

MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH—TRIED AND TRUE

Eric Lyons, M.Min. and Zach Smith

Some time ago, a young lady from a local university visited our offices at Apologetics Press and asked to talk to someone about a “new theory” she had been taught in a freshmen literature class. For the first time in her life, she had been told that Moses could not have been the author of the first five books of the Old Testament.

“He lived too early in human history to have written it.”

“The Pentateuch contains information Moses could not have known.”

“Many of the details are from a later age and are inappropriately inserted into the book of Genesis.”

“The Pentateuch actually was pieced together by anonymous sources (commonly called J, E, D, and P) at a fairly late date—long after Moses’ death.”

This impressionable young freshman was extremely disturbed by her professor’s statements. She was completely taken aback by the things skeptics and alleged “biblical scholars” had to say about the matter. Consequently, she began to question what she had learned regarding the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch in her Sunday school classes and at the Christian school she had attended nearly all of her life.

“Why would I be taught my whole life by teachers and preachers that Moses wrote Genesis through Deuteronomy, if he really didn’t?”

“Why did I not know about this until now?”

“Does it really matter who wrote Genesis, anyway?”

THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

The idea that Moses did not write the Pentateuch actually has been around for more than a millennium. However, until the mid-seventeenth century, the vast majority of people still maintained that Moses was its author. It was in the mid-1600s that the Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza began to seriously question this widely held belief (Green, 1978, p. 47; Dillard and Longman, 1994, p. 40). French physician Jean Astruc developed the original Documentary Hypothesis in 1753, and it went through many different alterations until Karl Graf revised the initial hypothesis in the mid-nineteenth century. Julius Wellhausen then restated Graf’s Documentary Hypothesis and brought it to light in European and American scholarly circles (see McDowell, 1999, pp. 404-406). It thus has become known to many as the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis.

Since the “Period of Enlightenment,” the Graf-Wellhausen explanation of the origin of the Pentateuch has been thrust consistently into the faces of Christians. Liberal scholars teach that the Pentateuch was compiled from four original “source documents”—designated as J, E, D, and P. These four documents supposedly were written at different times by different authors, and eventually were compiled into the Pentateuch by a redactor (editor). The J, or Jehovahist, document (usually known as the Yahwehist document) supposedly was written around 850 B.C., and was characterized by its use of the divine name *Yahweh*. *Elohim* is the divine name that identifies the E, or Elohist, document, purportedly written around 750 B.C. The D, or Deu-

teronomist, document contained most of the book of Deuteronomy and was supposed to have been written around 620 B.C. The last section to be written was the P, or Priestly, document, which would have contained most of the priestly laws, and allegedly was written around 500 B.C. We are told these documents were then redacted (edited) into one work about 300 years later in 200 B.C. (Morris, 1976, p. 23; McDowell, 1999, p. 406).

It is becoming increasingly popular to believe this theory. For example, not long ago we at Apologetics Press received an e-mail “informing” us that “the documentary theory is accepted by almost all scholarly interpreters.” Numerous commentaries, religious journals, and Web sites consistently promote it. And many professors who teach religious courses espouse it. Undoubtedly, it is champion among the topics discussed in classes on a critical introduction to the Bible. In most “scholarly” circles, if one does not hold to the Documentary Hypothesis (or at least some form of it), he is considered fanatical and uneducated. In his book, *The Darwin Wars*, Andrew Brown mentioned an interview he had with the rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in which Dr. Sacks defended the proposition that Moses wrote (or dictated) the first five books of the Bible. Brown’s response was: “That is the most shocking thing I have ever heard an intellectual say” (1999, p. 167).

Why are people today having such a difficult time believing that Moses wrote the Pentateuch? Likely, the principal reason is because students are bombarded with adamant “assurance” statements like the following:

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch—
Tried and True*
Eric Lyons and Zach Smith. 1

DEPARTMENTS

- Speaking Schedules. 5

Note from the Editor

- Would You Help Us Support and
Train Our Summer Interns?*
Bert Thompson 8

RESOURCES

- Jonah and the “Whale”?*. 1-R
In the News 4-R

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2003. All rights reserved.

Editor:

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.*
(*Microbiology, Texas A&M University)

Associate Editor:

Brad Harrub, Ph.D.*
(*Neurobiology, University of Tennessee)

Annual Subscription Rates:

- \$10.00 Domestic
\$ 7.50 Domestic Bulk (5+ to same address)
\$16.00 Canada & Overseas Airmail

Mailing Address:

Apologetics Press, Inc.
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

Phone: (334) 272-8558
Fax: (334) 270-2002

Orders:

Phone: (800) 234-8558
Fax: (800) 234-2882

On-line Web store/catalog, subscription order/renewal form, current issues, archives, and other information (all orders processed on a secure server):

URL: www.ApologeticsPress.org
E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids

is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the Discovery Web site at:

URL: www.DiscoveryMagazine.com

“One of the **certain results** of modern Bible study has been the discovery that the first five books of the Old Testament were not written by Moses” (Gottwald, 1959, p. 103, emp. added).

“**It is obvious** that the Book of Genesis was not written by a single author” (Rendtorff, 1998, 14[1]:44, emp. added).

“The most determined biblicalist can see that **there is no way** Moses could have written the Torah” (McKinsey, 1995, p. 366, emp. added).

Statements such as these have made their way into thousands of classrooms. Sadly, before hearing skeptics and liberal scholars present their ineffectual arguments for such beliefs, students frequently become so spellbound by the “intellectual” façade and bold affirmations of certainty that they rarely even consider the evidence at hand.

MOSES AND THE ART OF WRITING

Amazingly, one of the first assumptions upon which this theory rests was disproved long ago. From the earliest period of the development of the Documentary Hypothesis, it was assumed that Moses lived in an age prior to the knowledge of writing. One of the “founding fathers” of this theory, Julius Wellhausen, was convinced that “[a]ncient Israel was certainly not without God-given bases for ordering of human life; **only they were not fixed in writing**” (1885, p. 393, emp. added). Just thirteen years later, Hermann Schultz declared: “Of the legendary character of the pre-Mosaic narrators, the time of which they treat is a sufficient proof. **It was a time prior to all knowledge of writing**” (1898, pp. 25-26, emp. added). One year later, T.K. Cheyne’s *Encyclopedia Biblica* was published, in which he contended that the Pentateuch was not written until **almost a thousand years after Moses** (1899, 2:2055). These suppositions most certainly had an impact on these men’s belief in (and promotion of) the theory that Moses could not possibly have written the first five books of the Old Testament.

One major problem with the Documentary Hypothesis is that we now know Moses did not live “prior to all knowledge of writing.” In fact, he lived **long after** the art of writing was already known. A veritable plethora of archaeological discoveries has proven one of the earliest assumptions of the Wellhausen theory to be wrong.

1. In 1949, C.F.A. Schaeffer “found a tablet at Ras Shamra containing the thirty letters of the Ugaritic alphabet in their proper order. It was discovered that the sequence of the Ugaritic alphabet was the same as

modern Hebrew, revealing that **the Hebrew alphabet goes back at least 3,500 years**” (Jackson, 1982, p. 32, emp. added).

2. In 1933, J.L. Starkey, who had studied under famed archaeologist W.M.F. Petrie, excavated the city of Lachish, which had figured prominently in Joshua’s conquest of Canaan (Joshua 10). Among other things, he unearthed a pottery water pitcher “inscribed with a dedication in eleven archaic letters, the earliest ‘Hebrew’ inscription known” (Wiseman, 1974, p. 705). According to Charles Pfeiffer,

The Old, or palaeo-Hebrew script is the form of writing which is similar to that used by the Phoenicians. A royal inscription of King Shaphatball of Ge-bal (Byblos) in this alphabet dates from about 1600 B.C. (1966, p. 33).

3. In 1901-1902, the Code of Hammurabi was discovered at the ancient site of Susa (in what is now Iran) by a French archaeological expedition under the direction of Jacques de Morgan. It was written on a piece of black diorite nearly eight feet high, and contained 282 sections. In their book, *Archaeology and Bible History*, Joseph Free and Howard Vos stated:

The Code of Hammurabi was written several hundred years before the time of Moses (c. 1500-1400 B.C.).... **This code, from the period 2000-1700 B.C.**, contains advanced laws similar to those in the Mosaic laws.... In view of this archaeological evidence, the destructive critic can no longer insist that the laws of Moses are too advanced for his time (1992, pp. 103,55, emp. added).

The Code of Hammurabi established beyond doubt that writing was known hundreds of years before Moses.

The truth is, numerous archaeological discoveries of the past 100 years have proven once and for all that the art of writing was known not only during Moses’ day, but also long before Moses came on the scene. Although skeptics, liberal theologians, and certain college professors continue to perpetuate the Documentary Hypothesis, they should be informed (or reminded) of the fact that **one of the foundational assumptions upon which the theory rests has been completely shattered by archeological evidence.**

EVIDENCE FOR THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS—REFUTED

Many of the questions surrounding this theory were answered years ago by the respected scholar J.W. McGarvey. His book, *The Authorship of Deuteron-*



omy), (first published in 1902) silenced many supporters of the Documentary Hypothesis. Critics simply could not overcome his ability to detect and expose the many perversions of their teachings. Over the last century, however, various critics eventually regained their confidence and began citing even more “evidence” for their theory. One category of “proof” frequently mentioned by skeptics and liberal scholars is that of chronological lapses (also called anachronisms). Allegedly, numerous references found in the Pentateuch are said to be of a later time; hence, it is impossible for them to be Mosaic. According to Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman in their extremely popular book on archaeology and the Bible, *The Bible Unearthed*, “archaeology has provided enough evidence to support a new contention that the historical core of the Pentateuch...was substantially shaped in the seventh century BCE” (2001, p. 14; BCE stands for Before the Common Era)—about 800 years after Moses lived. Two years earlier, Stephen Van Eck wrote in the *Skeptical Review*: “[T]he best evidence against the Mosaic authorship is contained in the Pentateuch itself,” which “contains anachronistic references impossible to be the work of Moses” (1999, p. 2). Thus, allegedly, “at the very least, we can conclude that many elements in the patriarchal narratives are unhistorical” (Tobin, 2000).

Just what are these “anachronistic references” that are “impossible to be the work of Moses”? And are there reasonable explanations for them being in the Pentateuch? What can be said about the alleged chronological lapses that have led many to believe the stories of the Bible are unhistorical?

NO KING IN ISRAEL...YET

For most people, the 36th chapter of Genesis is “unfamiliar territory.” It is known more for being the chapter after Genesis 35 (in which details are given about Jacob’s name being changed to Israel) and before chapter 37 (where one reads about Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery). Nowhere does Genesis 36 record the names of such patriarchs as Abraham, Isaac, or Joseph. (And Jacob is mentioned just once.) Nor are there any memorable stories from this portion of Genesis—of the kind that we learned in our youth. Perhaps the least-studied chapter in the first book of the Bible is Genesis 36—the genealogy of Esau.

Surprisingly, to some, this often-overlooked chapter contains one of the more controversial phrases in the book. Gene-

sis 36:31 states: “And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, **before there reigned any king over the children of Israel**” (emp. added). According to skeptics and liberal theologians, the notation “before there reigned any king over the children of Israel” points to the days of the monarchs. Dennis McKinsey declared in his book, *Biblical Errancy*:

This passage could only have been written after the first king began to reign. ...It had to have been written after Saul became king, while Moses, the alleged author, lived long before Saul (2000, p. 521).

Paul Tobin also indicated that this portion of the Bible “must therefore have been written, at the very earliest, after the first Jewish King, Saul, began to rule over the Israelites which was around three centuries after the death of Moses” (2000). Tobin went on to ask (a question he feels cannot possibly be answered): “Now how could Moses have known that there would be kings that reigned over the Israelites?”

There are two logical reasons why Moses could mention future Israelite kingship. First, Moses knew about the explicit promises God had made both to Abraham and Jacob concerning the future kings of Israel. On one occasion, God informed Abraham and Sarah that many kings would be among their posterity. He promised Abraham saying, “And I will bless her [Sarah—EL/ZS], and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; **kings of peoples shall be of her**” (Genesis 17:16, emp. added). Years later (and just one chapter before the verse in question), when God appeared to Jacob at Bethel and changed his name to Israel, He said: “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and **kings shall come out of thy loins**” (Genesis 35:11, emp. added). The fact that Genesis 36:31 reads, “And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, **before there reigned any king over the children of Israel**,” does not mean this account must have been written by someone who lived after the monarchy was introduced to Israel. Rather, this statement was written with the **promise** in mind that various kings would come out of the loins of Abraham and Jacob, and merely conveys the notion that Edom became a kingdom at an earlier time than Israel. Keil and Delitzsch remarked: “Such a thought was by no means inappropriate to the Mosaic age. For the idea, that Israel was destined to grow into a kingdom with monarchs of his [Jacob’s—EL/ZS] own family, was a hope handed down to the age of

Moses, which the long residence in Egypt was well adapted to foster” (1996). Furthermore, the placement of this parenthetical clause (“before any king reigned over the children of Israel”) in 36:31

was exceedingly natural on the part of the sacred historian, who, having but a few verses before (Gen 35:11) put on record the divine promise to Jacob that “kings should come out of his loins,” was led to remark [discuss—EL/ZS] the national prosperity and regal establishment of the Edomites long before the organization of a similar order of things in Israel. He could not help indulging such a reflection, when he contrasted the posterity of Esau with those of Jacob from the standpoint of the promise (Gen 25:23) [Jamieson, et al., 1997].

A second reason Moses is justified in having knowledge of Israelite kingship before it was known experientially is because Moses was inspired (John 5:46; Mark 12:26; cf. Exodus 20:1; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). For someone to say that the author of Genesis could not have been Moses, because the author spoke generally of Israelite kings prior to their existence, totally ignores the fact that Moses received special revelation from Heaven. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the passage found in Deuteronomy 17:14-15. Here, Moses prophetically stated:

When thou art come unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, “I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me;” **thou shalt surely set him king over thee, whom Jehovah thy God shall choose**: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother (emp. added).

Under normal circumstances, such foreknowledge would be impossible. One must keep in mind, however, that “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26)—and God was with Moses (cf. Exodus 3:12; 6:2; 25:22).

Were the Christian to claim that Moses wrote Genesis without being inspired or without having knowledge of the earlier promises made to Abraham and Jacob about the future kingship of Israel, the critic would be correct in concluding that Genesis 36:31 is anachronistic. But, the truth is, a Christian’s faith is based on the evidences which prove that the Bible writers possessed access to supernatural revelation. Thus, Moses’ superior knowledge is not a problem. Rather, it is to be expected.

CAMELS BEARING A HEAVY LOAD

Arguably, the most widely alleged anachronisms used in support of the idea that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible are the accounts of the early patriarchs possessing camels. The word “camel(s)” appears twenty-three times in twenty-one verses in the book of Genesis. The first book of the Bible declares that camels existed in Egypt during the time of Abraham (12:14-17), in Palestine in the days Isaac (24:63), in Padan Aram while Jacob was employed by Laban (30:43), and were owned by the Midianites during the time when Joseph was sold into Egyptian slavery (37:25,36). Make no mistake about it—the book of beginnings clearly teaches that camels had been domesticated since at least the time of Abraham.

According to skeptics, and a growing number of “biblical scholars,” however, the fact that Moses wrote about camels being domesticated in the time of Abraham directly contradicts the archaeological evidence. Over one hundred years ago, T.K. Cheyne wrote: “The assertion that the ancient Egyptians knew of the camel is unfounded” (1899, 1:634). In Norman Gottwald’s defense of the Documentary Hypothesis, he cited the mention of camels in Genesis as one of the main “indications that the standpoint of the writer was later than the age of Moses” (1959, p. 104). More recently, Finkelstein and Silberman confidently asserted:

We now know through archaeological research that **camels were not domesticated as beasts of burden earlier than the late second millennium** and were not widely used in that capacity in the ancient Near East until well after 1000 BCE (2001, p. 37, emp. added).

By way of summary, then, what the Bible believer has been told is: “[T]ame camels were simply unknown during Abraham’s time” (Tobin, 2000).

While these claims have been made repeatedly over the last century, the truth of the matter is that skeptics and liberal theologians are unable to cite one piece of solid archaeological evidence in support of their claims. As Randall Younker of Andrews University stated in March 2000 while delivering a speech in the Dominican Republic: “Clearly, scholars who have denied the presence of domesticated camels in the 2nd millennium BC have been committing the fallacy of arguing from silence. This approach should not be allowed to cast doubt upon the veracity of any historical document, let alone Scripture” (2000). The burden of proof actually should be upon skeptics

to show that camels were not domesticated until well after the time of the patriarchs. Instead, they assure their listeners of the camel’s absence in Abraham’s day—without one shred of archaeological evidence. [Remember, for many years they also argued that writing was unknown during the time of Moses—a conclusion based entirely on “silence.” Now, however, they have recanted that idea, because evidence has been found to the contrary.]

What makes their claims even more disturbing is that several pieces of evidence do exist (and have existed for some time) that prove camels were domesticated during (and even before) the time of Abraham (approximately 2,000 B.C.). In an article that appeared in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* a half-century ago, professor Joseph Free listed several instances of Egyptian archaeological finds supporting the domestication of camels. [NOTE: The dates given for the Egyptian dynasties are from Clayton, 2001, pp. 14-68]. The earliest evidence comes from a pottery camel’s head and a terra cotta tablet with men riding on and leading camels. According to Free, these are both from predynastic Egypt (1944, pp. 189-190), which according to Clayton is roughly before 3150 B.C. Free also lists three clay camel heads and a limestone vessel in the form of a camel lying down—all dated during the First Dynasty of Egypt (3050-2890 B.C.). He then mentions several models of camels from the Fourth Dynasty (2613-2498 B.C.), and a petroglyph depicting a camel and a man dated at the Sixth Dynasty (2345-2184 B.C.). Such evidence has led one respected Egyptologist to conclude that “the extant evidence clearly indicates that the domestic camel was known [in Egypt—EL/ZS] by 3,000 B.C.”—long before Abraham’s time (Kitchen, 1980, 1:228).

Perhaps the most convincing find in support of the early domestication of camels in Egypt is a rope made of camel’s hair found in the Fayum (an oasis area southwest of modern-day Cairo). The two-strand twist of hair, measuring a little over three feet long, was found in the late 1920s, and was sent to the Natural History Museum, where it was analyzed and compared to the hair of several different animals. After extensive testing, it was determined to be camel hair, dated (by analyzing the layer in which it was found) to the Third or Fourth Egyptian Dynasty (2686-2498 B.C.). In his article, Free also listed several other discoveries from around 2,000 B.C. and later, each of which showed camels as domestic animals (1944, pp. 189-190).

While prolific in Egypt, finds relating to the domestication of camels are not limited to the African continent. In his book, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, Kenneth Kitchen, professor emeritus at the University of Liverpool, reported several discoveries **made outside of Egypt**, proving that ancient camel domestication existed around 2,000 B.C. Lexical lists from Mesopotamia have been uncovered that show a knowledge of domesticated camels as far back as that time. Camel bones have been found in household ruins at Mari in present-day Syria that fossilologists believe are also at least 4,000 years old. Furthermore, a Sumerian text from the time of Abraham has been discovered in the ancient city of Nippur (located in what is now southeastern Iraq) that clearly implies the domestication of camels by its allusions to camels’ milk (Kitchen, 1966, p. 79).

All of these documented finds support the domestication of camels in Egypt many years before the time of Abraham. Yet, as Younker so well stated, skeptics refuse to acknowledge any of this evidence.

It is interesting to note how, once an idea gets into the literature, it can become entrenched in conventional scholarly thinking. I remember doing research on the ancient site of Hama in Syria. As I was reading through the excavation reports (published in French), I came across a reference to a figurine from the 2nd millennium which the excavator thought must be a horse, but the strange hump in the middle of its back made one think of a camel. I looked at the photograph and the figurine was obviously that of a camel! The scholar was so influenced by the idea that camels were not used until the 1st millennium, that when he found a figurine of one in the second millennium, he felt compelled to call it a horse! This is a classic example of circular reasoning (2000, parenthetical comment in orig.).

Finds relating to the domestication of camels are not as prevalent in the second millennium B.C. as they are in the first millennium. This does not make the skeptics’ case any stronger, however. Just because camels were not as widely used during Abraham’s time as they were later, does not mean that they were entirely undomesticated. As Free commented:

Many who have rejected this reference to Abraham’s camels seem to have assumed something which the text does not state. **It should be carefully noted that the biblical reference does not necessarily indicate that the camel was common in Egypt at that time**, nor does it evidence that the Egyptians had made any great progress in the breeding and domestication of camels. It merely says that Abraham had camels (1944, p. 191, emp. added).

Similarly, Younker noted:

This is not to say that domesticated camels were abundant and widely used everywhere in the ancient Near East in the early second millennium. However, the patriarchal narratives do not necessarily require large numbers of camels.... The smaller amount of evidence for domestic camels in the late third and early second millennium B.C., especially in Palestine, is in accordance with this more restricted use (1997, 42:52).

Even without the above-mentioned archaeological finds (which to the unbiased examiner prove that camels were domesticated in the time of Abraham), it only seems reasonable to conclude that because wild camels have been known since the Creation, “there is no credible reason why such an indispensable animal in desert and semi-arid lands should not have been sporadically domesticated in patriarchal times and even earlier” (see “Animal Kingdom,” 1988). The truth is, all of the available evidence points to one conclusion—the limited use of domesticated camels during and before the time of Abraham. The supposed “anachronism” of domesticated camels during the time of the patriarchs is, in fact, an actual historical reference to the use of these animals at that time. Those who reject this conclusion cannot offer a single piece of solid archaeological evidence on behalf of their theory. They simply argue from the “silence” of archaeology...which is silent no more!

MOSES' KNOWLEDGE OF GATES

A further “proof” against Mosaic authorship is the continuous mention of gates throughout the Pentateuch. As McKinsey wrote:

Deut. 15:22 says, “Thou shalt eat it within thy gates.” The phrase “within thy gates” occurs in the Pentateuch about twenty-five times and refers to the gates of Palestinian cities, which the Israelites did not inhabit until after the death of Moses (1995, p. 363, emp. in orig.).

In making this statement, however, Mr. McKinsey commits a gross error by assuming that the passage is referring solely to the “gates of Palestinian cities.” Moreover, what skeptics like McKinsey fail to mention is the fact that “gate” does not necessarily mean the large doors in the walls of fortified cities. Sometimes, gates are used to represent entrances into areas of dwelling, as in Exodus 32:26: “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, ‘Whoso is on Jehovah’s side, (let him come) unto me.’ And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (emp. added). Would anyone suppose that the Israelites built walls and gates around their Bedouin-style tent cities? Of course not. Therefore, “gate” can mean the entrance to a city—of tents. In fact, the Hebrew word for gate (*šā’ar*) is translated as “entrance” ten times in the NIV. And in the NKJV, *šā’ar* is translated as “entrance” in Exodus 32:36.

Giving Dennis McKinsey the benefit of the doubt (that the term “gates” refers to the Palestinian cities), Moses could have been referring to the cities that the Israelites would capture in the future. Since he was inspired while writing the Pentateuch (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), this knowledge could have been the result of that inspiration, similar to the knowledge that Israel one day would have a king. Either way, the mention of “gates” in the Pentateuch is not anachronistic.

PHILISTINES IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM—FALLACY OR FACT?

The Bible declares that long before King David defeated the Philistine giant named Goliath in the valley of Elah (1 Samuel 17), Abraham and Isaac had occasional contact with a people known as the Philistines. In fact, seven of the eight times that the Philistines are mentioned in Genesis, they are discussed in connection with either Abraham’s visit with Abimelech, king of the Philistines (21:32,34), or with Isaac’s visit to the same city (Gerar) a few years later (26:1,8,14-15,18). For some time now, critics of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch have considered the mention of the Philistines—so early in human history—to be inappropriately inserted into the patriarchal account. Supposedly, “Philistines...did not come into Palestine until after the time of Moses” (Gottwald, 1959, p. 104, emp. added), and any mention of them before that time represents a “historical inaccuracy” (Frank, 1964, p. 323). Thus, as Millar Burrows concluded, the mention of Philistines in Genesis may be considered “a convenient and harmless anachronism,” which “is undoubtedly a mistake” (1941, p. 277).

As with most allegations brought against the Scriptures, those who claim the Philistine nation was not around in Abraham’s day are basing their conclusion on at least one unprovable assumption—namely, that the Philistines living in the days of the patriarchs were a great nation, similar to the one living during the time of the United Kingdom. The evidence suggests, however, that this assumption is wrong. The Bible does not present the Philistines of Abraham’s day as the same mighty Philistine nation that would arise hundreds of years later. Abimelech, the king of Gerar, is portrayed as being intimidated by Abraham (cf. Genesis 21:25). Surely, had the Philistine people been a great nation in the time of the patriarchs, they would not have been afraid of one man (Abraham) and a few



Dr. Bert Thompson

January 13	Bedford, TX	(817) 282-6526
January 17-19	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 765-2623
January 24-26	Ruston, LA	(318) 255-0417
January 31-February 2	Valdosta, GA	(229) 242-1069

Dr. Brad Harrub

February 7-9	Warner Robins, GA	(912) 922-3056
February 14-16	Paris, TN	(731) 642-2861

Dr. Dave Miller

January 13-15	Bedford, TX	(817) 282-6526
January 19	Leeds, AL	(205) 699-2447
January 24-26	Columbiana, AL	(205) 669-4339

Kyle Butt

February 1	Eufaula, AL	(334) 687-7385
February 7-9	Gadsden, AL	(256) 547-3731

Eric Lyons

February 2	Clarksburg, TN	(731) 986-3130
March 14-15	Augusta, GA	(706) 855-0801

hundred servants (cf. Genesis 14:14). Furthermore, of the five great Philistine city-states that were so prominent throughout the period of the Judges and the United Kingdom (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza—Joshua 13:3; 1 Samuel 6:17), none was mentioned. Rather, only a small village known as Gerar was named. To assume that the Bible presents the entire civilization of the Philistines as being present during Abraham's day is to err. In reality, one reads only of a small Philistine kingdom.

The word "Philistine" was a somewhat generic term that meant "sea people." No doubt, some of the Aegean sea people made their way to Palestine long before a later migration took place—one that was considerably larger. In commenting on these Philistines, Larry Richards observed:

While there is general agreement that massive settlement of the coast of Canaan by sea peoples from Crete took place around 1200 B.C., there is no reason to suppose Philistine settlements did not exist long before this time. In Abram's time as in the time of Moses a variety of peoples had settled in Canaan, including Hittites from the far north. Certainly the seagoing peoples who traded the Mediterranean had established colonies along the shores of the entire basin for centuries prior to Abraham's time. There is no reason to suppose that the Philistines, whose forefathers came from Crete, were not among them (1993, p. 40).

No archaeological evidence exists that denies various groups of "sea people" were in Canaan long before the arrival of the main body in the early twelfth century B.C. (see Unger, 1954, p. 91; Archer, 1964, p. 266; Harrison, 1963, p. 32). To assume that not a single group of Philistines lived in Palestine during the time of Abraham because archaeology has not documented them until about 1190 B.C. is to argue from negative evidence, and is without substantial weight. In response to those who would deny the Philistines' existence based upon their silence in the archeological world before this time, professor Kitchen stated:

Inscriptionally, we know so little about the Aegean peoples as compared with those of the rest of the Ancient Near East in the second millennium B.C., that it is premature to deny outright the possible existence of Philistines in the Aegean area before 1200 B.C. (1966, p. 80n).

Likely, successive waves of sea peoples from the Aegean Sea migrated to Canaan, even as early as Abraham's time, and continued coming until the massive movement in the twelfth century B.C. (Archer, 1970, 127:18).

Based on past experiences, one might think that critics of the Bible's inerrancy would learn to refrain from making accusations when arguing from silence. For years, modernists and skeptics taught that the Hittite kingdom, which is mentioned over forty times in Scripture (Exodus 23:28; Joshua 1:4; et al.), was a figment of the Bible writers' imaginations, since no evidence of the Hittite's existence had been located. But those utterances vanished into thin air when, in 1906, the Hittite capital was discovered, along with more than 10,000 clay tablets that contained the Hittite's law system. Critics of the Bible's claim of divine inspiration at one time also accused Luke of gross inaccuracy because he used the title *politarchas* to denote the city officials of Thessalonica (Acts 17:6,8), rather than the more common terms *stratego* (magistrates) and *exousiais* (authorities). To support their accusations, they pointed out that the term *politarch* is found nowhere else in all of Greek literature as an official title. Once again, these charges eventually were dropped, based on the fact that the term *politarchas* has now been found in 32 inscriptions from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D. (Bruce, 1988, p. 324n), with at least five of these inscriptions originating from Thessalonica—the very city about which Luke wrote in Acts 17 (Roberts, 1997).

Although critics accuse biblical writers of revealing erroneous information, their claims continue to evaporate with the passing of time and the compilation of evidence.

DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHO WROTE THE PENTATEUCH?

To some, the question of whether or not Moses wrote the Pentateuch is a trivial matter—one of secondary importance. After all, we do not consider it an absolute necessity to know whom God inspired to write the book of Job or the epistle of Hebrews. We do not draw lines of fellowship over who wrote 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Why, then, should the discussion of who penned the first five books of the Bible be any different? **The difference is that the Bible is filled with references attributing these books to Moses!** Within the Pentateuch itself, one can read numerous times how Moses wrote the law of God.

"Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah" (Exodus 24:4).

"Jehovah said unto Moses, 'Write thou these words...'" (Exodus 34:27).

"Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of Jehovah" (Numbers 33:2).

"Moses wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests..." (Deuteronomy 31:9).

Bible writers throughout the Old Testament credited Moses with writing the Pentateuch (also known as the Torah or "the Law"). A plain statement of this commonly held conviction is expressed in Joshua 8:32: "There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones **the law of Moses, which he [Moses—EL/ZS] had written**" (NIV, emp. added). Notice also that 2 Chronicles 34:14 states: "Hilkiah the priest found **the Book** of the law of Jehovah **given by Moses**" (emp. added; cf. Ezra 3:2; 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1, and Malachi 4:4). As Josh McDowell noted in his book, *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, these verses "refer to an actual written 'law of Moses,' not simply an oral tradition" (1975, pp. 93-94). [NOTE: The Hebrew Bible was not divided like our modern English Old Testament. It consisted of three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (cf. Luke 24:44). It contained the same "books" we have today; it was just divided differently. Genesis through Deuteronomy was considered one unit, and thus frequently was called "the Law" or "the Book" (2 Chronicles 25:4; cf. Mark 12:26). Even a casual perusal of its individual components will confirm that each book presupposes the one that precedes it. Without Genesis, Exodus reads like a book begun midway; without Exodus, Leviticus is a mystery, and so on. They were not intended to be five separate volumes in a common category, but rather, are five divisions of the same book. Hence, the singular references: "the Law" or "the Book."]

The New Testament writers also showed no hesitation in affirming that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. John wrote: "The law was given through Moses" (John 1:17). Luke recorded of the resurrected Jesus: "And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them [His disciples—EL/ZS] in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Referring to the Jewish practice of publicly reading the Law, James affirmed Mosaic authorship: "For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21). With this Paul concurred, saying, "For **Moses writes** about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them'" (Romans 10:5, NKJV, emp. added; cf. Leviticus 18:5). In 2 Corinthians 3:15, Paul also wrote: "Moses is read."

The phrase “Moses is read” is a clear example of the figure of speech known as metonymy (where one thing is put for another) [see Dungan, 1888, pp. 273-275]. Today, we may ask if someone has read Shakespeare, Homer, or Virgil, by which we mean to ask if he or she has read the **writings** of these men. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, one reads where Abraham spoke to the rich man concerning his five brothers saying, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). Were Moses and the Old Testament prophets still on Earth in the first century? No. The meaning is that the rich man’s brothers had **the writings of Moses** and the prophets.

Furthermore, both Jesus’ disciples and His enemies recognized and accepted the books of Moses. After Philip was called to follow Jesus, he found his brother Nathanael and said: “We have found Him of whom **Moses in the law**, and also the prophets, **wrote**—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45, NKJV, emp. added). Notice also that New Testament Sadducees considered Moses as the author, saying, “Teacher, **Moses wrote unto us**, if a man’s brother die, and leave a wife behind him, and leave no child, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother” (Mark 12:19, emp. added; cf. Deuteronomy 25:5).

A final reason that one must defend the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, instead of sitting by idly and claiming that “it doesn’t really matter who wrote it,” is because **Jesus Himself acknowledged that “the Law” came from Moses**. In Mark 7: 10, Jesus quoted from both Exodus 20 and 21, attributing the words to Moses. Mark likewise recorded a conversation Jesus had with the Pharisees regarding what “Moses permitted” and “wrote” in Deuteronomy chapter 24 (Mark 10:3-5; cf. Matthew 19:8). Later, we see where Jesus asked the Sadducees, “Have you not read **in the book of Moses**, in the place concerning the bush, how **God spake unto him**, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’” (Mark 12:26, emp. added). But, perhaps the most convincing passage of all can be found in John 5:46-47, where Jesus stated: “For if ye believed **Moses**, ye would believe me; for he **wrote of me**. But if ye believe not **his writings**, how shall ye believe my words?” (John 5: 46-47, emp. added; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-18). The truth is, by claiming that Moses did not write the books of the Pentateuch, one essentially is claiming that Jesus was mistaken. M.R. DeHaan expounded upon this problem in his book, *Genesis and Evolution*:

Prove that Moses did not write the books of the Pentateuch and you prove that Jesus was totally mistaken and not the infallible Son of God he claimed to be. Upon your faith in Moses as the writer of the five books attributed to him rests also your faith in Jesus as the Son of God. You cannot believe in Jesus Christ without believing what Moses wrote. You see, there is much more involved in denying the books of Moses than most people suppose (1978, p. 41).

Indeed, believing Moses wrote the Pentateuch is **very** important. It is not a trivial issue we should treat frivolously while suggesting that “it really doesn’t matter.” It matters because the deity of Christ and the integrity of the Bible writers are at stake!

REFERENCES

- “Animal Kingdom” (1988), *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft), orig. published by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois.
- Archer, Gleason (1964), *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Archer, Gleason L. (1970), “Old Testament History and Recent Archaeology from Abraham to Moses,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 127:3-25, January.
- Brown, Andrew (1999), *The Darwin Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster).
- Bruce, F.F. (1988), *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), revised edition.
- Burrows, Millar (1941), *What Mean These Stones?* (New Haven, CT: American Schools of Oriental Research).
- Cheyne, T.K. (1899), *Encyclopedia Biblica* (London: A & C Black).
- Clayton, Peter A. (2001), *Chronicle of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames & Hudson).
- DeHaan, M.R. (1978), *Genesis and Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman III (1994), *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Dungan, D.R. (no date), *Hermeneutics* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light).
- Finkelstein, Israel and Neil Asher Silberman (2001), *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Free Press).
- Frank, H.T. (1964), *An Archaeological Companion to the Bible* (London: SCM Press).
- Free, Joseph P. (1944), “Abraham’s Camels,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 3:187-193, July.
- Free, Joseph P. and Howard F. Vos (1992), *Archaeology and Bible History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Gottwald, Norman (1959), *A Light to the Nations* (New York: Harper and Row).
- Green, William Henry (1978), *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Harrison, R.K. (1963), *The Archaeology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row).
- Jackson, Wayne (1982), *Biblical Studies in the Light of Archaeology* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).

- Jamieson, Robert, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft).
- Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch (1996), *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft), new updated edition.
- Kitchen, K.A. (1966), *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press).
- Kitchen, K.A. (1980), *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale).
- McDowell, Josh (1975), *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ).
- McDowell, Josh (1999), *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Nelson).
- McGarvey, J.W. (1902), *The Authorship of Deuteronomy* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard).
- McKinsey, C. Dennis (1995), *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus).
- McKinsey, C. Dennis (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus).
- Morris, Henry M. (1976), *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Pfeiffer, Charles F. (1966), *The Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Rendtorff, Rolf (1998), “What We Miss by Taking the Bible Apart,” *Bible Review*, 14[1]: 42-44, February.
- Richards, Larry (1993), *735 Baffling Bible Questions Answered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell).
- Robertson, A.T. (1997), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft).
- Schultz, Hermann (1898), *Old Testament Theology*, transl. from fourth edition by H.A. Patterson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark).
- Tobin, Paul N. (2000), “Mythological Elements in the Story of Abraham and the Patriarchal [sic] Narratives,” *The Rejection of Pascal’s Wager* [On-line], URL: <http://www.geocities.com/paulntobin/abraham.html>.
- Unger, Merrill (1954), *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Van Eck, Stephen (1999), “The Pentateuch: Not Wholly Moses or Even Partially,” *Skeptical Review*, 10:2-3, 16, September/October.
- Wellhausen, Julius (1885), *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black), translated by Black and Menzies.
- Wiseman, D.J. (1974), *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Yunker, Randall W. (1997), “Late Bronze Age Camel Petroglyphs in the Wadi Nasib, Sinai,” *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*, 42: 47-54.
- Yunker, Randall W. (2000), “The Bible and Archaeology,” *The Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship*, [On-line], URL: http://www.aiias.edu/ict/vol_26B/26Bc_457-477.htm.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



WOULD YOU HELP US SUPPORT AND TRAIN OUR SUMMER INTERNS?

As regular readers of *Reason & Revelation* are well aware, one of my goals always has been, and ever remains, finding, training, and eventually bringing on board (on a full-time basis) a coterie of young men that can maintain the biblical soundness of the work, while simultaneously ushering it into the next century and beyond. Apologetics Press never has been, and never will be, a “one-man show.” Too many have sacrificed too much for too long to see the work fade and die—just because its founder does.

My continual prayer to God is that He will help me have the wisdom to identify such young men, and that He will provide the resources to allow me to train them to the appropriate level so that they one day can make their own contribution—via the work of Apologetics Press—to proclaiming and defending the Old Jerusalem Gospel. I suspect that regular readers of *R&R* certainly would agree with me that God has done His part. I currently work with what surely must be the best staff that any man could ever hope to have. Kyle Butt (our Director of Biblical Research), Eric Lyons (our Director of Research), Dr. Brad Harrub (our Director of Scientific Information), and Dr. Dave Miller (the chairman of our newly established Department of Biblical Studies) are all dedicated Christians, diligent workers, and scholars in their own right. They have had a tremendous impact on this work, on the church at large, and on non-Christians via their writings and lectures. And, Lord willing, that impact will continue for years to come.

Now it is time for me to do my part. Several years ago, I began the search for a small cadre of high school and college-age students with an above-average interest in the fields of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences—young men who are faithful, dedicated Christians and who possess an impressive array of writing, speaking, and organizational talents.

We now have **four** full-time summer interns, two of whom have spent multiple summers with us, and two of whom will be returning for their second “tour of duty” next summer. In the fall of 2003, **Alden Bass** will be a junior zoology major at Yale University, and **Joe Deweese** will be a senior biochemistry major at Freed-Hardeman University. We already have published in *R&R* several articles by Alden and Joe (July 2000, November and December 2001, June and December 2002). In last month’s issue (December 2002), we not only ran additional articles by Alden and Joe, but also included articles by two additional young men who worked as interns for the first time in the summer of 2002. **Branyon May** will be (in the fall of 2003) a senior physics major at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas; **Zach Smith**

(co-author of this month’s issue of *Reason & Revelation*) will be a junior Bible major at Freed-Hardeman. During the upcoming summer of 2003, we have a least two, and possibly three, new young men coming to join us as interns (each of whom is of high school age, and each of whom is extremely bright—we’re talking straight-A students here!).

With this kind of talent readily at hand, the future of our work looks bright indeed. If all goes as intended, within just a few short years (after stints in a variety of graduate schools), a quartet of freshly minted Ph.D.s (a biochemist, a zoologist, a physicist, and a biblical languages expert) will arrive—running at full throttle as they join us in our (and their!) work.

But I need your help—desperately—to make all of this happen. Rhonda (that pitiable woman who married me more than thirty years ago) and I house and feed the interns (yes, we have considered putting a revolving door on our refrigerator!). But all these young men give up sizable salaries from regular summer jobs in order to work with us at Apologetics Press. We are unable to match such salaries, but we do provide some remuneration. And this is where we need your assistance. Could you please look at your 2003 budget, and consider helping support one (or more!) of our summer interns? For those of you who own your own business, might it be possible for you to sponsor one of these young men during his summer with us? We also would appreciate it if you could make a plea to the congregation where you worship.

Our interns are deserving of your support, I assure you. They spend extremely long hours researching and writing articles for *R&R*, *Discovery*, our new children’s *Explorer Series*, and other such projects. They routinely fill in for local preachers, speak at area congregational activities, travel with us on our speaking engagements, etc. We pay each of them only \$300/week, which means, however, that their combined monthly salaries total over \$5,000 (and that does not even include the salaries for the new interns, which will push the figure to over \$7,000). Multiply that by 3 summer months, and you can see why we need your help so badly.

We realize this is a lot to ask, but we also recognize that the payoff on your investment is immeasurable. Many (if not all) of these young men eventually will join us in the work here to proclaim and defend New Testament Christianity—a prospect that you will have helped secure for generations yet unborn. If you could help, we would be most grateful. All donations, of course, are tax deductible. If you need additional information, write me, or call toll free at 800/234-8558. Many thanks!

Bert Thompson