

## **Week 6 Homework**

Archaeological and epigraphic data help us understand when a class of professional scribes could have started to develop literary production. Ska spends a good deal of time establishing the case for a timeframe based on the “concrete problems involved in writing in the ancient world” (Ska, 174). Writing was costly and a relatively rare skill that required specific materials. With this in mind, a time frame of 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. is widely viewed as the earliest possible window of time when writing in Judah could have occurred.

It is worthwhile to compare the transmission of the Pentateuch with other well-known documents from the same time period. The best example of a well-known document from the same time period is the Epic of Gilgamesh. Ska states that “scholars have at their disposal a great deal of material justifying comparisons with the Pentateuch: legal codes, religious and profane narratives, historical records, chronicles of military campaigns, and even travel journals” (Ska, 177). Ska describes a process of transmission in which the first phases are marked by a wide latitude for redactors to make changes to the text. “Whereas an editor has no trouble modifying a text during the first stage of transmission, toward the end of the development he can only insert additions into the preexisting text, not transform it” (Ska, 181).

The Pentateuch was undoubtedly transmitted in much the same way. Upon close examination it is easy to uncover a wide variety of grammatical mistakes or revisions that were most likely added by later redactors. Ska points out that “inconsistencies in the content may also indicate that an addition has been inserted” (Ska, 182). However, it is important to note one key difference between the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Pentateuch: divine inspiration. Ska describes

this difference stemming from the reality that “The biblical text is sacred, and it had normative value for the people of Israel” (Ska, 182).