

“There are countless forms of narrative in the world ... in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies ... Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.”

Roland Barthes (1966)

# Books Without Authors

## *Who Wrote —And Read— The First Novels?*

Joseph Cross

Adjunct professor, UNCA Dept. of Classics

Ph.D. candidate, University of Chicago  
*Egyptology & Biblical Studies*

**UNESOME  
DOVE**  
*A Novel*



**HARRY  
MURTRY**  
*TERMS OF ENDEARMENT*



**LOOK HOMEWARD,  
ANGEL**  
—  
**THOMAS WOLFE**



LADY  
CHATTERLEY'S  
LOVER  
BY  
D.H. LAWRENCE  
  
IN ITS ORIGINAL UNEXPURGATED EDITION  
  
INTRODUCTION BY MARK SHORER  
PREFACE BY ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

SPUTNIK  
SWEETHEART  
  
"Searingly, indelibly  
memorable."  
—The Baltimore Sun  
  
HARUKI  
MURAKAMI

**SYLVIA PLATH**  
  
**THE  
BELL  
JAR**  
  
P.S.  
HEARST  
INTERVIEW  
AUDIO

WILLIAM FAUL  
  
**ABSALON  
ABSALON**

**ULYSSES**  
  
BY  
JAMES JOYCE

THOMAS PYNCHON  
*Gravity's Rainbow*

**BELOVED**  
A NOVEL  
  
TONI  
MORRISON

A NOVEL BY **Saul Bellow**  
  
The  
**Adventures**  
of  
**Augie March**

WINNER OF THE  
NEBULA AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL  
  
**RED  
MARS**  
  
"A STAGGERING BOOK,  
THE BEST NOVEL ON  
THE COLONIZATION OF  
MARS THAT HAS EVER  
BEEN WRITTEN.  
IT SHOULD BE REQUIRED  
READING FOR THE COLONISTS  
OF THE NEXT CENTURY."  
—Arthur C. Clarke  
  
**KIM STANLEY  
ROBINSON**  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BLUE MARS

DOVER · THRIFT  
  
*Jane A  
EMM*

French roman  
German Roman  
Italian romanzo  
(English romance)

Spanish novela  
English novel

Derived from Latin *romanice*  
(**linguistic**: “what people ruled  
by the Roman Empire speak”)

Derived from Italian *novella*  
(**literary**: “a work of literature  
that is a short, new thing”)

# *The first novels were novellas*

## **Hypothesis:**

The first novellas are works that we would recognize as “novelistic” and as the ultimate ancestor of the novel.

# *The first novels were novellas*

## **Hypothesis:**

The first novellas are works that we would recognize as “novelistic” and as the ultimate ancestor of the novel.

They were written in the Southeastern Mediterranean starting in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and were popular through the heyday of the Roman Empire.

# Why “*novella*” and not “*novel*”?

- Distinct from the Graeco-Roman novel  
(mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE)
- Shorter than novels (both Greek and modern)  
but longer than short stories
- Preserved by themselves (not in story collections)

# *Today's talk*

1. Background, facts, and overview
2. Discovering the novellas
3. Imagining ourselves as readers of two novellas, with short readings from them

**Why we can talk about “the  
Egyptian and Judean novella”**



# *Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”*

- Same **time period** (Persian and Greek periods)

## The “Ages” of the Near East:

Bronze Age (3300 – 1200 BCE)

**Iron Age (1200 – 550 BCE)**

Persian Empire (550 – 330 BCE)

Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)

Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

### Judea:

- **Two kingdoms:**

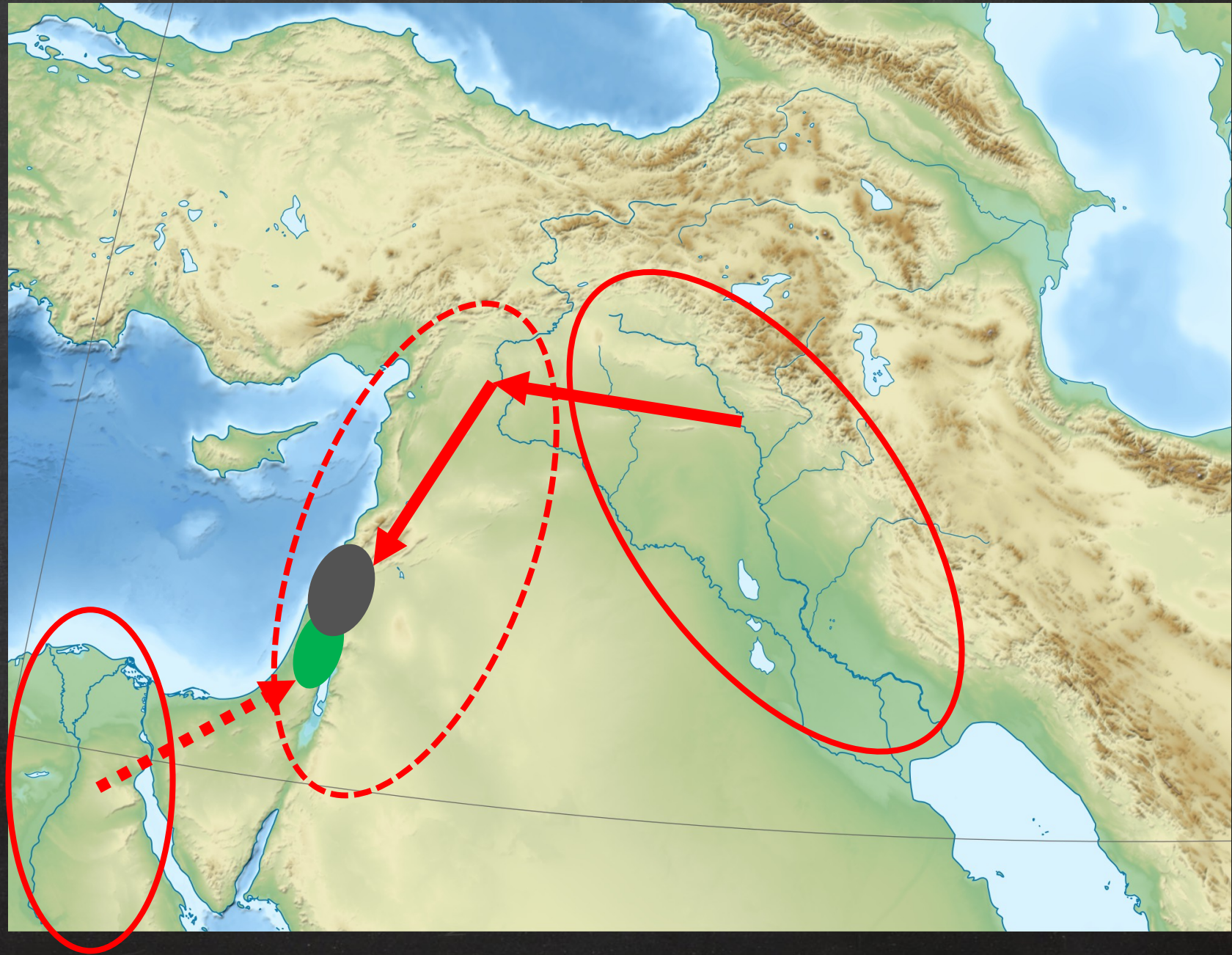
- Israel, until 710

- Judah, until 586

- **Constant threat from Mesopotamian empires**

### Egypt:

- **Weakening national power**



## The "Ages" of the Near East:

Bronze Age (3300 – 1200 BCE)

Iron Age (1200 – 550 BCE)

**Persian Empire (550 – 330 BCE)**

Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)

Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

## Judea:

- A province in the empire (Yehud)

## Egypt

- A province in the empire



## The “Ages” of the Near East:

Bronze Age (3300 – 1200 BCE)

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Persian Empire (550 – 330 BCE)

**Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)**

Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)

### Judea:

- Controlled by Ptolemaic then Seleucid Empires
- Period of national independence before Roman era (Hasmonean Kingdom)

### Egypt:

- Ptolemaic Empire



## The “Ages” of the Near East:

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Hellenistic Age (330 – 31 BCE)

**Roman Age (31 BCE – 337 CE)**

### Judea:

- Roman province

### Egypt:

- Roman province



# The era of Egyptian novellas (green)

Old Kingdom	Mid to late 3 <sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE
Middle Kingdom	Late 3 <sup>rd</sup> to mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE
New Kingdom	1550 to 1069 BCE
Kushite Period	744 to 656 BCE
Saite Period	664 to 525 BCE
Persian Empire	525 to 404, 343 to 332 BCE
Ptolemaic Empire	332 to 30 BCE
Roman Empire	30 BCE onward...

\*

\* Egyptians living in an Egyptian-controlled state

# The era of Judean novellas (green)

## Judeans in Palestine

Persian Empire 539-333 BCE  
Hellenistic Empires 333-164 BCE  
Hasmonean Kingdom\* 164-63 BCE  
Roman Empire 63 BCE – 70CE

## Judeans in Egypt

Persian Empire starting in ca. 550 BCE  
Ptolemaic Empire 332 to 30 BCE  
Roman Empire 30 BCE onward...

\*Judeans living in a Judean-controlled state

# *Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”*

- Same **time period** (Persian and Greek periods)



# *Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”*

- Same **time period** (Persian and Greek periods)
- Same **region** (Southeastern Mediterranean)

*Where novellas were found*

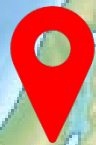
**Judean novellas**

**Egyptian novellas**

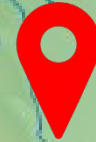
**Alexandria**



**Jerusalem  
& Qumran**



**Babylon (?)**



**Memphis**



**Fayyum**



**Thebes (?)**



# *Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”*

- Same **time period** (Persian and Greek periods)
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- Same **political context** (control by foreign empire)

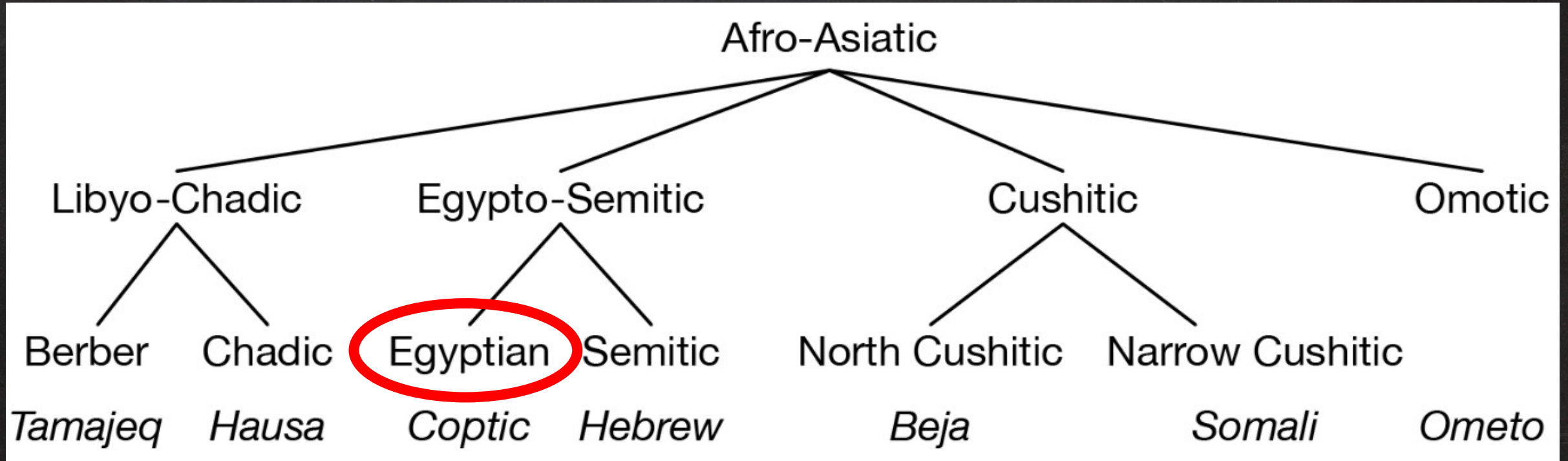
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- Same **language-type** (vernacular, once-national lang.)

# The language of Egyptian novellas

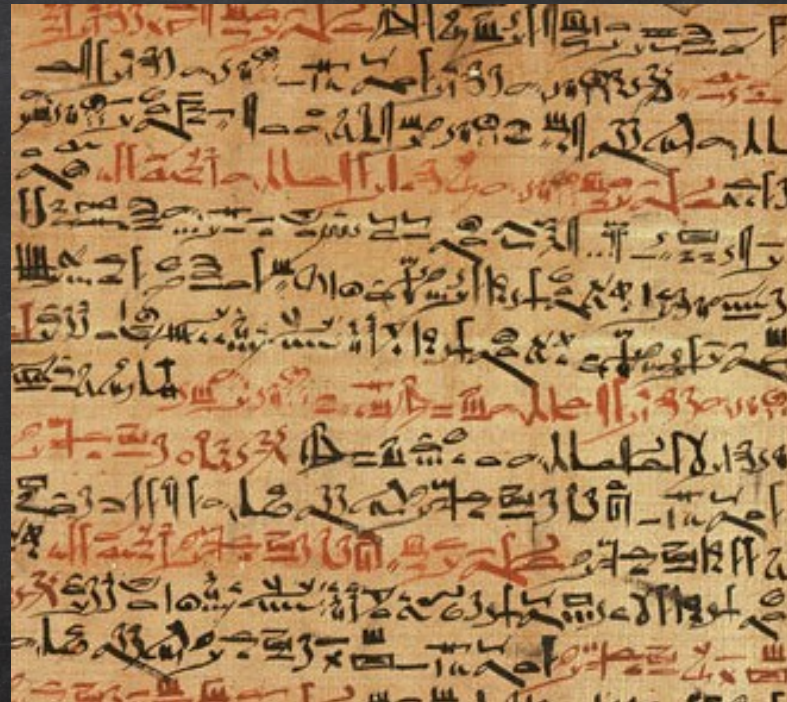


# The language of Egyptian novellas



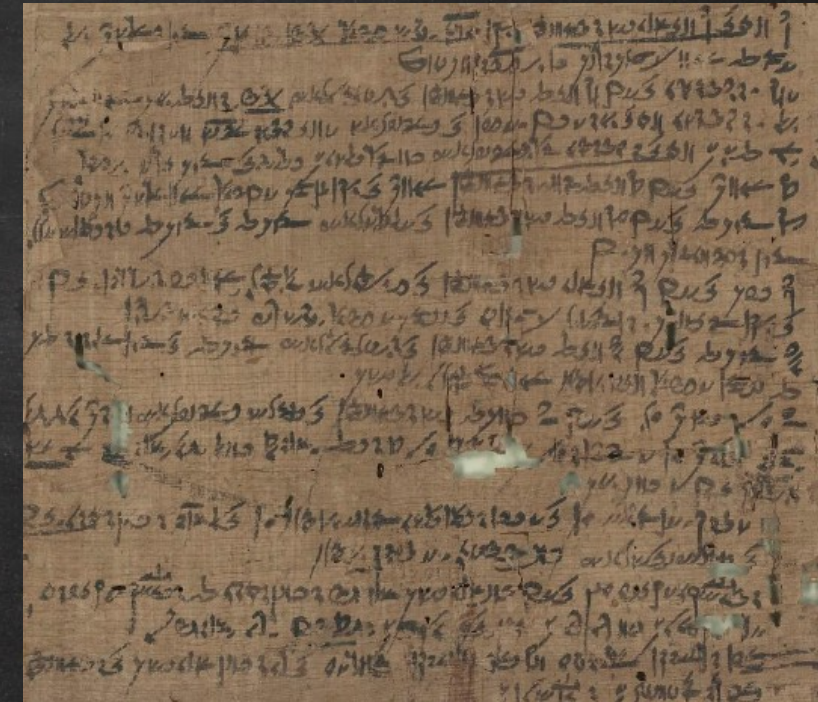
Hieroglyphs

Developed before Old Kingdom



Hieratic

Developed in Old Kingdom

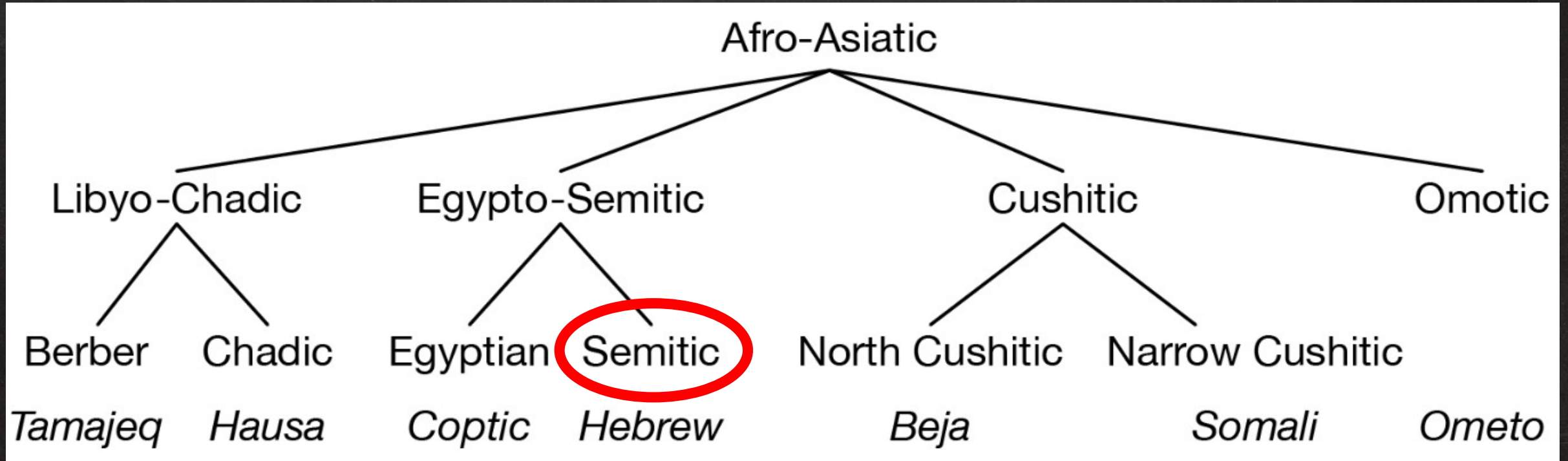


Demotic ✓

Developed in Persian Period



# The language of Judean novellas



# *The language of Judean novellas*

- **Hebrew** (Ruth, Jonah, Esther)

The traditional language of Judeans

- **Aramaic** (Tobit, other fragments)

A spoken language of Judeans, Persian period onwards

- **Greek (!)** (Judith)

A spoken language of Judeans, Hellenistic period onwards

## *Putting them side by side...*

- Egyptian novellas **continued to be written and read** in the Roman Period (as late as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE).
- Judean novellas **continued to be read only** in the Roman Period, but new novellas were much more influenced by Greek literature and are better called novels.

# *Putting them side by side...*

- Egyptian novellas were always written and copied in the Egyptian language (Demotic)
- Judean novellas were gradually translated into Greek and written in Greek as well

# *Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”*

- Same **time period** (Persian and Greek periods)
- Same **region** (Southeastern Mediterranean)
- Same **political context** (control by foreign empire)
- Same **social context** (increasing influence of Greek culture)
- Same **language-type** (vernacular, once-national lang.)
- Same **genre** (independent, short prose fiction)

# *Why we can talk about “the Egyptian and Judean novella”*

- Is there any cross-influence?

***How are the novellas preserved?***

Handwritten text in Arabic script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and covers most of the page area.

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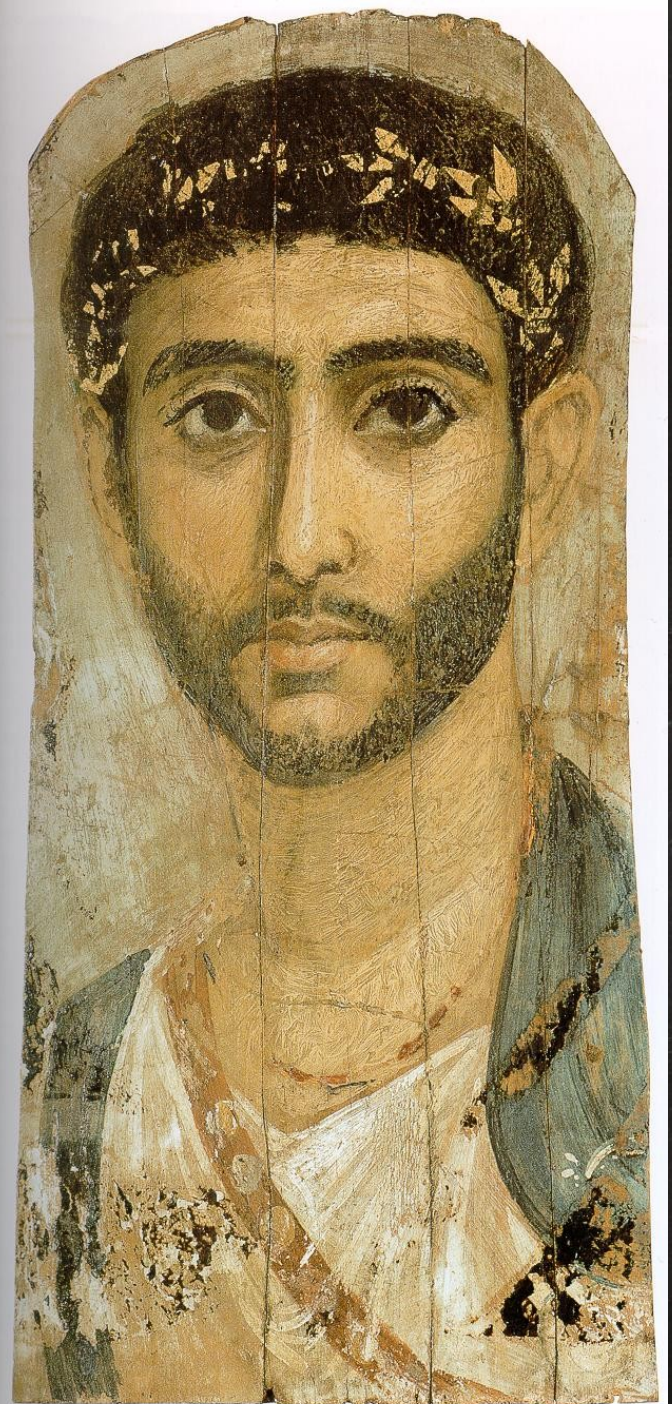




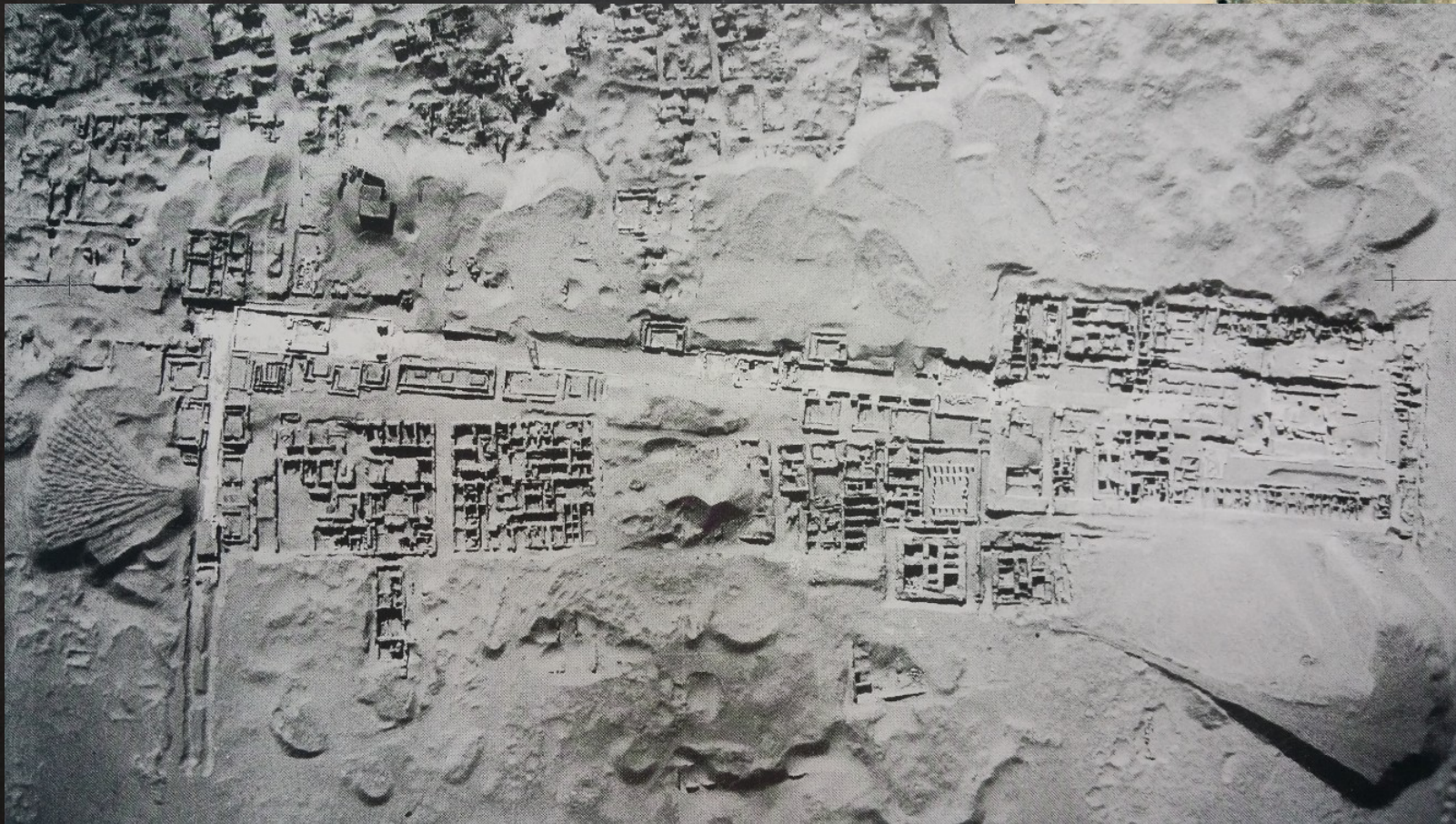


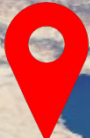
Fayyum





# Tebtunis





**Dead Sea Scrolls**

**Israel**



Sea of Galilee

Jordan River

Jordan

Site of discovery

Jerusalem

Israel

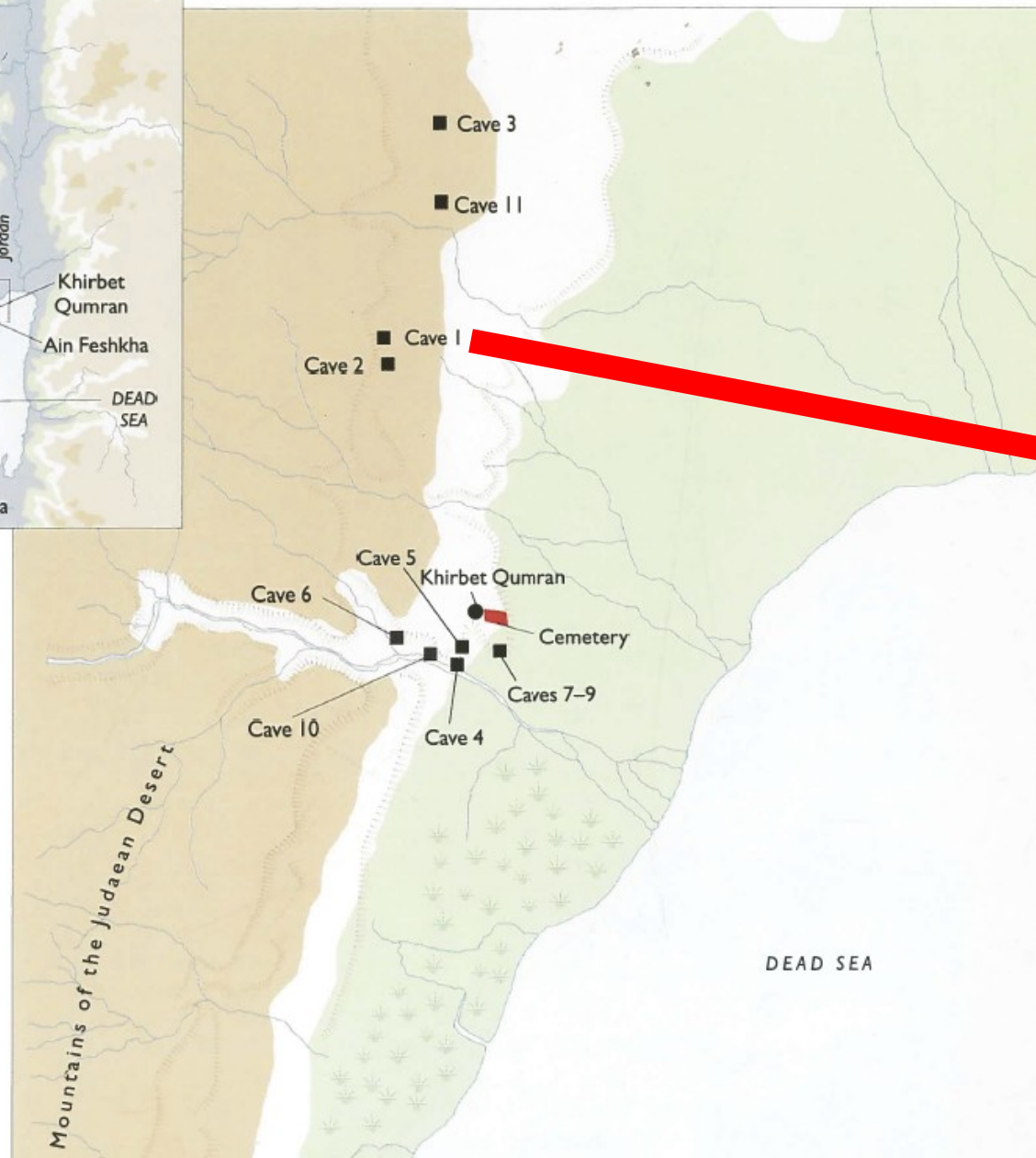
# The Dead Sea Scrolls

Discovered in 1946-1947

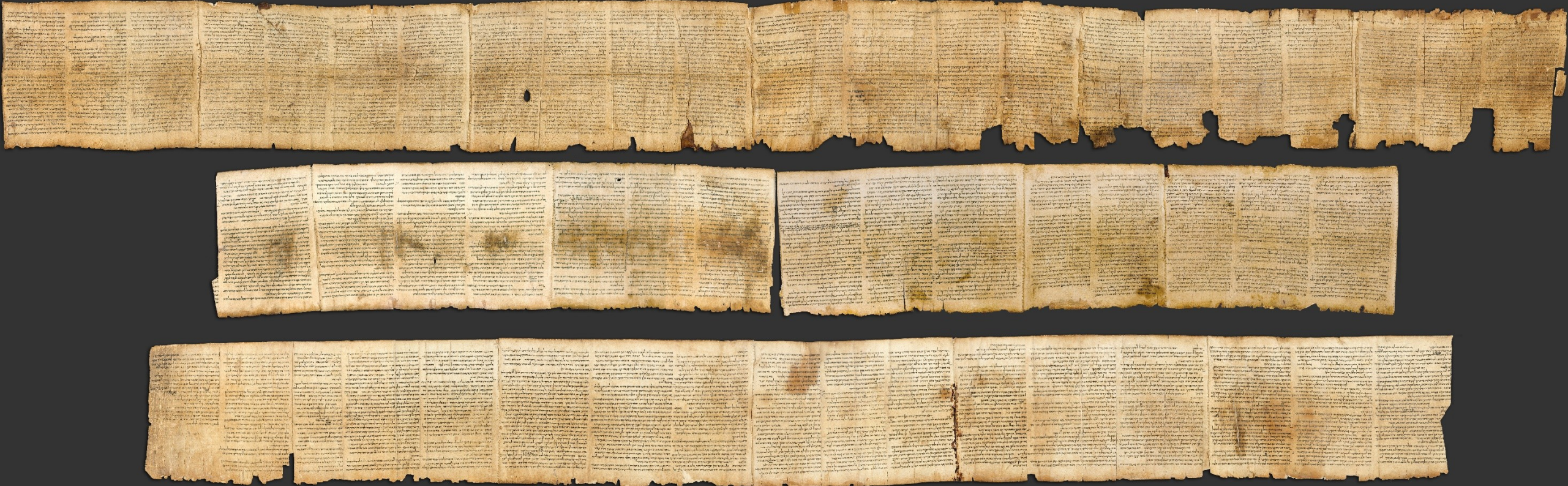
Date to ca 100 BCE  
to 50 CE







# The "Great Isaiah Scroll" of Cave 1



היה ראוי שיהיה ליהודים כבוד ממש כמו שיהיה  
ולא רק כבוד שיהיה להם כבוד אלהים ויהיה  
היה ראוי

בשם בנותיהם והיה להם כבוד על עבד של ובהם בנותיהם ובהם  
בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
איש באיש ואיש באיש ויהיה בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
בבנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
היה ראוי והיה ראוי את בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם

כפי שראוי והיה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
והיה ראוי והיה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
על הארץ על כל הארץ ויהיה בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
ואלה כל השמות בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
ויהיה בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם

על עושה שיהיה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
על עושה שיהיה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
אשר היה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
על עושה שיהיה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
על עושה שיהיה ראוי בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם

את אשר בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
ולאשר בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
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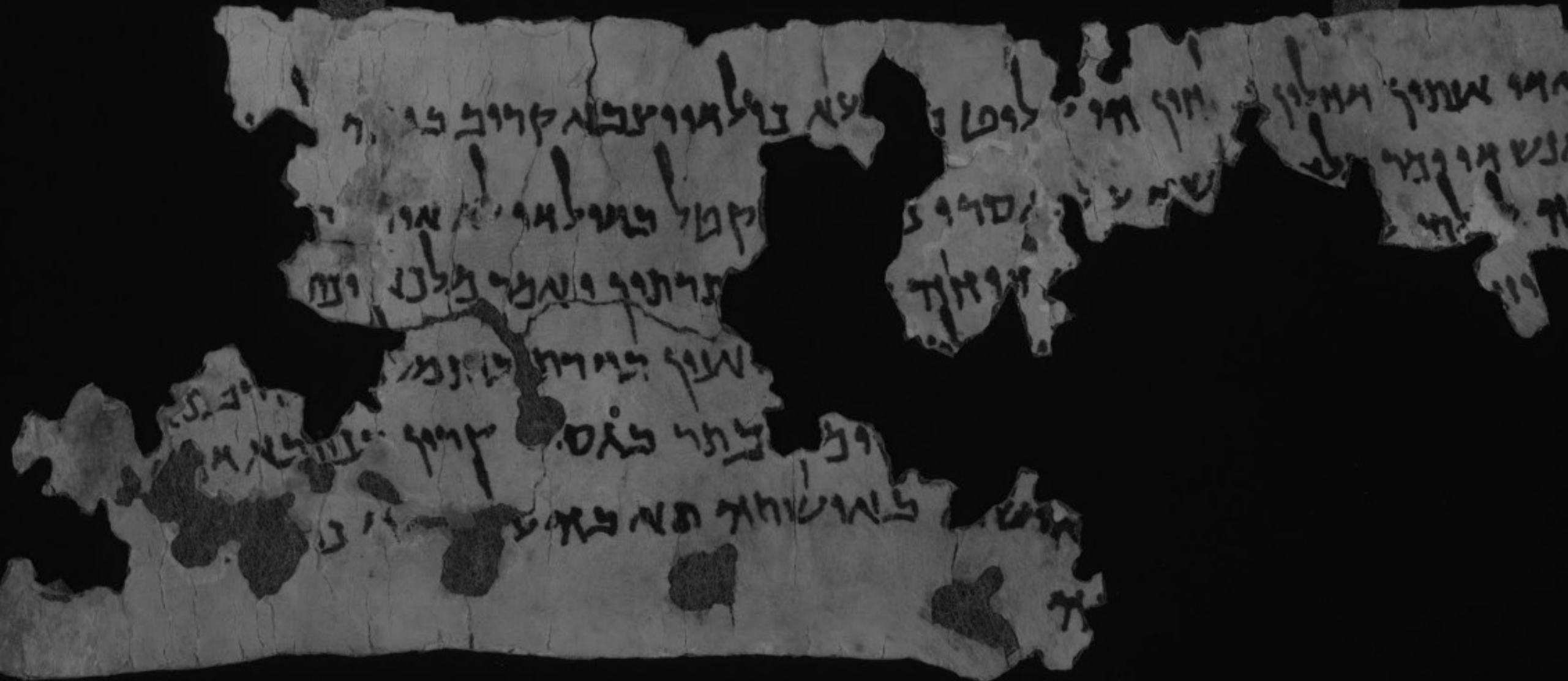
בשם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
בשם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם  
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בשם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם ובהם בנותיהם

A fragment of an ancient scroll, likely made of papyrus or parchment, featuring a series of eleven distinct, roughly triangular or diamond-shaped sections. Each section contains handwritten text in a cursive script, characteristic of ancient Hebrew or Aramaic. The text is arranged in a continuous, wavy line across the fragment. The paper is aged and yellowed, with some darkening and wear, particularly at the edges. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a display board.

Fragment of an ancient Hebrew manuscript on parchment, featuring several lines of text in a cursive script. The text is arranged in two columns, separated by a large, irregular hole in the center. The script is characteristic of the Tiberian period, with distinct vowel points and a consistent letter form.

Fragment of an ancient Hebrew manuscript on parchment, featuring several lines of text in a cursive script. The text is arranged in two columns, separated by a large, irregular hole in the center. The script is characteristic of the Tiberian period, with distinct vowel points and a consistent letter form.

# Fragment of an otherwise unknown novella from the Dead Sea



איהא ויביל שר למדוד מבתון מיני ממשן ונעטט ופניו ערא מיהא  
וילאד גו קודו מעברתא אשר צואה נהוין ארע אלמסתך שר ודוד  
הר ציון

פשא בציון דעד ודוד ונב על עב סל ובה מצרות ונעו אלהי בציון  
מבניו ויבב מצרות ופניו שר ושלמות מצרות מצרות ונחפיו  
איש נאמא ואיש בעידו ועור מצות ונלעך בצעוד ונבדוד יתמציות  
בדפיו ועתו אכלע ידיו אל אלהיך ואי האטיות ואי האבות ואי  
הדועות ודערתך את מציות בני ארבעת קסא וכלע עו וצא

פני נאמי האתי דודו קראות וישת מתי מצות ונדר וקונב ויבב  
והועחו דטריטע ודללו האב דאורי מצור סעד ומפן וקפיע ורות  
על האר על בני האר ונול פורעאורי ופש וענ ואן פו ואע דהגות  
ואכלו על פשמיני בראוי חנה וט שר מצרות על פני אכללו ויש  
עובדי בשתותך שדעות ואהרין חווי ודוד שותתה מציות

על עושי שר אגרי ניש אן אלהי שר עש חנניה וועעל בעוד  
עמוד נבדוד אן תאמרו אנביה בן חפני אגו בן עליה אן אן  
אנא חנניה ונאמרו לך וימיו פד ונע ודוד מציות נאמי  
שני פני נאמי שר בן חווי אן מצרות נש שפטיה ודוד  
מפן בקרבך ונאמרו אן אן אן מצרות בצול מצרות צחנות  
שני קראו ונא דוד מציות מצות איהו וצא ואיש נוב  
נבדוד ואנן שנת דוד ודוד מציות נאמי ונאמי ונאמי

את אשר נתן דודא ודוד ישראל שלשום מציות  
ואשר ברצוד בקרב דארין אשר שרנו ודוד קראת לאשר  
בניו עמי מציות ונאמרו ויהא אשר ונלעך ישראל

כשת בא תחיות אשר ויחיד בשלח אמי מציות על אשר והלחם  
באשרו ונלעך ונעו ודודא ונעו ודודא מציות ונאמי אן אן  
לאמר לך ומתות מציל מציות ונלעך ונאמי מציל ונלעך ונעו  
עו ולעצמות ונאמי ונאמי ודודא מציות ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי

ערוך ונאמי שלש שנים און ונבב על מציות ונלעך ונעו ונעו  
כלע אשר את שר מציות ואת גלת צוש מציות וקעץ ערוך  
והזן והשורי שונעדות מציות והזון והזון מציות מציות  
ונב מציות ונאמרו ואמי ודודא ודודא מציות ודודא ודודא  
עד נבבטן אשר נמנע שר לעודה לאנעל מציות על אשר  
ואן נלעך אסע

נשא ונב מציות נובב לזעב מציות נא מציות נאמי  
חנות מציות ונאמי ודודא מציות ודודא מציות ודודא מציות  
עלם מציות ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי  
מציות אנוני מציות ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי ונאמי  
מציות ונאמי ונאמי מציות בעתה את נאמי ודודא מציות  
לצדוד עמוך אשתי עמך ונאמי אנוני שנת מציות מציות  
מציות מציות מציות מציות מציות מציות מציות מציות

A fragment of a scroll  
of Ruth from the  
Dead Sea Scrolls





# Medieval Hebrew Bibles

Damascus Pentateuch Codex

ca. 1000 CE

ca. 1,000 years after Dead Sea Scrolls



**Genesis**  
**Exodus**  
**Leviticus**  
**Numbers**  
**Deuteronomy**

**Isaiah**  
**Jeremiah**  
**Ezekiel**  
**The Twelve\***

**Psalms**  
**Song of Songs**  
**Lamentations**

**Proverbs**  
**Qohelet**

**Job**

**Joshua**  
**Judges**  
**Samuel**  
**Kings**

**Chronicles**  
**Ezra-Nehemiah**

**Daniel**

**Ruth**  
**Jonah\***  
**Esther**

Genesis  
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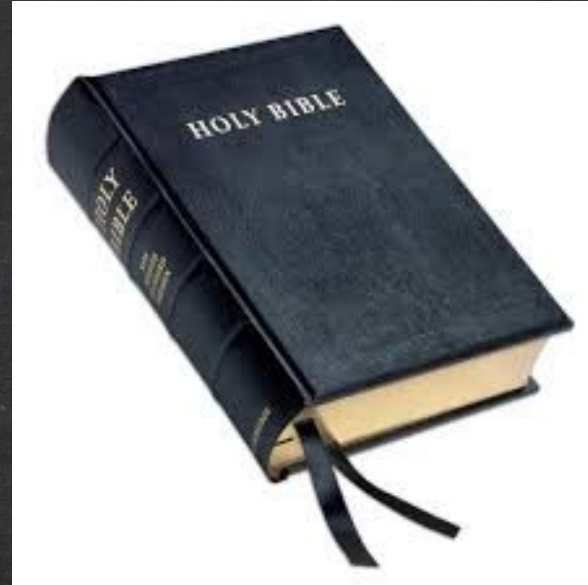
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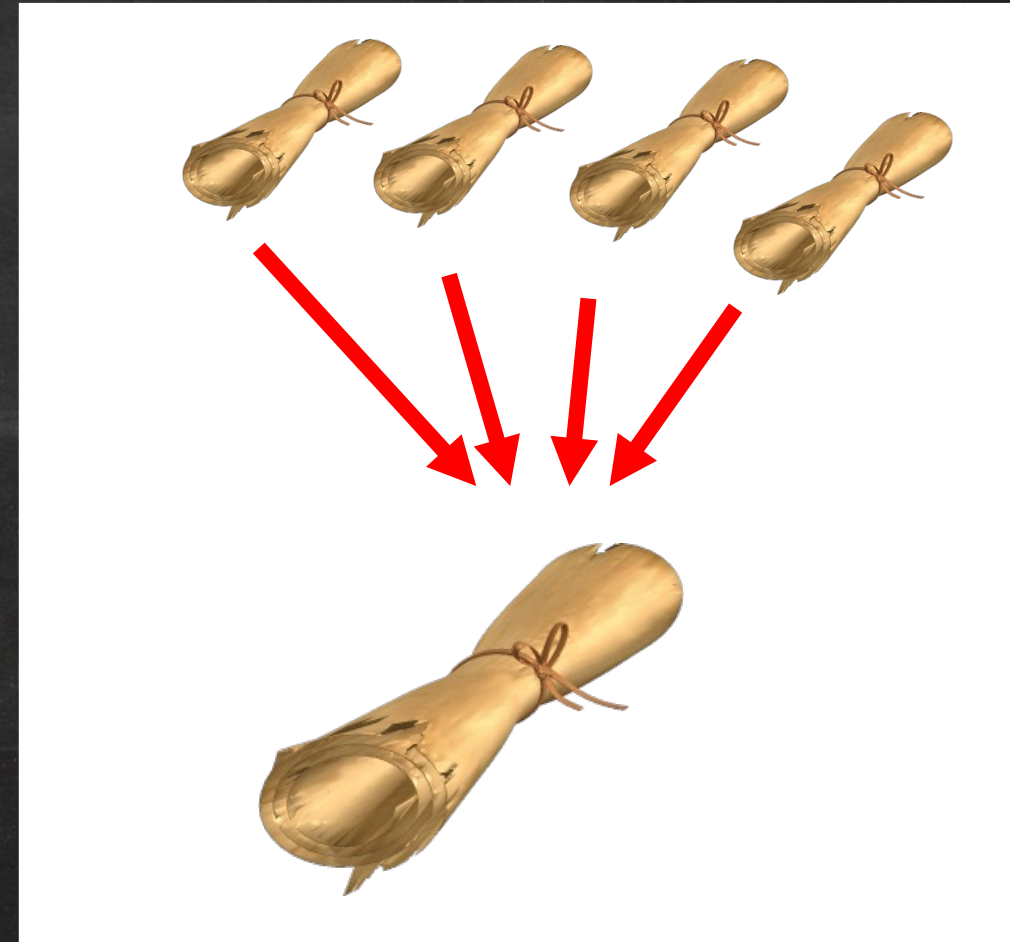
Joshua  
Judges  
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- Three categories:
  1. **Compilations**
  2. Edited works
  3. Compositions



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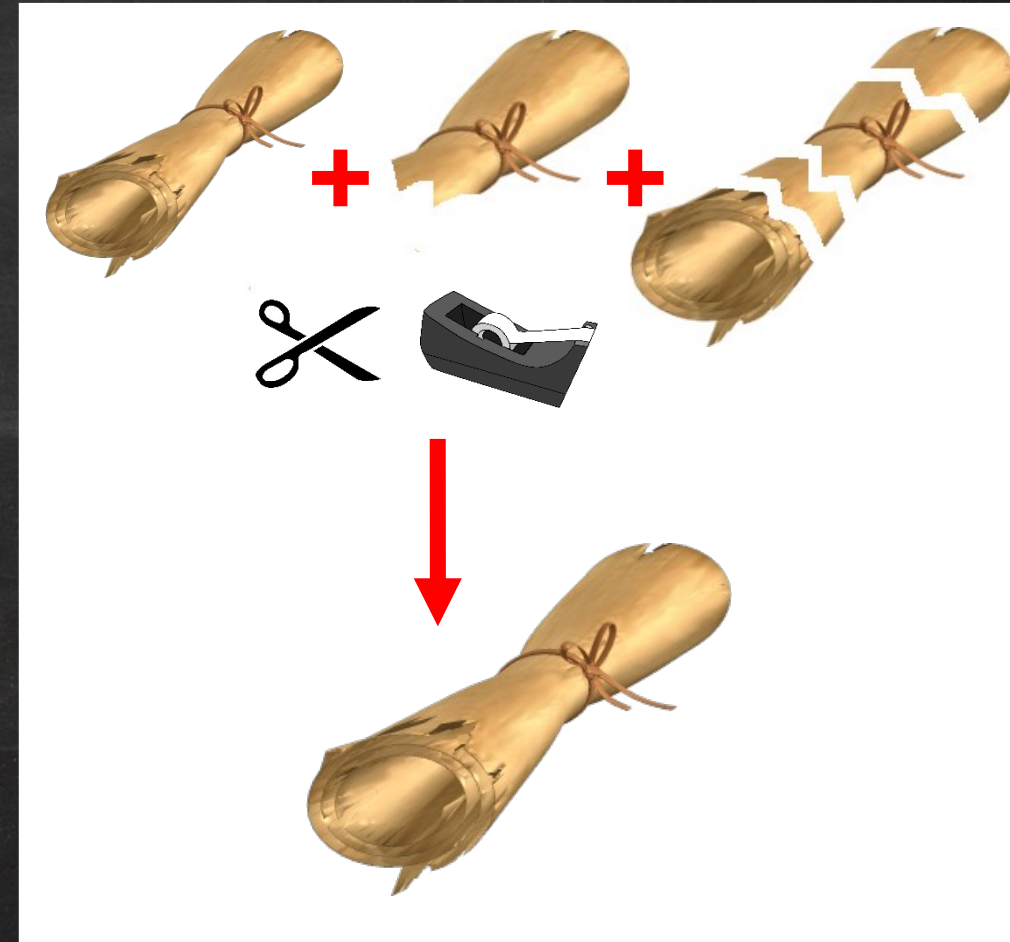
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Jonah\*  
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- Three categories:
  1. Compilations
  2. Edited works
  3. Compositions



Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Ezekiel  
The Twelve\*

Psalms  
Song of Songs  
Lamentations

Proverbs  
Qohelet

Job

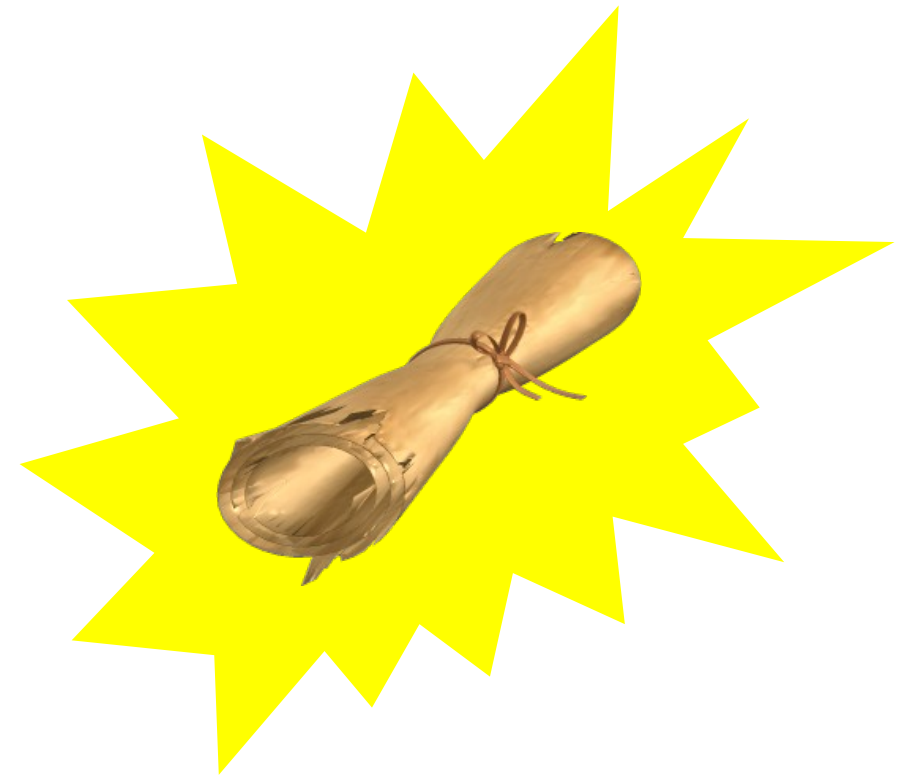
Joshua  
Judges  
Samuel  
Kings

Chronicles  
Ezra-Nehemiah

Daniel

Ruth  
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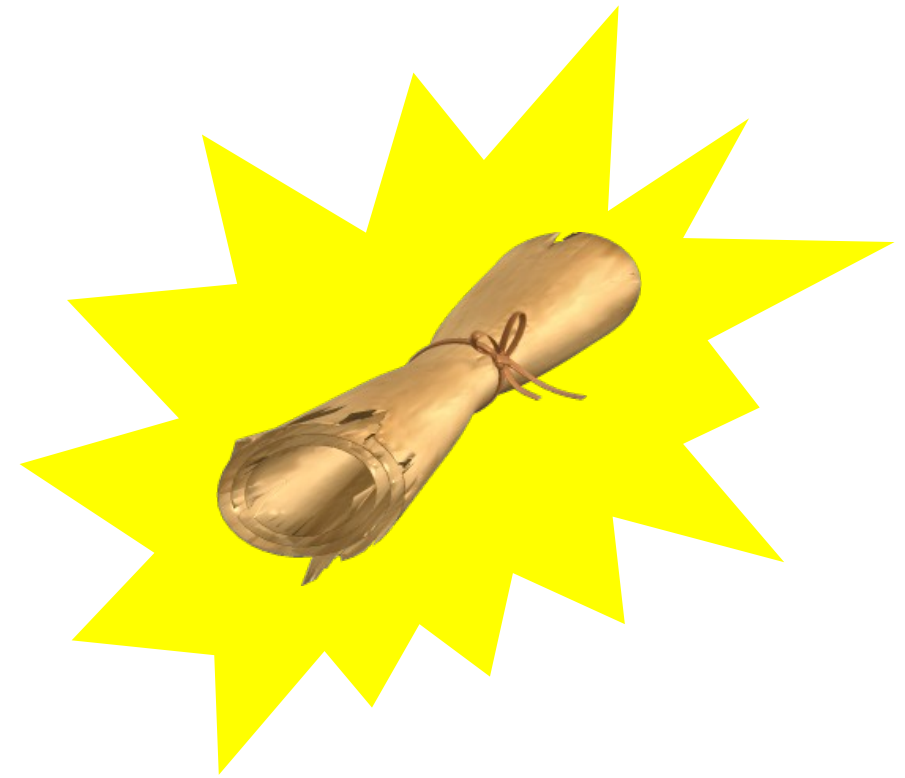
Joshua  
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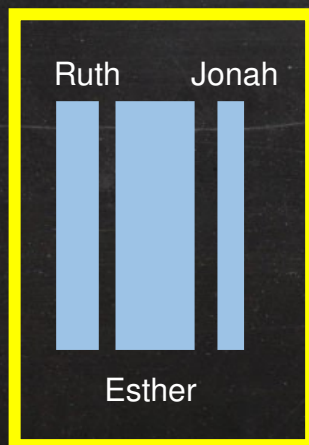
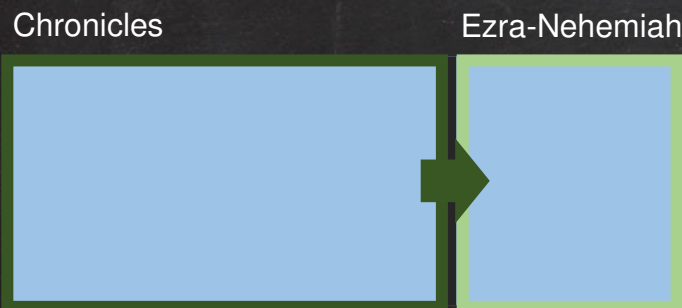
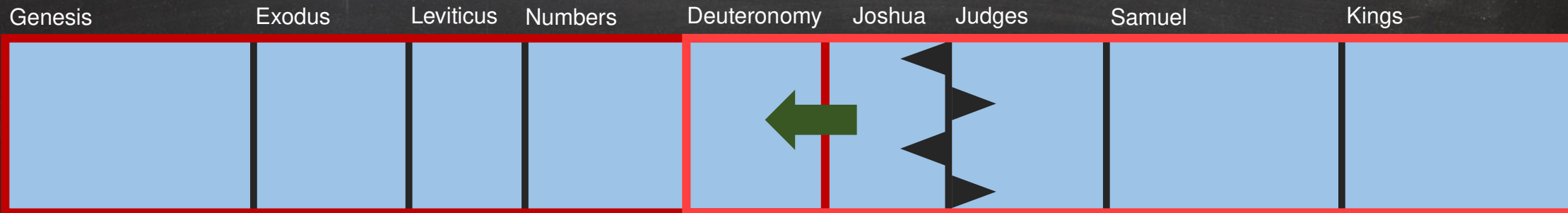
Chronicles  
Ezra-Nehemiah

Daniel

**Ruth**  
**Jonah\***  
**Esther**

The novellas are all  
authored compositions.





The novellas are unique:

- Short
- 1 composition per scroll
- No overlap with other scrolls



# The Jewish Bible

## Torah

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

## Neviim (Prophets)

Joshua  
Judges  
Samuel  
Kings  
  
Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Ezekiel  
The Twelve  
(incl. Jonah)

## Ketuvim (Writings)

**Ruth**  
Psalms  
Job  
Proverbs  
Song of Songs  
Lamentations

Qohelet  
**Esther**  
Daniel  
Chronicles  
Ezra-Nehemiah

# The Jewish Bible

## Torah

Genesis  
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Song of Songs  
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Qohelet  
Esther  
Daniel  
Chronicles  
Ezra-Nehemiah

Narrative record of the Golden Age  
of Judean history & era of prophets

Other literature which stems from  
the Golden Age

# *The canonical placement of the novellas*

A clue to their original purpose:

- Associated with the Golden Age
- Supplementing a particular era
- Not authoritative history but **historical fiction**

**Ruth** An idyllic short story about a distant ancestor of King David.

Setting: the era of Israel's ancestors  
(Early Iron Age)

# *The canonical placement of the novellas*

A clue to their original purpose:

- Associated with an era during the Golden Age
- Supplementing a particular era
- Not authoritative history but **historical fiction**

**Jonah** A humorous story of a prophet mentioned at 2 Kings 14:25 who struggles with his religious vocation.

Setting: the Kingdom of Israel (Iron Age)

# *The canonical placement of the novellas*

A clue to their original purpose:

- Associated with an era during the Golden Age
- Supplementing a particular era
- Not authoritative history but **historical fiction**

**Esther** A story of a Judean woman who becomes the favorite queen of the Persian emperor and who saves her people from destruction.

Setting: the Persian Empire

## *Other Judean novellas:* Judith, Tobit

- Written in Greek or more popular in Greek-speaking circles.
- Do not find immediate relevance to the record of the Golden Age as Ruth, Jonah, and Esther.

**Reading Ruth as a Judean,**  
**ca. 100 BCE-70 CE**

A fragment of a scroll of Ruth  
from the Dead Sea Scrolls,  
Hasmonean Period

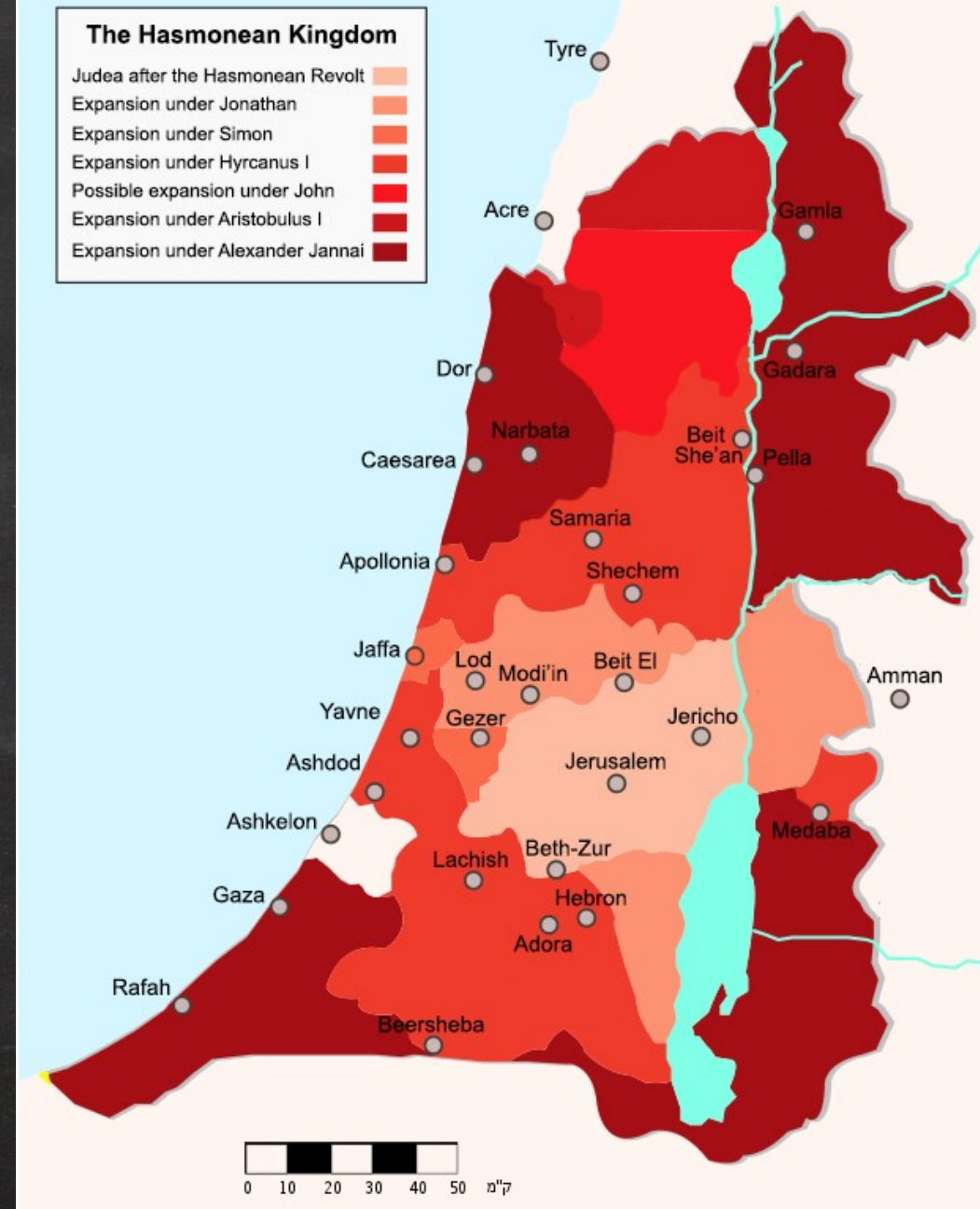




Antiochus IV – Hellenistic emperor  
175-164 BCE



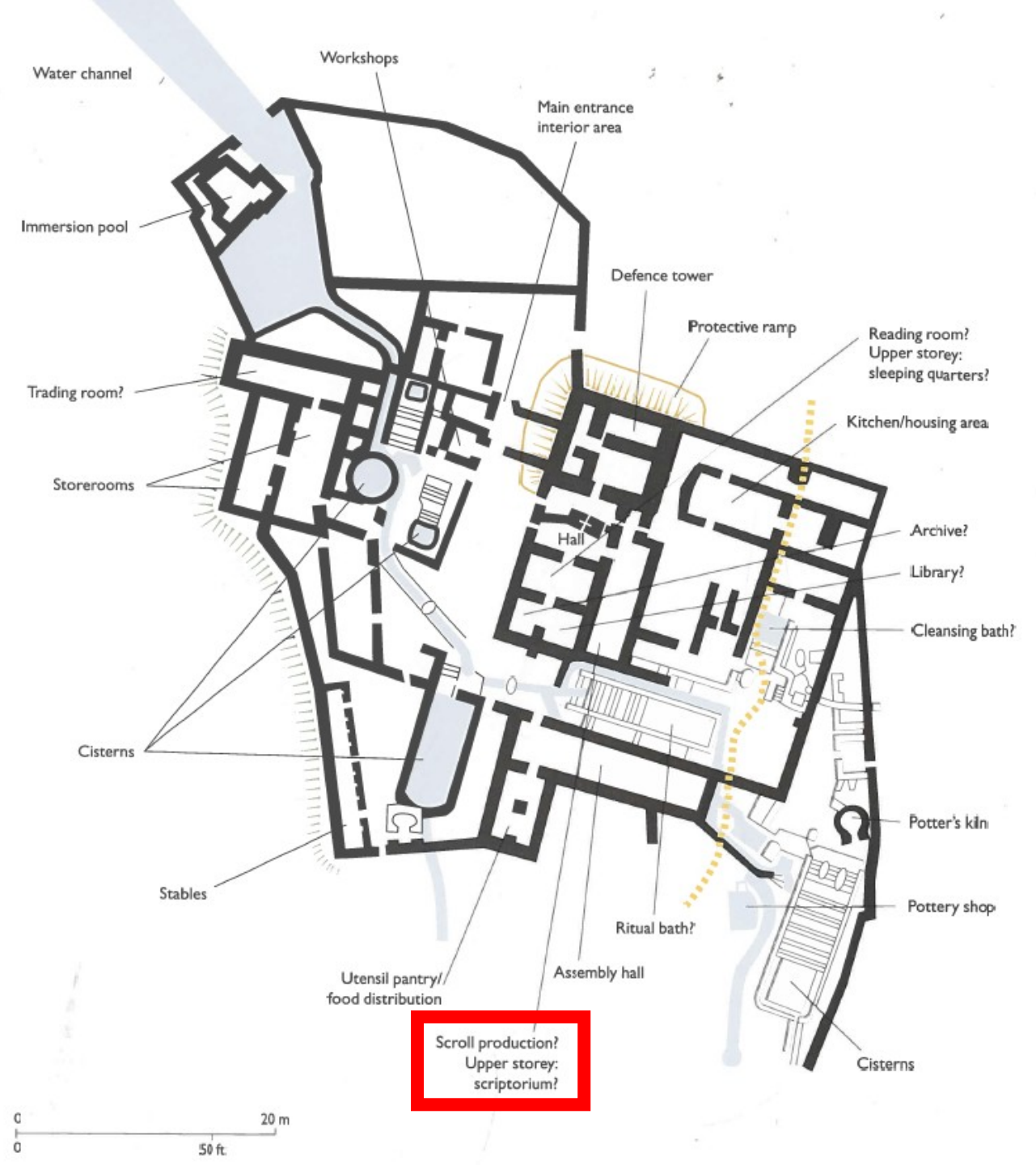
John Hyrcanus – Hasmonean king  
135-104 BCE



By Effib  
[https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/החשמונאים\\_החמלקת#/media/File:Map\\_Hasmonean\\_Kingdom-he.svg](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/החשמונאים_החמלקת#/media/File:Map_Hasmonean_Kingdom-he.svg), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63408877>







Pompey invading Jerusalem and entering the Holy of Holies of the Temple (63 BCE)



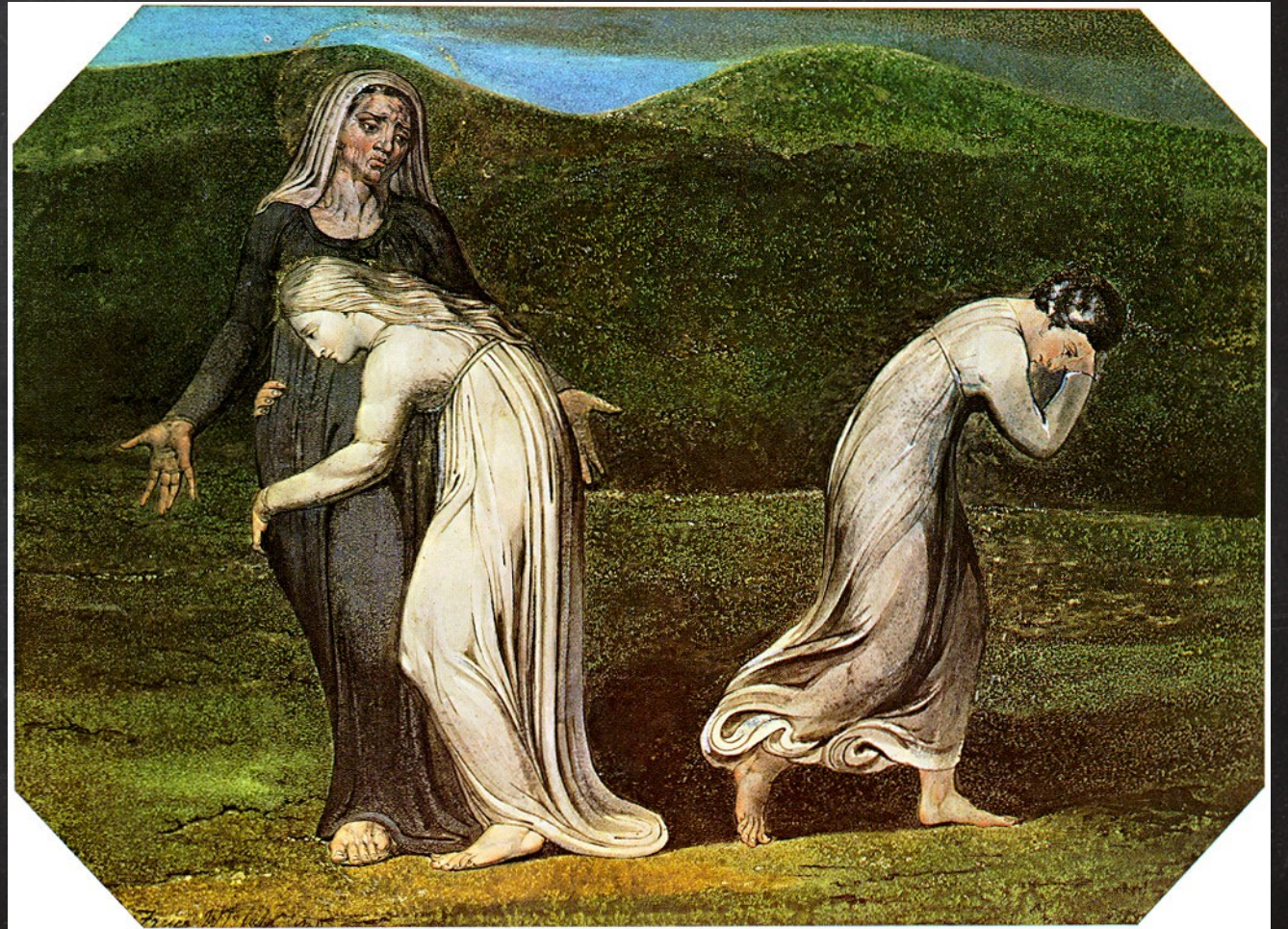
Painting by Jean Fouquet  
(1470-1475)





**Arch of Titus detail:  
Commemoration of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by Titus**

*Reading Ruth as a Judean,*  
*ca. 100 BCE-70 CE*



Ruth and Naomi by William Blake

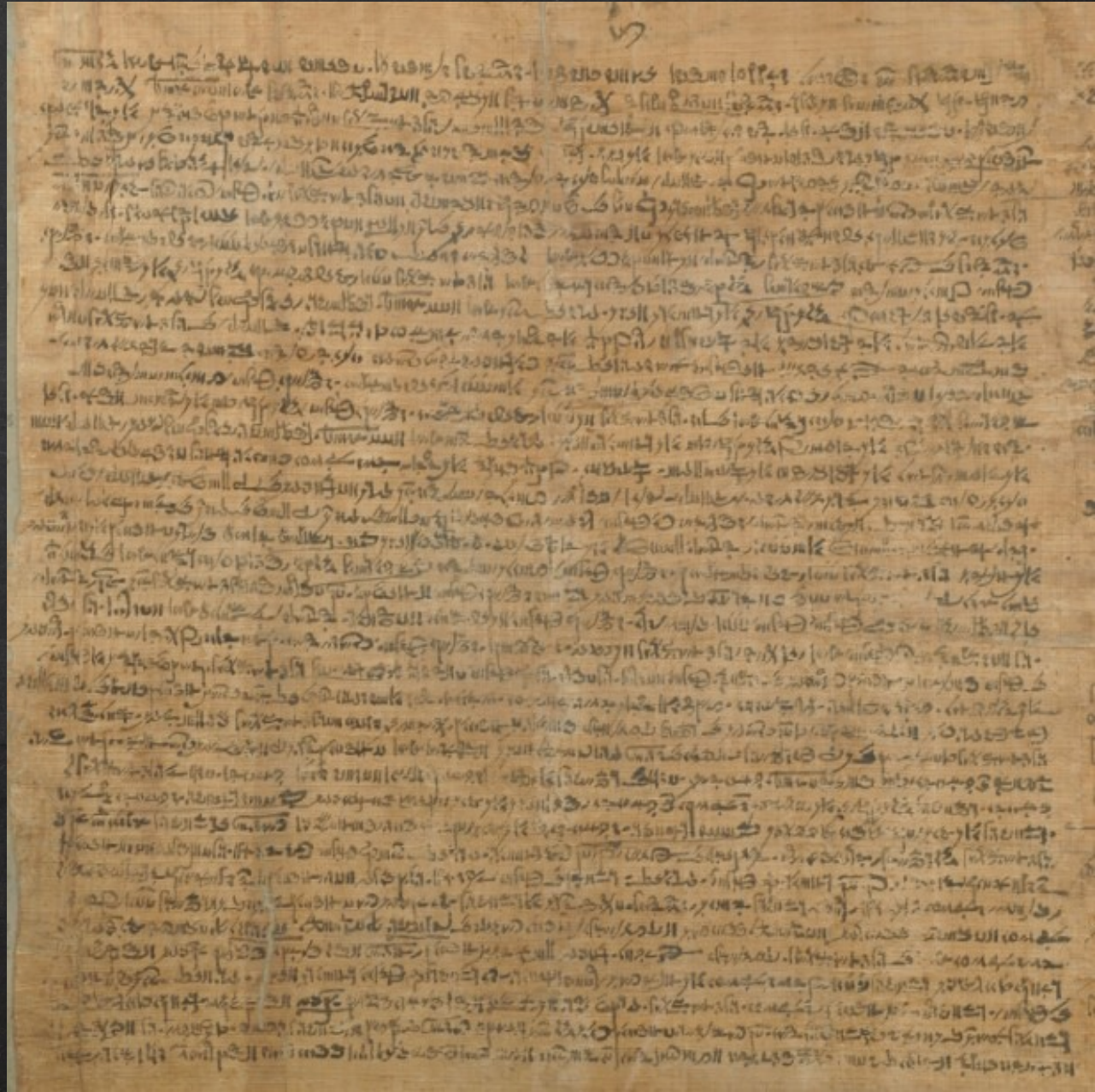
# Reading Ruth as a Judean, ca. 100 BCE-70 CE

“So Boaz married Ruth. She became his wife, and he lived with her. Yahweh let her conceive, and she bore a son. The women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be Yahweh, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel!’ ...

Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became its foster mother, and the women neighbors gave him a name: ‘A son is born to Naomi!’ They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.”

(Ruth 4:13-14, 16-17)

# Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

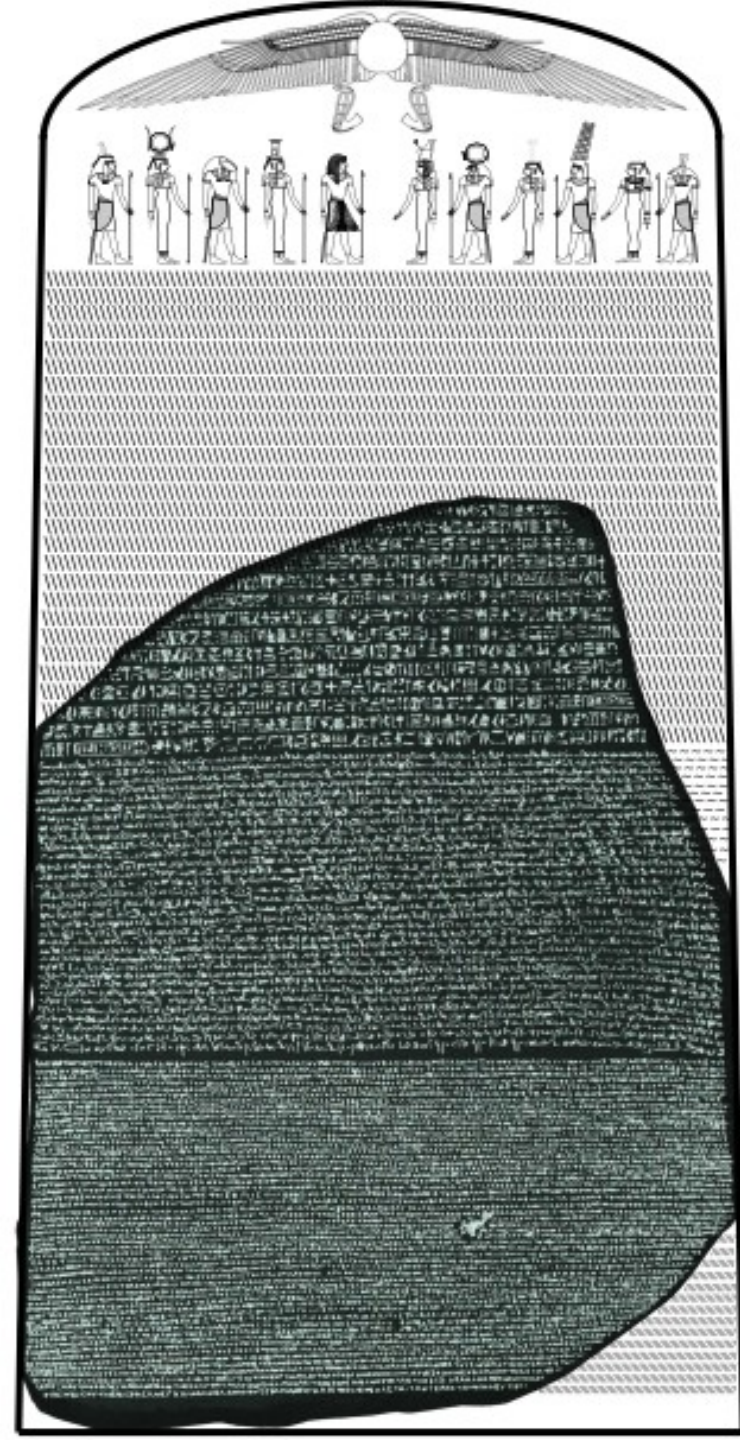


“Page” 4 from the only surviving  
copy of 1 Setna

# Reconstruction of the Rosetta Stone

By Captmondo (Own work), CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10799505>

Ptolemy V Epiphanes  
204-181 BCE









Temple of Edfu



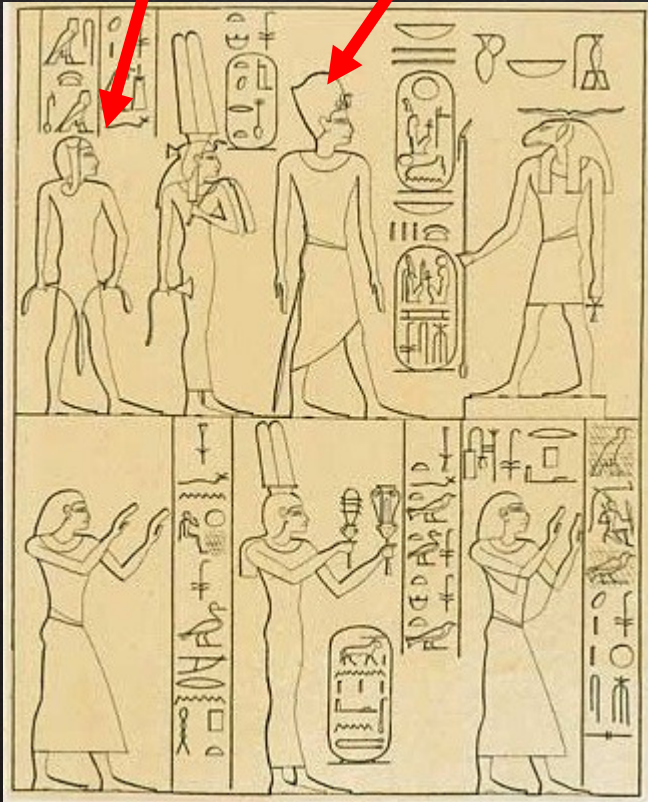
# Holy of Holies of the Temple of Edfu



# Reading 1 Setna as an Egyptian, ca. 195 BCE

Ramesses II

Khaemwaset



**Reading 1 Setna *as an Egyptian*,**  
**ca. 195 BCE**

**Reading 1 Setna *as an Egyptian,***  
**ca. 195 BCE**

Setna said, “Ihweret, let me be given this scroll, or I shall take it by force!” Naneferkaptah raised himself up from the coffin, and said, “Are you Setna? To whom this woman is speaking these woeful matters, and you not taking them into consideration? As for this scroll: can you take it by means of the strength of a skilled scribe, or by contest...by playing a game against me?” Setna said, “I am ready!”







**Reading 1 Setna *as an Egyptian,***  
**ca. 195 BCE**

The game board and its pieces were brought before them. Naneferkaptah took the first game from Setna. He chanted a spell, struck his head with the board, and sent him into the ground up to his feet. He did the same for the second game, and sent him into the ground up to his penis. He did the same for the third game, and sent him into the ground up to his ears.

**Reading 1 Setna *as an Egyptian,***  
**ca. 195 BCE**

After that, Setna was in great difficulty at the hands of Naneferkaptah. He called out to his brother Inaros: "Hurry to the surface and tell everything that has happened to me to the Pharaoh! Bring me the amulets of Ptah together with my magical scroll!" He did not delay...Inaros returned and put the amulets on the body of Setna, and he flew upwards at that very instant, reached out for the scroll, and took it.

# *Books Without Authors...*

**UNESOME  
DOVE**  
*A Novel*



**HARRY  
MURTRY**  
*TERMS OF ENDEARMENT*



**LOOK HOMEWARD,  
ANGEL**  
—  
**THOMAS WOLFE**



LADY  
CHATTERLEY'S  
LOVER  
BY  
D.H. LAWRENCE  
  
IN ITS ORIGINAL UNEXPURGATED EDITION  
  
INTRODUCTION BY MARK SHORER  
PREFACE BY ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

SPUTNIK  
SWEETHEART  
  
"Searingly, indelibly  
memorable."  
—The Baltimore Sun  
  
HARUKI  
MURAKAMI

**SYLVIA PLATH**  
  
**THE  
BELL  
JAR**  
  
P.S.  
HEARST  
INTERVIEW  
& MORE

WILLIAM FAUL  
  
**ABSALON  
ABSALON**

**ULYSSES**  
  
BY  
JAMES JOYCE

THOMAS PYNCHON  
*Gravity's Rainbow*

**BELOVED**  
A NOVEL  
  
TONI  
MORRISON

A NOVEL BY **Saul Bellow**  
  
The  
**Adventures**  
of  
**Augie March**

WINNER OF THE  
NEBULA AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL  
  
**RED  
MARS**  
  
"A STAGGERING BOOK,  
THE BEST NOVEL ON  
THE COLONIZATION OF  
MARS THAT HAS EVER  
BEEN WRITTEN.  
IT SHOULD BE REQUIRED  
READING FOR THE COLONISTS  
OF THE NEXT CENTURY."  
—Arthur C. Clarke  
  
**KIM STANLEY  
ROBINSON**  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BLUE MARS

DOVER · THRIFT  
  
*Jane Austen*  
**EMMA**

French roman  
German Roman  
Italian romanzo  
(English romance)

Spanish novela  
English novel

Derived from Latin *romanice*  
(**linguistic**: “what people ruled  
by the Roman Empire speak”)

Derived from Italian *novella*  
(**literary**: “a work of literature  
that is a short, new thing”)

# *Books Without Authors...*