

Chapter 10:

WHEN AND BY WHOM WAS THE OLD TESTAMENT WRITTEN?

Bible scholars theorize that the Old Testament was passed on orally from generation to generation until the 8th century B.C. Some scholars suggest that the 5th century B.C. marked the beginning of written biblical books.

The critical, careful student of ancient records finds, however, that written records among priesthoods were customary in the Near East already during the 3rd and 4th millennia B.C. For instance, Egyptian writings exist in the tomb of King Zoser of 2600 B.C., while Egyptologists such as Champollion, Mariette, Lepsius, and Brugsch place the earliest compilation of "*The Egyptian Book of the Dead*" into the 6th and 5th millennia B.C.¹ There are Sumerian, Akkadian and other Near Eastern records in existence from the 3rd millennium B.C. This leaves open the question: why should the members of the priesthood of the sons of Adam not have had the skills of reading and writing?

In the Old Testament Apocrypha --whose validity we shall discuss in the next chapter-- we read that each patriarch, beginning with the Adam of about 4000 B.C., and his successor Seth, contributed to the earliest written records of the original Old Testament which included the apocryphal books. In the Book of Adam and Eve (Apocrypha) we read that Seth was commissioned to:

MAKE YE THEN TABLES OF STONE AND OTHERS OF CLAY, AND WRITE ON THEM, ALL MY LIFE AND YOUR FATHER'S (ALL) THAT YE HAVE HEARD AND SEEN FROM US. IF BY WATER THE LORD JUDGE OUR RACE, THE TABLES OF CLAY WILL BE DISSOLVED AND THE TABLES OF STONE WILL REMAIN; BUT IF BY FIRE, THE TABLES OF STONE WILL BE BROKEN UP AND THE TABLES OF CLAY WILL BE BAKED (HARD).

Ch. 50:1

When Enoch became the seventh patriarch from Adam in the 4th millennium B.C. (3550 B.C. according to my calculation), he was called "the

¹"The Egyptian Book of the Dead". Translated by E. A. Wallis Budge. New York. Dover Publications, Inc. 1967. Page XIII, footnotes.

scribe of righteousness". He wrote in a number of passages in his books of the handwritings of the patriarchs (see 1En. 82:1; 92:1; 93:1; 108:1). In 2En. 23:6 he states that he wrote 366 books in all. Enoch passed on his records and those of his priestly ancestors to Methuselah, his successor, and recorded it:

GIVE THEM THE BOOKS OF THE HANDWRITING, AND THEY WILL READ THEM...AND LET THEM DISTRIBUTE THE BOOKS OF THY HANDWRITING

--

CHILDREN TO CHILDREN, GENERATION TO GENERATION, NATIONS TO NATIONS... THE HANDWRITING OF THY FATHERS ADAM, SETH, ENOS, CAINAN, MAHALELEEL, AND JARED THY FATHER.

Such references make one wonder about the existence of written records from the 4th millennium B.C. forward, as it was in many other traditions. Some of these patriarchal records such as those of Enoch, Lamech, and Noah have survived into our time. Naturally, scrolls wore out with age and use and were copied repeatedly. Therefore, if we do not have earlier copies, does this necessarily mean that those which were produced the last centuries before Christ were authored at that time?

Independent of the aforementioned references in the Apocrypha -- and there are many more in it in addition to those I have quoted-- the texts of the Bible contain that written records were in existence since about 4000 B.C., as we read in Genesis:

THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM ...

Gen. 5:1

I looked up the word "books" in Prof. Young's Concordance. The introductory sentence to this subject reads, "Books must have been coeval with the commencement of writing..." Thus Gen. 5:1 confirms the existence of written records during the time of the Adam (son of God) of circa 4000 B.C. of which Enoch speaks in his writings to Methuselah.

After the Flood --that is after 2500 B.C.-- Noah had written records in the inner pocket of his garment, which he discussed with Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Jub. 8:11; Apocrypha).

After Terah, Abraham and their followers had left Ur of the Chaldees and they dwelt temporarily in Haran, Abraham studied the books of the fathers which he had brought with him from Ur. During these studies

Abraham learned of the "sacred language" (symbolism) which had not been taught anymore in the 22nd century B.C. in Ur. (Jub. 12:26-27; Apocrypha).

Before Jacob passed on in Egypt (1929 B.C.), he "gave all his books and the books of his fathers to Levi his son that he might preserve them and renew them..." (Jub. 45:16; Apocrypha).

In the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, there are fifteen different references to written records which Moses produced after the exodus from Egypt, i.e., after 1506 B.C. according to my calculation. In the Book of Joshua there are seven such references.

The critical reader will also remember that Jewish people have always treasured the Torah, the Five Books of Moses given by God and written by the hand of Moses.

It is difficult to believe that the Bible was not put down in writing until the 5th century B.C. for various reasons. When one looks up the words "to write, writer, writing, written" in a concordance, there are four columns of Bible references to written records, beginning with Moses' writing in Ex. 17:14. These columns are printed in lettering as small as those in a telephone book. On the other hand, it does not require the mind of a genius to familiarize oneself with the arts of reading and writing. What was the level of the intelligence of the patriarchs? A few generations after Noah, during the last centuries of the 3rd millennium B.C., sensitivity became rare among the sons of Adam, meaning, the source of higher intelligence and ultimate truth faded from most of them. Abraham was blessed (enlightened) in various areas, and so were Jacob and his twelve sons. The latter were educated in their father's house (priesthood). What was their status of education? Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob. At age seventeen he was sold into slavery, was a servant for ten years and in prison for three years. At age thirty, his education was sufficient to make him administrator of Egypt, the right hand of several pharaohs, for eighty years. This fact proves the high level of education among the members of the patriarchal families! And they are supposed to have lacked the ability to read and write?

Then, too, when we consider the respect shown to Abraham and, later to Jacob and his family, by Egyptian pharaohs, it is evident that we do not deal with primitive, nomadic pastoralists who lived in poverty in deserts and pondered their fate. This image of the patriarchs, which is also shown in a

number of illustrated Bible editions, requires a dramatic change in favour of truth.

Moses, too, proved through his significant work, which modern scientists helped us to analyze, evaluate and understand, that only he himself could have been the author of his Five Books, owing to the advanced sciences involved. No one after Moses, neither priest nor scribe, could possibly have learned by heart, or recorded the technical description of the ark of the covenant and the tent of meeting 1,000 years after Moses and in the kind of detail, without forgetting an aspect of it, that today's scientists can recognize the nature of this work. This kind of knowledge was a total mystery to later, unenlightened biblical priesthoods; they simply respected "the power of God" in the sanctuary. Thus who but Moses himself could have been the recorder?

Moreover, scriptural authors identify themselves in their records. They give their names, their fathers', or predecessors' or teachers' names, and those of the kings or judges whose reign is recorded in the genealogies. Such an author could not write anything that was untrue for two reasons: firstly, a blessed person, a prophet or visionary, knew that the God-given soul is the mediator between a man and his Creator. It withdraws from liars, as it is written, and this was a risk no true prophet was ready to take. His relationship to God and his truth was of far greater importance to every enlightened one than that to a king or religious authority. Thus truth was recorded for posterity, even if that truth cost a prophet his life. Secondly, such an author was known to his contemporaries and to the next generation that preserved the written work. If he had written anything that was not the plain truth, his work would have been discarded.

So I argued with some of my co-workers about the intelligence of our priestly ancestors and about their authorship of the Good Book. Unexpectedly, evidence came our way in the second half of the 1970s:

Professor Giovanni Pettinato and his Italian team of archaeologists unearthed the royal library of the ancient kingdom of Ebla in today's Syria, and their publications in various journals and daily newspapers rocked the

boat of many theorists². The Eblaite library consists of circa 15,000 tablets. Twenty percent of these tablets, about 3,000, were written in Semitic (Hebrew) characters during the time from 2600 B.C. to 2300 B.C. There is also a flood story contained in the Eblaite tablets which shows that the scribes of Ebla were contemporaries of the biblical Noah, who was then the patriarch (head) of the priesthood of the sons of Adam. This leaves today's theorists, who insist that the Old Testament was not produced in written form until the 8th or 5th century B.C., with finding an answer to the following question:

If the Eblaite scribes were familiar with reading and writing Hebrew, the style of writing typical of the Semitic (Hebrew) priestly families, can one honestly deny Noah and his people these arts? Or are the 3,000 Eblaite tablets material evidence of the existence of written Hebrew records during the 3rd millennium B.C. as stated in both the Old Testament and the Apocrypha? I believe in the written word, especially when evidence of it falls almost accidentally into our hands -

Come to think of it: when archaeologists unearth clay tablets or scrolls they place their whole faith in the absolute accuracy of such writings. Yet, at times, the authors of such texts are unknown or tablets are broken and lack authors' names. Such records can be of two types, that is, they could either have been authored by prophets who recorded nothing but the truth, or by paid scribes who wrote whatever pleased the gods or their kings. No one seems to question the difference between them. The Bible, however, receives all the possible distrust available, and I believe the distrust originates in the lack of, or in false interpretations that make Bible history and events into myths and mysteries.

Since I frequently refer to the Old Testament Apocrypha, it is advisable that I explain why I believe in the validity of the inspired books it contains, and how I distinguish between inspired and uninspired literature. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

²Freedman, David Noel. "The Real Story of the Ebla Tablets". *Biblical Archeologist*. University of Michigan. Ann Arbor. December 1978. Pages 143-164.