

## Notes for Introduction and the Dawn of History to 2000 BCE

Two big pitfalls to be avoided: The Lachrymose conception of Jewish history and the Retrojection Fallacy

Lachrymose conception - everything in the Jewish experience has been horrible and degrading. No worth in studying it.

Retrojection fallacy - Contemporary traditionalism is the way things have always been. Judaism was static for a long time and modern changes are anomalous. Rabbi Akiva wore a black homburg hat and spoke Yiddish.

The Ancient Near East was home to many of the most basic inventions and aspects of human society, like cities, the wheel, and writing.

The two poles of power in the region are Egypt and Mesopotamia

Abraham comes from Mesopotamia, and the region is largely influenced by Mesopotamian culture.

Also Egyptian influence, although doesn't seem like there is as much.

Mesopotamian flood stories: Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh has Xiusudra surviving the flood, Babylonian Enuma Elish has Atrahasis surviving the flood. Biblical retellings inject Israelite values into the stories: almost a response to the way they exist in Mesopotamian culture.

Further Reading

*H.W.F. Scaggs, Civilization Before Greece and Rome*

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