what Mūsā, Hārūn and Joshua (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ) were commanded with and performed

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as not to be drawn towards their shirk (idolatry). Ḥazaqyāl had already prophesied the fall of Jerusalem to them and then he witnessed this prophecy taking place and himself spent time in exile.

<sup>3</sup> These portrayals came through the hands and poisoned pens of disbelievers and apostates and not of people of Islām (submission), Īmān (faith) and Tawḥīd (monotheism). It is clear that there were many hands involved in the evolution of what became known as the Torah from the 6th to the 3rd century BC. This is not far-fetched when you consider the history of Banī Isrā'īl that we have discussed in previous parts in this series. Despite the attempts of individuals among them to reform their condition, the affair of Banī Isrā'īl was already lost and hence, the sending of 'Īsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) to guide them.

dutifully—but rather, based on a mixture of longing for a land, tribalism, and chosenness, with some remnants of monotheism, though even that is polluted. Thus, Allāh, the Lord of Ibrahīm, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb and his twelve sons (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ) is turned into more of a fiery, war-loving tribal god, depicted with human qualities, for a chosen people to whom He allegedly promised a land whose borders happened to coincide with the borders of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires in which they resided.



The Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

The doctrine asserts that if they keep the law, they are promised this land, a “Geater Israel”—one much greater and expansive than the tiny one in which they were unable to remain upon Tawhīd and uprightnes, not even for a straight fifty years. Likewise, that they will acquire domination over the nations should they

keep the law, because Allāh will send them a Messiah who will lead them. As such, **ethnicity, a promised land and a law** were all tied together in this new doctrine.

Given this, we cannot be completely sure of the accuracy and of the geographical settings that have come to us regarding the stories of Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Ishāq, Ya'qūb and the Aṣḃāt, the twelve sons (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ), and likewise of Mūsā and Hārūn (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَامُ) who were in Paran (Fārān, mountains of Makkah) at some point. The alleged journey of Ibrāhīm (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) seems very conveniently to match the borders of the Promised Land, “Greater Israel” and mention of his residence in Makkah building the Ka'bah with his first son, Ismā'īl is conveniently concealed. Likewise, our sources establish that Mūsā and the Banī Isrā'īl would perform Hajj. Nothing of the sort appears in the Torah of the Jews. Thus, much information has been omitted and possibly altered as well. This is matter of investigation and is outside the scope of this series.

This new doctrine came at the hand of the **Judeans**, the “Jews” and not Israelites (who are the other ten tribes) of the Northern Kingdom of Samaria. It is interesting to note how the Jewish Encyclopedia explains that the Judeans (who became the “Jews”) had aforesaid intermingled and intermarried, essentially losing their “Israelite” lineage and stood apart from the ten tribes of the other kingdom. It states:

“The tribe of Judah is said to have been descended from the patriarch Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah (Gen. xxix. 35). In the Book of Numbers it is represented as sharing with the other tribes, without distinctive fortunes, the experiences of the Exodus and of the sojourn in the wilderness. The clans which then composed the tribe are said to have been the Shelanites, Perizzites, Zerahites, Hezronites, and Hamulites (Num. xxvi. 19-22)... After the settlement in Canaan, Judah seems to have stood apart from the other tribes... when Judah entered Palestine it first gained a foothold at Adullam and Timnah (Gen. xxxviii. 1, 12)... An alliance was soon made with the clans of the Perizzites and Zerahites, who had the palm-tree for their totem, and were therefore said to be children of Tamar (Gen. xxxviii. 13-30). Later the Kenizzite clans of Caleb and Othniel were amalgamated with the tribe. These clans were, perhaps, of Edomitish origin, since Kenaz is counted among the descendants of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 11). These two clans occupied the region around Hebron, Carmel, and Kirjath-sepher, or Debir. Gradually the Jerahmeelites were also incorporated in the tribe of Judah. Their habitat appears to have been in the Negeb (I Sam. xxvii. 10), and as Jerahmeel is said to be Caleb’s brother, perhaps they also were of Edomitish origin. A branch of the Kenites from the Sinaitic peninsula added another element to Judah’s complex character. **This**



large admixture of foreign blood in the tribe of Judah is probably the reason why the Judahites were so loosely connected with the other tribes of Israel. A consciousness existed on both sides that Judah stood apart in origin and in sentiment.”<sup>4</sup> Under the entry for “Tribes, the Twelve”, the Encyclopedia states, “Judah in all likelihood being a non-Israelitish mixed tribe”.<sup>5</sup>

It was these “Judeans” who after the Kingdoms of David and Sulaymān (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَامُ), during their captivity in Babylon and the period thereafter, constructed the new Torah. However, the Samaritans, the other ten tribes, rejected this and they claimed to have their own Torah. It is here that we see the first major ideological split and the appearance of two distinct religious groups: The “**Jews**”, the authors of the chosen people and promised land doctrine and the “**Samaritans**”. Both of these sects claimed to have the authentic Torah.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Jewish Encyclopedia, 1912 (New York: Funk and Wagnell), 7/330.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 12/253

<sup>6</sup> As for the Samaritans, then they accepted only the first five books (Pentateuch) and the Book of Joshua and they did not really affirm any prophets after them. They held Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) was the seal of the Messengers. They were Jahmites, deniers of the attributes. They also believed that what is present day Nablus in Palestine was the true sacred, holy place and the qiblah for worship. They believed in a Messiah who would come and fight against the followers of Ezra (who compiled the other Torah). As for the followers of Ezra and the other Torah, from them came the Pharisees and they are the ones who claimed an “Oral Law” and who developed the Talmūd and who gave rise to what became known as **Rabbinical Judaism**. Refer to *al-Talmūd*

As for **the Torah of the Jews**, then Ibn Ḥazm writes:

“Ezra’s writing of the Torah only took place more than 70 years after the destruction of Bayt al-Madis, and their books indicate that Ezra did not write it and edit it for them except 40 years after their return the House [Jerusalem], after the 70 years they had been in exile. [In this era], they had no Prophet, no dome, no ark, and about the manārah, it is differed about, whether they still had it or not. So in this is sufficiency for the one who has any intellect that it is an altered, fabricated, forged book and a manufactured religion opposed to the religion which they affirm that Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) had brought to them. And Shayṭān did not desire anything more than this from them, and nor to put them into any misguidance more than this, and we seek refuge in Allāh from desertion.”<sup>7</sup>

As for **the Torah of the Samaritans**, Ibn Ḥazm writes:

“In the hands of the Samaritans is a Torah other than the Torah of all the Jews. They claim it is revealed and they are definite that the one in the hands of the Jews is distorted (muḥarrafah), altered (mubaddalah). Yet all the Jews say that the one in the hands of the Samaritans is distorted and altered. The Torah of the Samaritans has not reached us because to them it is not lawful for

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*wa Mawqifuhu min al-Ilāhiyyāt* of Dr. Abū Bakr Muḥammad Thānī, 1433H (Madīnah: al-Jāmi‘ah al-Islāmiyyah) 1/164 onwards.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to *Tawrāt al-Yahūd wal-Imām ibn Ḥazm al-Andalūsī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam) p. 139.

them to leave Palestine and Jordan at all. Thus, the affair of those [Samaritans] who were transferred back from Āmid and the peninsula to the land [inhabited by] the Israelites, they are the ones who reject the Torah [of the Jews]. They have a different Torah besides this one belonging to the Jews. They do not believe in a Prophet after Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ), and they do not speak of the excellence of Bayt al-Maqdis, nor do they recognise it. They say that the sacred city is Nāblus (used to be called Shakīm). Thus, the affair of the Torah of those [the Samaritans] is weaker than the Torah of these ones [the Jews] because they do not refer back to any Prophet with respect to it, and nor were they present in the days of the state of Banī Isrā'īl. Rather, their leaders devised it for them asd well.”<sup>8</sup>

What Ibn Ḥazm is saying here is that the alleged Torah of the Samaritans is in a much weaker position as they reject any prophet after Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ), which means there were no more prophets among them.<sup>9</sup> Also, they were not present in the Kingdom of Judah, which was supposed to hold the Torah, and their kingdom was sacked much earlier in 720 BC, compared to that of the kingdom of Judah, which was sacked in 586BC. Thus, the Torah with them was also manufactured by their leaders for them, as they had nothing concrete to base

<sup>8</sup> Refer to *Tawrāt al-Yahūd*, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritans speak ill of Dāwūd and Sulaymān (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَامُ), declaring them disbelievers, claiming that they altered the religion.

it upon—[meaning, the actual Torah of Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) or confirmation of guidance and teachings by a prophet]—save memories and observances, mixed with whatever influences would have come upon them.



### Summary

So what we should take from this article is that the Torah of the Jews and the Torah of the Samaritans are reconstructions and that their contents were written both during the exile period and after it. They contain accounts of the history of the Banī Isrā'īl and within these accounts are remnants of the Torah of Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), alongside other influences. In putting these Torahs together, there would have been reliance upon traditions passed down, knowledge of observances practiced, as well as parchments and scraps, and books that were written earlier. However, there was no Torah of Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), because if it existed in that period and Ezra or the Samaritans had it, then we would have known of it and it would have been explicitly mentioned. The reality is that it was lost a long time before, before the era of Sulaymān (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), and as thus, what we see is really a **reconstruction**—not a revival—of Mosaic religion, a reconstruction that was influenced by the political, religious and social settings of the time.

In the Torah of the Jews, a new doctrine appears, one of tribalism, chosenness and a promised land. “Judaism” appeared and developed in the 5th century BC after the Persians, under Kūrash (Cyrus) conquered Babylon and permitted the Judeans to return to Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Torah and the other books of the Old Testament are simply **Judean-centrism** and not revelation from Allāh, even if they contain some remnants of the Torah and details of some of His Prophets. As the Encyclopedia Britannica (1911) states: “Written by an Oriental people and clothed in Oriental address, the Old Testament does not contain objective records, but **subjective history written and incorporated for specific purposes.**”<sup>11</sup>

In short, “In light of these influences and merging of culture and civilisation, the Judaic religion came into being and grew. Hence, it should not be surprising that

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<sup>10</sup> When Kūrash (Cyrus), King of Persia, conquered Babylon in 537 BC, he permitted them to return to Jerusalem and appointed them a leader. He was very sympathetic towards them and that is why he is praised by them very highly. In fact, Cyrus is spoken of in such glowing terms that you will not find for other Prophets in the Old Testament. The reason he is praised is not because he was upon Tawhīd—as it is known that he would attend the rituals and observances of various religions—but because the Jews saw that in him was a fulfillment of God’s promise to them of the land which He had promised to Ibrāhīm (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) in their Judeao-centric world view which appeared in the Torah they later wrote. It should be noted that not all the Judeans returned back to their former land of inhabitation. Many of them had become accustomed and attached to Babylonian life. So many of them refused to go back and remained in Babylon.

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia Brittanica, 1911 (New York) 15/372.

it contains the idolatry of the day that was current in the era of exile in Babylon. This is because those who were affected by the Babylonian culture, they are the very ones who wrote what they call the Torah and the Books, and likewise what they call the Books of the Prophets thereafter. Under these circumstances arose the idea of committing to writing the oral traditions, which is the Talmūd, even if it did not appear in this form except after centuries.”<sup>12</sup>

We have a reconstructed religion around a rewritten Torah, providing the basis for committing an alleged additional “oral law” into writing. To these people ʿĪsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) was sent a few centuries later to confirm the Torah, teach the Injīl and give them tidings of a prophet to come who will bring all truth and guidance.

In the parts to follow in the series we will speak about the Jews and the Torah during the period that they were ruled over by the Greek and the Roman empires, reaching the time of ʿĪsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ).

Abu ʿIyaad

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to *al-Talmūd wa Mawqifuhu min al-Ilāhiyyāt* (Madīnah: al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmiyyah) 1/107-108.

### **A Note Regarding Ezra**

As for Ezra—in one of the views of the mufassirīn—he is the 'Uzayr mentioned in the Qur'ān (9:30), about whom a faction of the Jews said that he is the “son of Allāh”. He is glorified by them because in their view he recovered the Torah for them, and essentially saved their religion as they see it. Similar accounts are found in the tafsīr of the Qur'ān for the verse in question. Thus, if we accept, on the basis of this view, that Ezra indeed recovered the Torah, then Ezra's Torah is also lost, similar to how that of Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) was lost. This does not change what has been mentioned above. Since between Ezra and 'Īsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) are over 400 years and in that period, there is more history to cover about the distortion, alteration and loss of the Torah. Specifically, how the period of Greek rule also led to kufr and shirk (disbelief and idolatry) among the Jews as well as burning and destruction of their books and writings.