

## MOSES, THE PENTATEUCH, AND THE MAJOR PROPHETS

The first five books of the Old Testament form the most seriously challenged section of the Bible. And the first challenge is to Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch (the five books of the Law) through what has been called the *documentary hypothesis* or *JEDP theory*.

### **The Reliability of Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch**

Challenges to Mosaic authorship have been an issue since the seventeenth century AD, when Benedict Spinoza voiced his denial of it in his *Theological-Political Treatise* (1677). Jean Astruc, in 1753—actually, in an attempt to refute Spinoza—was the first to propose a primitive version of the documentary theory.

Soon after, in the nineteenth century, many critical scholars adopted this theory. Astruc limited his analysis to Genesis. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn was the first to apply this theory to the entire Pentateuch, with a series of publications beginning in 1780. Wilhelm M.L. de Wette also made a significant contribution to this discussion in positing that Deuteronomy was its own independently constructed source in his *Dissertation Critico-Exegetica* in 1805; a year later this hypothesis was repeated in his *Beitrag zur Einleitung*. De Wette actually went so far as to say that none of the Pentateuch was composed prior to the time of David! However, it was Julius Wellhausen who popularized (not created—a common misconception) the idea that the Pentateuch was written by various persons whom he called *Jehovist* (J, also known as Yahwist), *Elobist* (E), *Deuteronomist* (D), and *Priestly* (P), each one supposedly distinguished by their literary characteristics. Thus the name *JEDP theory* refers to the various sources hypothesized.

### ***Professor Gleason Archer's Critique of JEDP***

Professor Gleason Archer, noted Harvard PhD and Old Testament expert, lists nine difficulties for the JEDP theory. He also argues for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.<sup>1</sup>

1. The theory employs circular reasoning. It assumes that the Bible is not a supernatural book and then attempts to give a natural explanation for its origin, claiming that in some way this explanation also proves the nonsupernatural character of the Bible.
2. Though documentary theorists base their theory on the textual evidence, when the textual evidence seems to counter their theory it is ignored.
3. Authors have always been capable of using more than one style and more than one name for God.
4. Archaeological evidence that confirms individual historical details that indicate the Pentateuch was written long before the time of David is simply ignored (see part 6 of this book).
5. The theory starts with the assumption that Israel's religion is of human origin like other religions, and as such needs an explanation of its evolution.
6. Supposed "discrepancies" are noted to prove a diversity of sources, even though the passage in question, read in its context, makes plenty of sense.
7. A double standard is applied to the Hebrew Bible. Other Semitic sources describe various entities in differing styles of language, yet their singular authorship, authenticity, or antiquity is not called into question.
8. The theory falsely assumes we have no literature contemporary to the Pentateuch to which we can compare it. The theory also explains away instances that it cannot account for by claiming Masoretic scribal additions or alterations of the text.
9. Scholars who hold the theory assume they, living 3,400 years after the fact, can better understand these texts than can the New Testament authors, whom these scholars judge to live 600 to 1,000 years after the fact (according to their dating of the Pentateuch).

In addition to Archer's responses, the JEDP theory has come under increasing attack by scholars in recent years since no JEDP "documents" have ever been found—no traces can be found in the hundreds of biblical texts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls or anywhere else. Yale scholar William W. Hallo points out:

The literary-critical study of the Hebrew Bible has had a checkered history. The [JEDP] documentary hypothesis with which it began over two centuries ago remains to this day a hypothesis, the [JEDP] documents which it reconstructed [are] beyond recovery; their precise extent, their absolute and relative dates, and their changes over time [are] all matters of dispute; and the applicability of the hypothesis beyond the Pentateuch [is] severely limited.... Given such disparate and even desperate reactions to two centuries of modern Biblical scholarship, it is perhaps

not surprising that much of the most exciting work...has been...from...  
epigraphic [archaeological] discoveries.<sup>2</sup>

### *More Reasons to Affirm Mosaic Authorship*

There also exist further independent reasons for affirming Mosaic authorship.

First, *Scripture itself attributes authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses*. Within the Pentateuch itself it is repeatedly stated that Moses wrote down the words of the law given directly to him by Yahweh (Exodus 17:14; 24:4,7; 34:27; Numbers 33:1-2; Deuteronomy 31:9,11). Books within the rest of the Old Testament also give witness to this fact. The book of Joshua attests to Mosaic authorship in 1:8 and 8:31-32, identifying them as the “book of the law” or the “book of the law of Moses.” The title “law of Moses” is used by David in 1 Kings 2:3 to refer to the first five books written by Moses, while 2 Kings 14:6 gives the same title, quoting from Deuteronomy 24:16. Again, 2 Kings refers to the same title of the Pentateuch.

Other references to the Mosaic authorship are found in Ezra 6:18, Nehemiah 13:1, Daniel 9:11-13, and Malachi 4:4. The authorship of the Torah is always attributed to Moses throughout the Old Testament and even into the New Testament. The Gospels refer to the writings of the Torah as “Moses” in John 5:46-47 and 7:19 and Acts 3:22. Other places in the New Testament refer to Moses as the author of the Torah, such as in Romans 10:5. It is also interesting to note that Mark 12:26 states that God Himself uttered the words written in Exodus 3:6 to the historical Moses.

Second, upon further investigation, *other internal evidences attest to Moses’ authorship of the Pentateuch as well*. Independent investigation of the historical events recorded, of the contemporary issues of Moses’ day, of the descriptions of the plants and wildlife, and of the conditions of geography and climate has led scholars to believe that the author was originally a resident of Egypt and not of Israel. Investigation also confirms that the author of the Pentateuch was an eyewitness of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, and one who possessed a very high degree of education, literary skill, and familiarity with Egypt and the Hebrew way of life. Moses is the most reasonable choice as author since he appears to have possessed all the qualities and training necessary to fulfill the role of author.

The many geographic details recorded in passages such as Exodus 15:27 suggest that the author was an actual participant in the events themselves. Genesis and Exodus show the author’s familiarity with the land of Egypt and with Egyptian names, expressions, customs, and culture. In addition, the unity of arrangement and harmony that underlies the Torah also points to a single author of the text. And taking into account that the Pentateuch was written over a period of about four decades through progressive revelation given by God, we would expect differing writing styles.

Third, *the late date many critics assigned to Deuteronomy (the seventh century BC) has been thoroughly discredited* by the excellent scholarship of Meredith Kline. In his landmark work *The Treaty of the Great King*<sup>3</sup> he demonstrates that Deuteronomy follows the

form of the typical Hittite suzerainty treaty of the second millennium BC. This is the very time during which Moses would have written Deuteronomy.

### **The Historicity of Adam and Eve**

The first chapters of Genesis are generally considered by critical scholars to be myth and not actual historical events. They cite the poetic structure of the text, the parallels with ancient myths, and its contradiction of the theory of evolution as evidence that the accounts are legendary. But Genesis presents Adam and Eve as historical, literal people who began the human race. Indeed, an early archaeological discovery supports a literal Adam and Eve. In 1932 E.A. Speiser of the University Museum of Pennsylvania discovered a seal near the bottom of the Tepe Gawra Mound, 12 miles from Nineveh in Mesopotamia, that he dated about 3500 BC. It shows a naked man and woman both bent over as if they were downcast. Behind them is a serpent. The seal is about one inch in diameter, engraved on stone, and is now in the University Museum in Philadelphia. Professor Speiser noted that the image is strongly suggestive of the Adam and Eve story.

Both the Old and New Testaments continually refer to Adam and Eve as literal persons, recording the most important events in their lives, documenting the events of their descendants, placing Adam at the beginning of human genealogy, and telling of their literal existence as key to an accurate understanding of original sin.

Despite the common assumption by some that Genesis is a form of poetry, the casual reader will immediately recognize that its structure and genre do not necessarily follow the typical pattern of Hebrew poetry. When Genesis is compared with the poetic structure of Psalms and Proverbs, the differences are clearly evident. Genesis predominately contains narrative and tangible real-life descriptions and does not appear to contain significant amounts of poetry, whereas Psalms and Proverbs are poetic and melodic. The creation account of Genesis 2 reads like any other historical narrative found in the Old Testament. This is evidenced by the structure of the text, in that the account is introduced like other historical narratives with the phrase, “This is the account of...” Moreover, Jesus and the apostles viewed the creation account as an actual historical event (see Matthew 19:4; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:13-14). In fact, no New Testament passage treats the events recorded in Genesis as poetic or mythological.

### ***Reasons for Accepting Genesis 1–11 as Historical***

There are, in fact, many good reasons for accepting the historicity of Adam and Eve and, for that matter, the whole of Genesis 1–11:

1. Genesis 12 begins with what is called a *waw*-consecutive verb (“and he said”), which indicates that what follows is a continuation of chapter 11 and not a break.
2. The structure of Genesis is connected by the phrase “these are the generations (history) of...” which occurs ten times. Each time this phrase occurs it narrows the focus to something that has previously been discussed: the heavens and the earth (2:4), Adam (5:1), Noah (6:9), Noah’s sons (10:1),

Shem (11:10), Terah (11:27), Ishmael (25:12), Isaac (25:19), Esau (36:1), and Jacob (37:2).

3. Since six of the phrases mentioned in point 2 occur in Genesis 1–11 and four in Genesis 12–50, it is clear that both sections should be understood in the same way. They form the literary connectives that hold the whole historical record together.
4. There is a connective between both sections in the history of Abraham, Sarah, and Lot, which begins near the end of Genesis 11 (verses 27–32) and continues in chapters 12–25.
5. Genesis 12 makes little sense by itself without the preparatory genealogy given in chapter 11. Only hermeneutical gymnastics could bring one to take Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as historical, but not Adam, Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
6. The New Testament cites indiscriminately from both sections as historical. This is demonstrated below by numerous citations that confirm 15 persons or events from Genesis 1–11.

Therefore, Genesis 1–11 is just as historical as Genesis 12–50. Any hermeneutic which undermines the historicity of Genesis 1–11 is thereby undermining the full inerrancy of the Bible. And with it, they are undermining the authority of Christ, the New Testament writers, and many important Christian doctrines based on the historicity of Genesis 1–11. Consider all the New Testament references that support the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis:

1. The creation of the universe (Genesis 1)—Mark 13:19; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16
2. The creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 1–2)—Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19; 1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Corinthians 11:8–9; 15:45
3. God resting on the seventh day (Genesis 1)—Hebrews 4:3–4
4. The marriage of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2)—Matthew 19:4–6; Mark 10:7–8; Ephesians 5:31; 1 Corinthians 6:16
5. The temptation of Eve (Genesis 3)—1 Timothy 2:14; 2 Corinthians 11:3
6. The disobedience of Adam (Genesis 3)—Romans 5:12,14–19
7. The sacrifices of Abel and Cain (Genesis 4)—Hebrews 11:4
8. The murder of Abel by Cain (Genesis 4)—Matthew 23:35; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11
9. The birth of Seth (Genesis 4)—Luke 3:38
10. The translation of Enoch to heaven (Genesis 5)—Hebrews 11:5
11. Marriage before the Flood (Genesis 6)—Luke 17:27

12. The Flood and the destruction of mankind (Genesis 7)—Matthew 24:39
13. The preservation of Noah and his family (Genesis 8–9)—1 Peter 3:20;  
2 Peter 2:5
14. Noah's son Shem and his descendants (Genesis 10)—Luke 3:35-36
15. The birth of Abram (Abraham) (Genesis 11)—Luke 3:34

In view of this, to deny the historicity of these early chapters of Genesis is to deny, first, the inspiration of the New Testament; and second, the authority of Christ, who affirmed six of those chapters Himself (1, 2, 4, 8, 11, and 12). What is more, denying the historicity of Genesis 1–11 undermines crucial New Testament doctrines that are based on them. These include 1) the doctrine of marriage (Matthew 19:4-6); 2) the doctrine of the essential equality of men and women, who are both in “God’s image” (Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 11:7-12); 3) the doctrine of the essential unity of the human race (Acts 17:26); 4) the doctrine of the Fall of mankind (Romans 5:12-14); and 5) the doctrine of redemption by the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45).

### *Adam and Eve and Darwin's Theory*

Sometimes the historicity of Adam and Eve is dismissed due to its incompatibility with Darwin's theory of evolution. His book *On the Origin of Species* (1859) sought to explain the origins of the biological species by means of natural selection, contradicting the biblical assertion that species reproduce after their own kind. According to current macroevolutionary theory, the process of the development of plants, animals, and humans is governed by the unguided principle of survival of the fittest. Over the process of millions of years, variations in species begin to emerge as they evolve and adapt to their surrounding environment, enabling them to be better equipped to survive and then produce offspring with these same capabilities. Other species that have not developed with such characteristics would lack the capabilities necessary to thrive, which would lead to their eventual extinction.

Darwin's theory of evolution leaves no room for divine intervention in the emergence of life, which poses a direct contradiction to the creation account presented in Genesis, leaving many to doubt the reliability of the text of that book (see Genesis 1:1,3,6,9,21,27). However, there is no reason to accept the conclusions of macroevolutionary theory.

**The fossils say no.** First, no conclusive fossil evidence exists to support the evolutionary contention that certain kinds can transition into other kinds (for example, reptiles into birds, chimps into humans). All the so-called “missing links” have been either refuted as frauds or closely examined and discovered to be either animal or human, but not both.

Indeed, top evolutionists have acknowledged the lack of fossil evidence to support evolution. Darwin asserted that the lack of transitional fossils in the geological record is “the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory.”<sup>4</sup> *American Scientist* magazine contains the statement, “As Darwin noted in the *Origin of Species*,

the abrupt emergence of arthropods in the fossil record during the Cambrian presents a problem for evolutionary biology.”<sup>5</sup> The late Harvard scientist Stephen Gould admitted, “The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches.” Even in his later attempt to modify this statement he admitted that “transitional forms are generally lacking at the species level.”<sup>6</sup> Niles Eldredge said, “Most families, orders, classes, and phyla appear rather suddenly in the fossil record, often without anatomically intermediate forms.”<sup>7</sup> W. Ford Doolittle said, “The history of life cannot properly be represented as a tree.” Carl Woese noted that “there would never have been a single cell that could be called the last universal common ancestor.” Cornell University biology professor William Provine said, “The evidence for the big transformations in evolution are not there in the fossil record.”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, Antonis Rokas declared that “phylogenetic incongruities can be seen everywhere in the universal tree, from its root to the major branching within and among the various taxa to the makeup of the primary groupings themselves.”<sup>9</sup> Sir Fred Hoyle used a lively description: “The evolutionary record leaks like a sieve.”<sup>10</sup> After science had spent 150 years looking for missing links, Oxford biologist Mark Pagel “saw in the fossil records rapid bursts of change, new species appearing seemingly out of nowhere and then remaining unchanged for millions of years—patterns hauntingly reminiscent of creation.”<sup>11</sup>

**Observation and experimentation say no.** By contrast, science has supported the biblical view of the reproduction of each kind as being after its kind. That is, reptiles do not become birds. Experience and experimentation demonstrate that each kind reproduces after its own kind—no one has shown this to be false. Natural selection or survival of the fittest cannot account for the beginning of new kinds. There has been no experiment in the laboratory or observed experience in nature where natural selection produced a new biological kind.

There is certainly merit to the notion of survival of the fittest as a way to *weed out* weaker and sick animals and kinds, leaving the stronger animals to remain and reproduce. However, at best the principle of natural selection can only lead to the *survival* of kinds, not the *arrival* of kinds. Moreover, it should be noted that there is no fossil evidence that supports the claims that sudden drastic mutations, such as the addition of an organ or appendage, have occurred over a short time, say a thousand-year period. Studies in genetics have showed that the range of variations that are possible within a species are very limited and give no support to the possibility of the development of new kinds.

**Biochemistry says no.** Darwin described the criterion that would be fatal to the linchpin of his theory of evolution when he said,

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find out no such case.<sup>12</sup>

Even the most basic biological forms of life (for example, amoebas) have been scientifically shown to consist of complex information systems and patterns that reflect the involvement of intelligence. In fact, according to the famous evolutionist Richard Dawkins, there is the equivalent of 1,000 sets of encyclopedias of information in a one-celled animal.<sup>13</sup> These patterns and systems often resemble the workings, order, and precision of a factory assembly line (for example, DNA, RNA, replication, transport, coding, assembly, and so on), all of which can only be accounted for by a complex and intelligent cause.

In all cases of human experience there appear to be intelligent causes responsible for the existence of complex information systems.<sup>14</sup> If we are to be consistent in our thinking, this would hold true for all biological information systems, especially since all specified complexity (like information contained in a sentence) implies a designer. Darwin's criterion in the above quotation has been met by biochemist Michael Behe. Behe has demonstrated that the basic components of the cell appear to be irreducibly complex, meaning all of its components must be fully formed and functioning together for the cell to thrive. Thus, the cell could not have developed (evolved) through numerous, successive, and slight modifications. Evolutionary theory cannot account for the origin, development, and sustaining of the cell by slight successive changes over long periods of time. In such a case the cell's complexity would be reduced and could not survive.

As an analogy, the workings of the cell are much like the workings of a car. All the necessary system components (that is, engine, gasoline, spark plugs, transmission, battery, fuel injectors, and so on) must be present, complete, and functional all at once—or the car will not operate. For biological life this is certain death or even extinction. Behe uses the example of a mousetrap. If one of its component parts is broken or missing it will not catch mice. In other words, the mousetrap is irreducibly complex—any reduction in the complex parts will render the trap useless for its purpose of catching mice.

**Dating methods are not definitive.** The rejection of Adam and Eve's historicity because of an alleged contradiction between early evolutionary dates of man's origin with Genesis's timeline is unfounded for several reasons. First, there are both biblical and scientific arguments that can be used to support a young-earth view—that the creation of mankind occurred 10,000 or fewer years ago.\* Fossil dating methods to determine the antiquity of human origin are often inaccurate and not always trustworthy. Moreover, in some cases it is not clear whether the fossil remains analyzed are actually human. The well-known carbon-14 dating method is subject to the objection of whether the fossil

---

\* For example, noted physicist Gerald Schroeder argues that the universe is both 15 billion years old (judged from our perspective looking back) but yet only thousands of years old because there were only six literal days (from God's perspective looking forward). Genesis speaks from God's perspective, but since the universe has expanded, looking back from our perspective we judge the passage of time to have been much greater. Time is relative to space, and as space expands, time expands with it. So both the Bible (with its literal days of creation) and modern science could be correct (see Gerald Schroeder, *The Science of God* [New York: Free Press, 2009]). Other young-earth views challenge the constancy of the speed of light, the reliability of scientific dating methods, or both (see Henry M. Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science* [Philadelphia: P&R Press, 1970]).

was in a pure state. It is not always easy to discern whether there was a constant and uninterrupted rate of decay or whether the sample was contaminated by outside forces.

It is also worthy of note that some dating methods, carbon-14 among them, are only accurate for thousands of years, not for hundreds of thousands or millions of years. Therefore, some dating methods used to analyze fossils are, at best, dependent upon the speculations of the analyzer or are altogether inaccurate. Because the dating methods are based on analysis of bone fragments, scientists' attempts to reconstruct origins are very speculative. Therefore, the foundations of the objections made against the historicity of Adam and Eve are speculative. Second, the objection fails to understand that some Christians hold to an old-earth chronology that leaves room for an earlier date for Adam.

### **The Reliability of Controversial Mosaic Narratives**

The general reliability of the Old Testament narrative has been supported with numerous archaeological finds. As Nelson Glueck has boldly asserted, "As a matter of fact, however, it may be stated categorically that *no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference*. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."<sup>15</sup>

With the resurgence of Near-Eastern historical research and the successful excavation of Bible lands, Mosaic narratives have been given more ample historical support. The following chart will chronologically outline the general reliability of these key passages (see more detailed discussion in chapter 17, "Exodus and Conquest").

## The Historical Reliability of Genesis and Exodus: Summary of Major Points

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<b>Adam and Eve</b> Genesis 1–3	The literal existence of Adam and Eve is untenable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The biblical text refers to Adam and Eve as real historical persons who gave birth to real children (Genesis 4:1,25; 5:1ff.).</li> <li>• The Genesis text refers to its events as historical, using the Hebrew word <i>toledoth</i>, which is variously translated “history,” “generations,” “account,” and “records” (Genesis 6:9; 9:12; 10:1; 11:10; 17:7,9); these events include creation (2:4) and lineage of Adam and Eve (Genesis 5:1ff.).</li> <li>• Adam is listed at beginning of the ancestry of Jesus (whose existence has been securely established) (Luke 3:38).</li> <li>• Unless there was a literal first man and woman, the human race of today could not exist.</li> </ul>
<b>Date of Adam and Eve</b> Genesis 1–5	A late date for Adam and Eve is not scientific.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An early date is built on questionable assumptions that there are missing genealogical records (see Genesis 5; 11; 1 Chronicles 1:1-24) and that the creation “days” in Genesis 1 are not 24-hour periods.</li> <li>• The early date is built on the assumption that early fossil dating is accurate, and that these early fossils were human. These “human” fossils have been based on scant remains that have proven to be unreliable and speculative.</li> </ul>
<b>Genesis and Myth</b> Genesis 1–9	The early chapters of Genesis (1–2) are poetry and myth similar to Mesopotamian legends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genesis 1 is not written in Hebrew poetical form (couplets and parallelism; for example, see Psalms or Proverbs) despite the presence of what some believe to be parallel ideas in the days of creation (Genesis 1).</li> <li>• According to Dr. Walter Kaiser, the events of Genesis 1–11 are written in regular prose form (not poetic parallelism). Normal “use of the <i>waw</i>-consecutive with the verb to describe sequential acts, the frequent use of the direct object sign and the so-called relative pronoun, the stress on definitions, and the spreading out of these events in a sequential order indicates that we are in prose and not in poetry.”<sup>16</sup></li> <li>• Genesis 2–9 is written in plain historical narrative (like other historical narratives found in the Old Testament) without the presence of typical Hebrew poetical form.</li> <li>• The New Testament (Jesus, Matthew, Paul) considered the creation and Flood literal historical events (Matthew 19:4; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:13-15).</li> <li>• Near-Eastern scholars such as K.A. Kitchen and others have confirmed that the earlier Mesopotamian myth accounts (of creation and the Flood) should not be viewed as source material for the early chapters of Genesis, which were written later. Kitchen affirms that early legend or myth does not become more historical or simplified over time.<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<b>Genesis and Science</b> Genesis 1–9	Genesis contradicts the science of modern evolutionary theory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation account described in Genesis 1 stands in contradiction to macroevolutionary theory. However, it is important to note that the Bible (domain of Christian theology) and nature (domain of scientific inquiry) do not stand in contradiction to each other, since both domains have the same author—God. The interpretations of nature by fallible scientists and the interpretations of the Bible by fallible theologians are what stand in real conflict.</li> <li>• Macroevolutionary theory cannot adequately account for basic philosophical questions such as 1) How can something come from nothing? 2) How do information systems (for example, DNA) come from nonintelligent causes? 3) How does life emerge from nonliving causes? These questions are answered in Genesis.</li> <li>• Information systems such as DNA, the apparent fine-tuning of the universe and the galactic and solar habitable zones, and complex life require an intelligent cause for their existence. Natural, nonintelligent causes cannot explain the origin and sustaining of these conditions.</li> <li>• Biochemist Dr. Michael Behe has demonstrated through the concept of “irreducible complexity” (see <i>Darwin’s Black Box</i>) that simple cells and simple life forms could not have developed in a slow, incremental Darwinian fashion over long periods of time. Rather, they must have developed fully formed with all biological systems present all at once. In other words, these forms are irreducibly complex. These scientific observations are confirmed by Dr. William Dembski (see <i>The Design of Life</i>) and Dr. Stephen Meyer (see <i>Signature in the Cell</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Noah and the Flood</b> Genesis 6–9	Noah and the Flood story reflect legend similar to other ancient myths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering Noah and the Flood to be myth comes from an overemphasis on surface similarities between mythical and biblical accounts and the neglect of identifying the significant differences. These similarities do not demonstrate dependency but rather indicate both accounts share a common historical event. The earlier accounts are written in a highly mythical manner, whereas the later Genesis account is written in a historical, nonmythical style that indicates the later Genesis account is not dependent upon earlier Mesopotamian accounts. Near-Eastern experts have shown that myth never becomes more historical and simpler over time.</li> <li>• The Old Testament considers Noah and the Flood historical, indicated by the use of biblical words such as Noah’s “history,” “generation,” and “genealogy,” and even “nations” that came from him (Genesis 6:9; 10:1-11; 1 Chronicles 1:3-4; Isaiah 54:9; Ezekiel 14:14,20).</li> <li>• The New Testament considers both Noah and the Flood historical (Matthew 24:37-38; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5; 3:5-15).</li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Noah's Ark</b> Genesis 6–9</p>	<p>A wooden vessel could not survive catastrophic flood conditions over a long period of time. Besides, Noah's Ark probably did not exist.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific evidence gained from aquatic and nonpolar life, as well as geological evidence, demonstrates the earth was previously covered with water.<sup>18</sup></li> <li>• The presence of over two dozen literary works (for example, the Gilgamesh Epic, the Atrahasis Epic, and so on) and archaeological finds (for example, the Sumerian Kings List) mentioning the great Flood, from various people-groups (Chinese, Hindus, Indians, Mexicans, Hebrews, Greeks, Hawaiians, Mesopotamians, and so on) attests to the historicity of the Flood account in Genesis.<sup>19</sup></li> <li>• According to one naval architect, the design (long and rectangular) of the Ark was the one best-suited for stability and durability.<sup>20</sup></li> <li>• The gopher wood materials used to build the Ark have been recognized for their strength and flexibility under pressure. Some have considered the Ark to be more stable than our modern shipping vessels and modern ocean liners.<sup>21</sup> Unlike modern cruise ships, Noah's Ark was built for stability, not for speed (which reduces stability).</li> <li>• Instead of the extreme cargo weight (animals, feed, supplies, and so on) being a liability for the Ark, the weight provided the boat with stability in turbulent waters.</li> <li>• Ancient and medieval writers such as Josephus,<sup>22</sup> Theophilus of Antioch (AD 115–185),<sup>23</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis (AD 315–403),<sup>24</sup> Chrysostom (AD 345–407),<sup>25</sup> Isidore of Seville (AD 560–636),<sup>26</sup> Jehan Haithon (13th century),<sup>27</sup> Sir John Mandeville (d. 1372),<sup>28</sup> and Adam Olearius (AD 1603–1671),<sup>29</sup> acknowledge the existence of Noah's Ark.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tower of Babel</b> Genesis 11</p>	<p>The confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel is mythological. Originally, no extrabiblical mention of the event existed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent archaeological excavation in Mesopotamia has unearthed remains of at least 30 enormous stair-stepped pyramid-shaped towers, known today as <i>ziggurats</i>. The most ancient of these is located at Eridu and dates from the late fifth to early fourth millennium BC, lending historical credibility to the Genesis account. Among its many functions was to provide a place for a temple, which was located on top and dedicated to a god or gods.</li> <li>• The building materials described in Genesis 11:3 (thoroughly burnt “bricks” and “bitumen for mortar”—ESV) have been confirmed to have been in use in Mesopotamia (at Samarra) by the sixth millennium BC. For example, the Ziggurat of Ur-Nammu at Ur is made from these materials.</li> <li>• Mesopotamian literature reflects the Genesis account of the confusion of languages. For example, the fourth-millennium BC Sumerian legend known as “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta” contains allusions to a unified language and a subsequent diversifying of language by the gods (see “The Spell of Nudimmud”).</li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<p data-bbox="158 591 207 725"><b>Early Writing</b> Genesis 1–11</p>	<p data-bbox="245 591 391 899">Written languages did not exist during the period Genesis was supposedly written. Thus, the events Genesis describes could not have been written down.</p>	<ul data-bbox="422 227 1022 1246" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The word <i>Babel</i>, the term used in association with this event by God (11:9), is still used today to refer to unintelligible speech. Furthermore, the Mesopotamian area of “Babylon” adopted this name from early times, and it is located in the general vicinity of the Land of Shinar, where the events took place.</li> <li>• Of the two major theories of the origin and development of language (<i>monogenesis</i> and <i>candelabra</i> theories), neither can explain the linguistic phenomena of unity and diversity of current language. However, the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel adequately explains why diverse languages have similar words and speech, without the need for development over long time periods.</li> <li>• Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of written languages (pictographs) on clay tablets dating to the mid-fourth millennium BC. This is nearly 2,000 years prior to the events of Genesis being written down.</li> <li>• God could have revealed these events to the author of Genesis at a later time. To reject this possibility would require the rejection of miracles. However, a dismissal of miracles would first require evidence that God does not exist. For if God exists, then miracles (which are acts of God) are possible.</li> <li>• The repeated phrase “this is the account of...” (Genesis 2:4; 5:1) implies that Moses had earlier records from which to compile Genesis. Other extrabiblical works are mentioned throughout the Old Testament as sources for biblical authors, such as the Book of Jasher (Joshua 10:13) and The Books of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers 21:14); “The Chronicles of Samuel...Nathan the prophet...and...Gad the seer” may also fit in this category (1 Chronicles 29:29 <i>ESV</i>).</li> <li>• Due to the presence of the repeated phrase “This is the generation of...” Near-Eastern scholar P.J. Wiseman posits that the history of Genesis was originally written on clay tablets that would be continually passed on to succeeding generations.<sup>30</sup> This is consistent with Moses collecting these sources and editing them into their final version, especially since Genesis could not have been written any later than Moses’ time period (that is, mid-second millennium BC).</li> </ul>
<p data-bbox="158 1303 207 1437"><b>Historical Support</b> Genesis 1–11</p>	<p data-bbox="245 1303 391 1437">Most ancient people considered the Genesis accounts mythical.</p>	<ul data-bbox="422 1303 1022 1541" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus and the New Testament writers believed the early chapters of Genesis were historical. Examples include             <ol data-bbox="433 1385 1011 1541" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. creation of the universe (Genesis 1)—Mark 13:19; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; 2;</li> <li>2. creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 1–2)—Mark 10:6; 1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Corinthians 11:8–9; 15:45;</li> <li>3. God resting on the seventh day (Genesis 1)—Hebrews 4:3–4;</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<b>Destruction of Sodom and Its Location</b> Genesis 18–19	Sodom is a legendary city from Jewish folktales.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. the marriage of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2)—Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:7-8; Ephesians 5:31; 1 Corinthians 6:16;</li> <li>5. the temptation of Eve (Genesis 3)—1 Timothy 2:14; 2 Corinthians 11:3;</li> <li>6. the disobedience of Adam (Genesis 3)—Romans 5:12,14-19;</li> <li>7. the sacrifices of Abel and Cain (Genesis 4)—Hebrews 11:4;</li> <li>8. the murder of Abel by Cain (Genesis 4)—Matthew 23:35; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11;</li> <li>9. the birth of Seth (Genesis 4)—Luke 3:38;</li> <li>10. the translation of Enoch to heaven (Genesis 5)—Hebrews 11:5;</li> <li>11. marriage before the Flood (Genesis 6)—Luke 17:27;</li> <li>12. the Flood and the destruction of mankind (Genesis 7)—Matthew 24: 38-39.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After W.F. Albright conducted an exploration of the southeastern Dead Sea area in the early twentieth century, Sodom was no longer relegated to the pages of myth. He posited that the location of the city should be at the southeastern shores of the Dead Sea, the area known today as Bab edh-Dhra. Though chronological (too early dates) and geographical challenges still exist for identifying this location as Sodom, Albright forcefully shifted the Sodom story from “myth” to plausibility.</li> <li>• Recent geographical research and archaeological excavation by Dr. Steven Collins at Tall el-Hammam, which is located northeast of the Dead Sea, appear to answer the geographical and chronological challenges still hampering the southern location. After eight seasons of excavation, Collins has unearthed impressive archaeological evidence (to be published soon) to support his identification of Tall el-Hammam as Sodom. Evidences include a massive destruction layer, catastrophic high-heat indicators, 40 geographical markers supporting the biblical descriptions, strata supporting the chronological context of Sodom, absence of Late Bronze Age pottery, and a hiatus in population (even though this was a prime location) of nearly 700 years after its fiery destruction (see full article on Sodom in this book).</li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<p><b>The Patriarchs</b> Genesis 12–50</p>	<p>The biblical patriarchs in Genesis are legendary figures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Near-Eastern scholars such as William F. Albright, Edwin Yamauchi, P.J. Wiseman, K.A. Kitchen, and others are convinced by the archaeological evidence of the historicity of the Genesis patriarchs. The detailed descriptions of geography, customs, cultural characteristics, religion, linguistics, and law codes within the Bible have established the historical nature of the patriarchal narratives when compared to actual geography and archaeological finds.<sup>31</sup></li> <li>• Archaeological discoveries throughout the Near East have clarified and added to the argument for historicity. For example, the Amarna Tablets, Nuzi Tablets, Mari Letters, and Ras Shamra Tablets have contributed to our understanding of the similar cultural, legal, and religious expressions during the patriarchs' time period and among their contemporaries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Historical Nature of Exodus and Deuteronomy</b></p>	<p>Moses could not have written such a sophisticated law code like the one found in the Pentateuch by the fifteenth century BC, according to the Documentary Hypothesis of Graf and Wellhausen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Archaeological discoveries in the twentieth century answered this hypothesis. For example, in 1929, archaeologists (Claude F.A. Schaeffer and George Chenet in northern Syria, working in ancient Ugarit, today known as Minet el-Beida) unearthed a royal palace, scribal school, and a library adjoining a temple that contained a cache of archive documents dating to the late fifteenth century BC. The tablets were written in a variety of languages; however, the most often used was a Canaanite language that is very similar to Hebrew. The tablets were understood to be describing a sophisticated law code very similar in style to the Law of Moses. These texts also describe the dark religious practices of the Canaanite peoples in the land prior to Joshua's conquest. These wicked practices offer confirmation of the Canaanite deities, practices, and religious customs described in the Old Testament, including 1) the suffocation of children, who were buried alive, evidenced by the discovery of thousands of clay jars containing the remains of children who were sacrificed; 2) absence of morality among the gods; 3) orgiastic worship of nature; 4) male and female religious prostitution; 5) malice and jealousy among the gods; 6) other types of child sacrifice; 7) pornographic nudity with serpent symbols; 8) high religious mythology; and 9) sensual idol worship. These finds give new meaning and significance to the divine command given to Joshua and the Israelites to amputate the moral gangrene of the Canaanites and their religion.</li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">The Timing of the Exodus Exodus 12</p>	<p>Critical scholars have pushed the time of Israel's migration to the Holy Land forward to the late thirteenth century BC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ras Shamra texts use a number of terms similar to those associated with religious offerings described by Levitical terminology. These include “whole” (<i>ishsheh</i>), “burnt” (<i>kalil</i>), “peace” (<i>shelamin</i>), and “guilt” (<i>asham</i>) offerings. Because of the presence of sophisticated law codes contemporary to Moses’ time as evidenced in the Ras Shamra Tablets, it can no longer be asserted that Moses could not have penned the Mosaic law as early as the fifteenth century BC. Moreover, the texts have contributed much to our understanding of the development of the Hebrew script, as well as our understanding of the Old Testament, from about 1500 BC to the modern day. Furthermore, this discovery has dealt a mortal blow to negative higher critics who had asserted that Aramaic words contained in the Old Testament did not develop until after the exile to Babylon (sixth century BC). Several Aramaisms were found in the Ugaritic and Ras Shamra texts contemporary with Moses, which refutes this notion. (See our section on the Exodus in the archaeological portion of this book).</li> <li>• The biblical text indicates that the Exodus occurred in the late sixteenth to mid fifteenth century BC, and the text says Israel entered Canaan forty years later (Exodus 12:40; 1 Kings 6:1; Judges 11:26; Acts 13:19-20).</li> <li>• The Merneptah Stele (an official Egyptian government inscription) confirms that Israel was already in Canaan by the late thirteenth century BC, which eliminates any possibility of arguing for a late-thirteenth-century date for the Exodus.</li> <li>• Other plausible solutions have been proposed that make it no longer necessary to accept a late date for the Exodus. First, Donovan Courville has argued that there are about 600 extra years in the Egyptian chronology due to the listing of “sub-rulers” living simultaneously with Egyptian pharaohs. Previously, these rulers were thought to be successor kings, but now it is possible that they were contemporaneous with other rulers, which would shorten the Egyptian chronology considerably. When these chronological adjustments are made, it appears that Israelite history and the chronology of the Egyptian kings harmonize—including the early Exodus date of the mid-fifteenth century BC. Second, some have suggested (based on recent archaeological excavation) lowering the date of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) to about 1400 BC (instead of about 1550 BC), which would bring harmony between the fall of the cities of Canaan and Joshua’s account of the conquest. Further, the late date for the Exodus could be based on the mistaken notion that the city of “Raamses” (Exodus 1:11) was named after Ramses the Great, and that there was an absence of building projects in the Nile Delta before 1300, both of which would make the biblical account of the condition described in Exodus implausible.</li> </ul>

Scripture	Controversy	Evidence of Reliability
		<p>prior to 1300.<sup>32</sup> These ideas can be answered by recognizing that 1) the name “Ramses” may be referring to an earlier individual; after all, Ramses the Great is Ramses II (there must have been an earlier individual by this name—that is, Ramses I); 2) Genesis 47:11 describes the Nile Delta region as “Raamses” (the same place Jacob and family settled).<sup>33</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The date adjustments considered above would also fit nicely with certain Egyptian literary finds. For example, there are parallel accounts of the plagues that occurred at the time of the Exodus. The Ipuwer Papyrus (a 13th-century BC manuscript copy, meaning that the original was written earlier) was discovered in Egypt in 1828; it was translated in 1909 by Alan H. Gardner and found to have a direct parallel to the plagues brought on Egypt by God through Moses in Exodus (see chapter 17, “Exodus and Conquest,” for more detailed discussion).</li> <li>• Meredith Kline has argued convincingly that the critics’ seventh-century BC date for Deuteronomy should be rejected.<sup>34</sup> Rather, Kline argues that the form of Deuteronomy reflects the Hittite suzerainty treaty common in the second millennium BC, the same time period during which Moses is traditionally considered to have authored Deuteronomy.</li> </ul>

Chart © Joseph M. Holden, 2013.

### *A Final Word on the Pentateuch*

While literally thousands of finds have validated the persons and events presented in the Old Testament, not a single archaeological find has refuted anything in the Pentateuch. Noted biblical scholar Donald J. Wiseman affirms that “The geography of Bible lands and visible remains of antiquity were gradually recorded until today more than 25,000 sites within this region and dating to Old Testament times, in their broadest sense, have been located.”<sup>35</sup>

### **The Historicity of the Major Prophets (Isaiah and Jeremiah)**

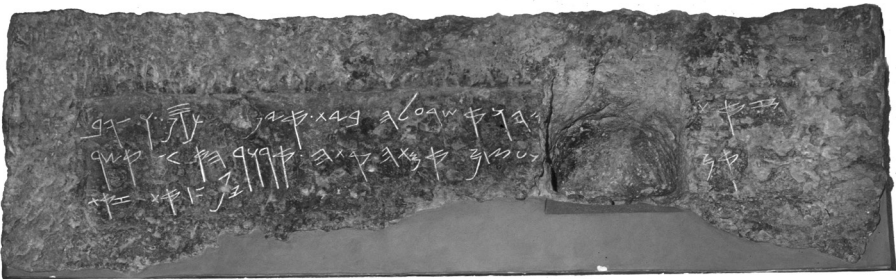
#### *The Historicity of Isaiah*

During the past two centuries, the book of Isaiah has been subject to endless scrutiny and criticism. In particular, the book’s nature and structure have engendered an array of views, ranging from the traditional view that Isaiah is one unitary book to a popular theory that it is a collection of three books (chapters 1–39; 40–55; 56–66) that were written at three distinct time periods.

However, in the discussions and debates concerning the supposed threefold division of the book, there appears no evidence from the text of Isaiah itself. Moreover, evidence from the Isaiah Scroll found at Qumran confirms the view of a single book. The book was found as a single unit, not stitched together, and



Discovered in 1931 on the Mount of Olives by E.L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, this first-century AD stone funerary inscription bears the name of king Uzziah (Azariah), who is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 26:21-13 and Isaiah 6:1. Most believe it is a copy of an earlier inscription originally attached to the king’s tomb. The inscription reads, “To this place were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah; do not open!” The final phrase of the inscription may reflect Uzziah’s leprous condition. (Photo by Zev Radovan.)



The prophet Isaiah rebukes a man named “Shebna” for building a tomb for himself in a very conspicuous place near the Temple (22:15-17). In 1870, Charles Clermont-Ganneau discovered this eighth-century BC Hebrew lintel inscription over a rock-cut tomb in the village of Silwan (Jerusalem). Later it was deciphered by Nahman Avigad and shown to belong to the royal steward of the king. Though only a partial name inscription remains, many believe this was the tomb of Shebna, the royal steward “who is over the house” (NKJV) of King Hezekiah. (Photo by Zev Radovan.)

not separated into three scrolls. In this complete scroll, one can see the text at 33:34, where the scribe intentionally left a blank space that was equal to about three lines, designating a break at the end of the column in order to begin a new column at chapter 34. Chapter 34 is very close to the midpoint of the book, and it would seem that there was reason to divide the book between chapters 33 and 34 as opposed to dividing it into three books between chapters 39 and 40, and 55 and 56 respectively. One theory addresses this twofold division from the standpoint of chronological significance, with chapters 1 through 33 dealing with the time period from Uzziah to Ahaz and chapters 34 through 66 with the time of Hezekiah and later. One can also see that each half corresponds well to the other in terms of the topics covered in seven parts.<sup>36</sup>

One view that favors a three-part structure attempts to offer traces of evidence that reveal its composition occurred at different time periods and different locations. There is little doubt that chapters 1 through 39 belong to the eighth century BC; that section contains geographical and cultural references to that era. Evidence that chapters 40 through 55 are based in Babylon (which this theory proposes) is not strong since these chapters do not convey knowledge of the metropolis of Babylon, but more appropriately belong to Israel and the Levant. For it was in that historical-geographical context that it seemed most appropriate for Isaiah to warn Hezekiah about the dangers of trifling with Babylon. Furthermore, chapters 56 through 66 do not pose any descriptive inconsistencies with composition in seventh-to-sixth-century BC pre-exilic Judah.

What is more, the Gospel of John, chapter 12:38-41 supports the unity of Isaiah. John the Apostle attributes quotations from both the first half and second half of the book to one and the same Isaiah. John writes, "...that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke" (verse 38 NKJV), which is followed by a quote of Isaiah 53:1. John continues in the very next verse (verse 39) and says, "Isaiah said again," followed by a quote of Isaiah 6:9-10. The context, quotes, and the presence of the word *again* confirms that there is only one Isaiah responsible for both parts of the book, and therefore the book should be considered a unity. The evidence supports a unitary view of the book of Isaiah, while alternative views of the book are inconsistent with normative prophetic composition, recording, and usage in the biblical world.

### *The Historicity of Jeremiah*

Jeremiah wrote the longest and most complexly formatted book in the Old Testament. The narrative sections contain many allusions to contemporary history as well as to various people who lived during Jeremiah's lifetime.\* Any attempt to date parts of Jeremiah



This late seventh-century BC stamp seal impression is written in the Hebrew script and reads, "Belonging to Baruch, son of Neriah, the scribe." Baruch was the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah; he wrote down the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:1-32). (Photo by Zev Radovan.)

\* See chapter 20 of this book, which identifies individuals such as Jehucal the son of Shelemiah (Jeremiah 37:3); [Pashhur] the son of Immer (20:1); Sarsekim, who was Nebuchadnezzar's chief officer during the invasion of Jerusalem (39:3); and Baruch, son of Neriah, the scribe of Jeremiah (36:4).

to a later period, such as the fifth to third century BC, appeals for support to the lack of extrabiblical knowledge of pre-exilic history. This however, is an argument from silence. The absence of pre-exilic history does not justify positing a later date for Jeremiah, nor does it undermine its reliability. The absence of historical references by no means indicates a latter or contradictory narrative.

Although the prophetic writings in the Hebrew Old Testament display many differences between each other, they nonetheless possess common characteristics. First of all, every prophetic book explicitly declares the author who wrote it and puts forth the contents as a message given to them by God Himself. What is more, nearly all the books contain a series of messages, oracles, or narratives of varying lengths that support the message. The only books excluded from this pattern are Nahum, Obadiah, and Habakkuk. With the exception of these books and the book of Jonah, the prophetic books were written down on separate occasions. Specific oracles and messages were given to prophets and written down by a scribe or amanuensis and were kept in a scroll as a series, although there are many instances where the prophet did write down his own words. There is a great amount of consistency and unity found within the text itself, which attests to the reliability of the Old Testament writings.

## Conclusion

The historicity of the Old Testament is widely supported by archaeological findings (see part 6). Every major aspect from Genesis to the post-captivity period is confirmed as history, not only by the New Testament writers, but by extrabiblical sources as well. The once critical scholar Dr. William F. Albright gradually grew to accept a more conservative view as a result of a lifetime study of the archaeological facts. He wrote,

Thanks to modern research we now recognize its [the Bible's] substantial historicity. The narratives of the patriarchs, of Moses and the exodus, of the conquest of Canaan, of the judges, the monarchy, exile and restoration, have all been confirmed and illustrated to an extent that I should have thought impossible forty years ago.<sup>37</sup>

More recently, a magazine not known for conservative leanings concluded an article titled "Is the Bible True?" with these words:

In extraordinary ways, modern archaeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old Testament—corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus.<sup>38</sup>