Chapter 2

THE TRANSMISSION AND CREDIBILITY OF THE GENESIS TEXT

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Behind the book of Genesis is a remarkable tale of preservation through some very difficult times. This chapter will trace some of the challenges faced in the safeguarding and transmission of the written text over a period of more than two millennia. Evidence will be provided that will enable an assessment to be made as to how well the text of Genesis has been maintained over these centuries.

The Challenge of Accurately Transmitting a Text by Means of Copying

The invention of printing brought with it a remarkable change in the method used for preserving the text of the Bible. This is because printing made possible the production of a large number of exact copies of a text. That many copies were produced safeguarded against the accidental destruction of one or more of their number. Furthermore, the number of variations in the Hebrew text of Genesis has been near zero since the printing of the first complete Hebrew Bible in 1488.[1] But prior to this point in history, when a copy of Genesis wore out through long use, it could only be preserved by careful copying by trained professionals known as scribes. Scribes are mentioned in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament (2 Kings 12:10; Ezra 7:6; Matt 2:4; 13:52; Acts 23:9). Their work revolved around producing and preserving written texts of various kinds, including records of various kinds for the state,[2] religious and philosophical texts and writings of a more private nature. Even the best scribes make mistakes in their copying from time to time. A mistake in the copying process means that the copied text varies from its original (*i.e.*, gives rise to a "variant"). If a copy with a variant is carefully copied thereafter, then any subsequent copies based on the text with the variant will continue to have that specific variant in it.

There are several ways in which a scribe can make a mistake in copying a text. For example, all forms of copying rely on the scribe remembering a set of words for a short time. As they write out what they remember, scribes may unconsciously correct the grammar of what has been heard or read, or they might substitute a synonym for one of the words. Other types of mistakes are dependent on how a copy is being produced. Where a copy is being made by one scribe reading aloud to a number of others who write down what they hear, a scribe may mishear a word and write down a word that makes sense in the context but which is not the exact word that was in the original.

A different set of variants can be traced to a process of copying where one scribe works from an original, and copies directly from it. One should not overemphasize the number and importance

of such variants, but they are an inevitable by-product of this process of copying. For example, while the letters in Hebrew manuscripts were divided into words much earlier than they had been for the Greek New Testament, it was still possible for the eye of a scribe to miss a couple of lines of text, or to go to another copy of the word he had just written that occurs further down the page in the original. This type of error goes under the impressive name of *homoioteleuton*, rare enough, but known from the texts that have survived.[3]

Other variants can be traced to the fact that some letters in Hebrew are quite like each other (*e.g.*, ד – the Hebrew letter for a "d" sound; and ר – the Hebrew letter for an "r" sound) and sometimes it is possible to confuse them and still read a word that makes sense in the context.[4] Take for example, the descendents of Javan: should they include Dodanim (Gen 10:4) or Rodanim (1 Chr 1:7)? It is clear from the context that these are, in fact, two different names for the same individual. The only difference between the two names is in the first letter, and that difference is highly likely to be traced back to a scribe who mistook a ד (*D*odanim) for a ר (*R*odanim) or vice versa.[5] As can be seen in the example just given, the changes introduced to the text by these kinds of errors are usually very minor. After all, the difference between Dodanim (Gen 10:4) or Rodanim (1 Chr 1:7) hardly affects the basic meaning of the passage. But a careful scribe would always try to avoid introducing even these small variations into a text that was being copied.

The Work of the Masoretes

The various possibilities for copyist errors were well known in the ancient world, and extraordinary lengths were taken so that the text of the Hebrew Bible was copied accurately. Not surprisingly, we know more about the process used for copying from the medieval period than we do for earlier periods. Thus, it is probably helpful to begin by describing what is known best – with the work of a group of scribes called the Masoretes (or Massoretes) – and then work backwards to those times about which less is known.

Today's standard Hebrew Bible, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (abbreviated as BHS) is based on the earliest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible – Codex Leningradesis (abbreviated as L).[6] L will continue to be the basis of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (abbreviated BHQ), the replacement for BHS that is currently under development. In their general introduction to the first part of BHQ to be published, the editors report on their discussions as to whether to continue to use L as the base text. Despite there being some earlier manuscripts of parts of the Hebrew Bible, they remained with L because "M^{L}[the Masoretic text of L] remains the earliest known manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible," quite aside from the pragmatic reason that L was already available in electronic form.[7] The manuscript L was copied around AD 1008, and is significant for our purposes in that it is a product of the Masoretic scribes (*fl.* AD 500 to *c.* 1000).[8]

The term "Masorete" comes from the many accompanying notes of Masoretic manuscripts called Masorah (or Massorah). These notes include a great deal of information important for somebody who is copying the text. For example, if a word required a note in the margin a little circle was put on top of the word. Thus, if a word is only found once in the Hebrew Bible in a particular form, a circle is placed over it in the text, and the Hebrew letter *Lamed* with a dot over it (לׄ) is put in the margin. Where a word occurs in a particular form only twice, it is again marked with a small circle, but this time the Hebrew letter *Beth* with a dot over it (בׄ) is placed in the margin. Also noted

are various other unusual constructions and where they may be found in the Hebrew Bible. So useful and important are these notes, that many of them are included in the margins of the BHS, while the rest are available through footnotes making reference to the second volume of BHS, which contains the complete set of Masorah for L.[9]

More importantly for us, perhaps, the Masoretes were also responsible for the addition of the vowels that appear above and below the text of the Hebrew Bible. When originally written, the Hebrew Bible consisted of only consonants. If a language is well known to the reader, it is quite possible to read the wrds wtht vwls tht mk p cnsnntl txt (*i.e.*, words without vowels that make up a consonantal text). But even by New Testament times, it is likely that Hebrew was very much a minority language in Palestine, and one of the important functions in learning to read the Hebrew Scriptures was to learn how the various words should be said. While some of the longer vowels had been added to the Hebrew text at a quite early date and are found in the manuscripts from Qumran, it may have been as late as the late ninth century AD that a complete system of vowels was added.[10] Because of the great respect of the Masoretic scribes for the text, they chose not to add the vowels between the letters of the words, but above and below them, as a set of dots and other marks (hence adding vowels produces what is called a "pointed text" – *i.e.* a text with vowel points added).

In adding these vowels, the Masoretes made accommodation for various traditions that had arisen for the reading of the text. For example, the extreme reverence given to God and to his name meant that pious Jews had long had the practice of not pronouncing the name YHWH, one of the most revered names of God, nor even reading it aloud from the Hebrew Bible. In fact, because the name was never said aloud for many hundreds of years, it is impossible to know for sure today how this particular name of God was originally pronounced. Most modern scholars, though, think it might have originally been pronounced "Yahweh." When reading from a text that contained this name for God, it was customary to substitute the Hebrew word for "lord" (Adonai). What was written in the text is known as the written or *Ketib* form; what was said aloud was known as the *Qere* form. To indicate this, the Masoretes left the original consonants in the text, but added the vowels for what should be read instead. Hence the name YHWH (Yahweh) was given the vowels from Adonai, which in the Middle Ages led to the hybrid word "Jehovah." This substitution is called a perpetual *Qere*, and is found frequently enough that it is not accompanied by a marginal note. Less frequently occurring *Qere* forms are accompanied by a marginal note indicating what should be read aloud.

Scribal Care During Rabbinic Times

From what has been recorded it can be observed that the Masoretes took great pains when copying the text of the Hebrew Bible. They ensured that the unusual features of the texts were maintained, and were diligent in eliminating errors from their work. In doing this, they were continuing the efforts of scribes from earlier periods, such as those active during the time that the Mishnah and Talmud were formed (first to seventh century AD).[11] While rabbinic works such as the Mishnah and Talmud deal primarily with the interpretation of the law and stories that illustrate how the law should be kept, from time to time comment is made about the work of a scribe who has copied texts from the Hebrew Bible. From these comments we know, for example, the following facts about the text of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, known collectively as "the Torah" (Law or Teaching). In this entire text:

- The middle consonant was the letter "w" in the word "belly [of a reptile]" (Hebrew letters "ghwn") in Leviticus 11:42;
- the middle word was the word "sought" in Leviticus 10:16; and
- Leviticus 13:13 was the middle verse.[12]

These statistics were used to check how accurately a manuscript had been copied. Even a missing letter would be detected by actually counting the number of letters to the middle letter. If the number was incorrect, then the mistake could be sought out. That this was a slow and careful process can well be imagined, but such was the care taken to accurately transmit the text during the rabbinic period. There was even a functionary who was paid from the temple treasury to check the accuracy of copies of the scrolls of the Hebrew Bible.[13]

The rabbinic traditions reveal the extreme care with which copies of the Hebrew Bible were made during that time. Scribal practices from before the rabbinic period have to be inferred from the surviving evidence. Relevant evidence includes the manuscript of the Torah preserved by the Samaritans, ancient translations such as the Septuagint, and from the manuscripts found in the vicinity of the Dead Sea.

The Septuagint and Other Early Greek Translations

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible – called the Septuagint (LXX) – is an important witness to the text of the Hebrew Bible from the second century BC, a good one thousand years earlier than Masoretic manuscripts such as L. The LXX originated in Alexandria in Egypt, where there was a considerable Jewish population who spoke Greek, and various dates for its translation have been suggested.[14] The Hebrew manuscripts from which it was translated have been lost, but some of the features of the resultant translation show that these manuscripts did have some important differences from those that formed the basis of Masoretic texts such as L. For example, the LXX contains some chapters and indeed whole books, not found in the Hebrew Bible. The additional works include 1-4 Maccabees, which describe a successful Jewish revolt that won independence from the Seleucid rulers of Mesopotamia, and Ecclesiasticus – a collection of wisdom sayings. The writings that are common between the Hebrew Bible and the LXX show various levels of congruence. Some LXX books – such as Genesis – are quite close to the Masoretic text, but others, such as Jeremiah, are quite different. The Masoretic text of Jeremiah is considerably longer than that of the LXX, and some of the oracles against the nations occur in different places in the two versions.[15]

Just what should be concluded from these differences between the LXX and the Masoretic texts of the Hebrew Bible has long been a matter of debate. Despite the fact that the LXX quickly established itself as the Bible of the early Christian Greek-speaking church and appears to underlie many of the Hebrew Bible citations in the New Testament, Luther rejected from his Bible all the books and chapters found in the LXX that were not in the Hebrew Bibles known to him. This decision has been followed within Protestant traditions to this day. Roman Catholics, however, still retain seven of the additional books in their Bible (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, 1 and 2 Maccabees and Baruch, as well as some additions to Daniel and Esther). In Catholic Bibles they are interspersed among the other books. "The additional books are sometimes called Deuterocanonicals. . . . They are also known as the 'Apocrypha,' a term meaning 'hidden' or 'secret.' "[16]

One likely explanation for some of the differences between the Masoretic text and the LXX is that they have arisen out of the translation process. Different languages express things in different ways. It is a matter of considerable judgment how close a translation should stay to the original. If one translates literally, and tries to keep translating one original Hebrew word with one Greek word, the resulting translation can sometimes either be nonsense in Greek, or convey a meaning different to that of the original. The suggestion has been made that some of the translators of the LXX may have been deliberately seeking the most literal translation, and in doing so translated less skillfully than their actual ability. Georg Walser observes that "there is good reason to believe that the ability of the translators was higher than is shown by the translation of the Pentateuch."[17] On the other hand, freer translation takes one further and further from the original text. Also there is the not-unlikely possibility that the translator may lack sufficient skills in one or other language, or that the meaning of an ancient language has been entirely lost at the time the translation was made.[18] Certainly the quality and style of translation varies from book to book. The Torah in the LXX was translated rather literally, while Job, Esther, Proverbs, Isaiah and Daniel have been translated rather freely.[19] Yet not all of the differences between the Hebrew Bible and the LXX can be accounted for by differences in translation technique. It was the discovery of the ancient scrolls near the Dead Sea that have provided the best means to evaluate the evidence of the LXX, a topic that will be taken up later in this chapter.

The Samaritan Pentateuch

The Samaritan Pentateuch is another very important witness to what the Old Testament was like before rabbinic times. The Samaritans have always been a small community who were devoted to the worship of God at a temple they had built on Mount Gerizim (*cf.* John 4:20) near biblical Shechem.[20] The modern Samaritan community traces its origins back to a split between themselves and the Jews returning from Babylonian exile who were rebuilding the Jerusalem temple (Ezra 4:1-5). There is some debate as to what extent the groups mentioned in Ezra 4 overlap with the Samaritans. Magnar Kartveit goes so far as to say, "The moment of birth of the Samaritans was the construction of the temple on Mount Gerizim. The people who erected it did exist before that moment, but they were not Samaritans until the temple project got under way." He also points out that archaeological evidence places the building of the temple to the fifth century BC – the Persian period.[21] This date is important to the transmission of the Genesis text because the Samaritan Bible consists of a very ancient version of the Torah, which traces its origin right back to the time of the founding of the community. The Samaritan scriptures do not include either the Prophets or Writings found in the Hebrew Bible, but accept only the first five books of Moses (the Pentateuch). The Samaritan Pentateuch is written in a form of the ancient Hebrew script used before (and after) the Exile, and is written entirely in consonants. In other words, as was the case with the Hebrew Bible at the time of Jesus, the vowels that must be added in reading exist only in oral tradition.

While the oldest manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch are from the medieval period, they represent an independently transmitted text from very ancient times. This text has some features that are considered unlikely to be part of the original text – such as explicit commands to worship only on Mount Gerizim, but even so, still preserves a very old textual tradition. The Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke states that one of the "primary values" of the Samaritan Pentateuch for the

literary criticism of the Old Testament is that it "points up the relative purity of the Masoretic text" and that it "helps to establish the antiquity of the Pentateuch."[22] As with the LXX there has been a long debate as to the relative merits of some of the readings found in the Samaritan Pentateuch. It was the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls that enabled some clarification in this matter.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Just how successful ancient scribes were in their attempts to transmit the text of the Hebrew Bible with great accuracy received remarkable confirmation in the discoveries of ancient manuscripts, now known collectively as the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in the region of the Dead Sea more than fifty years ago. The most important collections of these manuscripts were found in caves close to some ruins at a place called Khirbet Qumran. It is conjectured that many of the more important manuscripts owned by the so-called Qumran community were hidden for safekeeping in nearby caves during the terrible events surrounding the Jewish revolt from Rome that culminated with the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in AD 70. For some reason, nobody came back to recover these scrolls and they remained hidden until their discovery, beginning in 1947.

In their book, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, James VanderKam and Peter Flint provide an excellent summary of the archaeology and other methods used to date the occupation of the Qumran site and the scrolls found nearby. They point out that archaeology suggests that the first buildings were erected during the reign of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC), that it was damaged in an earthquake in 31 BC, rebuilt and destroyed sometime between AD 68 and 73, after which it was used as a military post until the end of the first century, and again briefly during the second revolt against Rome (AD 132-135).[23]

Several of the scrolls were in very good condition, including one nearly complete copy of the book of Isaiah and another with substantial portions of many chapters of the same book. Other scrolls had deteriorated, some quite badly, leaving only a few scattered pieces. Between them, however, along with manuscripts dealing with the specific interests of the community, the Qumran discoveries include at least a fragment of every book in the Hebrew Bible except Esther,[24] in some instances extensive fragments.[25] There were, in fact, fragments of several copies of many books including Genesis (fragments of twenty different original manuscripts), Exodus (sixteen), Deuteronomy (thirty), Isaiah (twenty-one) and Psalms (thirty-seven).[26] There were even fragments of several copies of Genesis, Leviticus and Deuteronomy written in the old Hebrew script that was used before the Exile, although these copies were made about 100 BC.[27] Some of the manuscripts were already quite old by the time they were hidden in the caves during the first Jewish revolt against Rome. The complete copy of Isaiah (1QIsa^{a})[28] was produced sometime before 100 BC.[29] Thus, the discoveries at Qumran and other places in the deserts surrounding the Dead Sea have provided access to manuscripts that were, in many cases, well over one thousand years older than the earliest previously known manuscripts.

Given that later manuscripts such as L were preserved by copying for a period of at least one thousand years after the time that the Qumran scrolls were originally copied, scholars were very interested to see how much the manuscripts had varied over that time. Some of the changes were expected; for example, the texts lacked the vowel points that were in texts such as L. There were some things that were the same that they had expected to be different – even though Greek texts

from this time period were written without gaps between the words; words were separated in the Qumran manuscripts. Most importantly, though, many of the texts from Qumran were very close indeed to the texts that had been preserved by the Masoretes.[30] These have been described as proto-Masoretic texts, as they belong to the Masoretic text tradition, but predate the Masoretes. Given the challenges of accurate copying, that the texts had been so well preserved over such a long period of time is quite remarkable.

On the other hand, some of the Qumran texts appeared to have the characteristics noted in the Septuagint translation. In particular, two Hebrew fragments of Jeremiah (4QJer^{b} and 4QJer^{d}) have words that correspond to the shorter text of the LXX, and share the rearrangement of sections of the LXX version of Jeremiah. Other texts appear similar to that of the Samaritan Pentateuch, while others have features of more than one of these types of text.[31] Emanuel Tov estimates that 60 percent of the Qumran texts from works found in the Hebrew Bible follow the proto-Masoretic text type, 5 percent are related to the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and a further 5 percent appear to be related to the text type of the LXX. Of the remaining texts, Tov says that about 20 percent of them follow what he describes as texts written in the "Qumran Practice." Such texts (*e.g.*, 1QIsa^{a}) "reflect a free approach to the Biblical text which is reflected in adaptations of unusual forms to the context, in frequent errors, in numerous corrections, and sometimes, also, in negligent script." Other texts exist that he classifies as "non-aligned texts."[32]

The Qumran statistics are very interesting, in that they highlight that the clear majority of Qumran texts of works found in the Hebrew Bible are of the Masoretic text type. Indeed, some of the Greek translations found at Qumran tend to move the LXX translation closer to the Masoretic text.[33] Thus, while the Dead Sea Scrolls do not answer all the questions raised by the LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch, they clearly show that as early as the second and first centuries BC, the main text type of the Old Testament was proto-Masoretic.

A Remarkable Tale of Survival

New discoveries are made by archaeologists almost every day, and it is impossible to predict whether or not earlier manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible than those found in the region of the Dead Sea may emerge. But at the present time, the Dead Sea Scrolls are the earliest known evidence on which we can evaluate the care with which the text of Genesis and the other works in the Hebrew Bible were copied. What, then, can be said about the period between the writing of Genesis and the first manuscripts that have survived, a period that could be more than a thousand years?

First, it should be noted that it is more than a little remarkable that Genesis and the other writings of the Hebrew Bible have survived at all. They describe the escape of a group of slaves from Egypt, who after hundreds of years of eking out an existence in the marginal hill country of Canaan, finally conquered the whole country under the leadership of their second king, David, around 1000 BC. David and his son, Solomon, sponsored the worship of the one God, Yahweh. David's court and his capital city were very small, even by the standards of his day. It is estimated that at the time of David, the entire population of Jerusalem was only about two thousand and that this had expanded to perhaps five thousand inhabitants by the time of Solomon.[34] These numbers would include some of David and Solomon's standing army, their courts, and the priests and other functionaries associated with the tabernacle/temple. That there were scribes associated with both the

courts of David and Solomon is clear. For example, a list of important functionaries of David's court included the head of the army, chief ministers, two priests, an official recorder and an official scribe (2 Sam 8:15-18). The recorder and scribe were thus part of the inner circle of David's administration. The scribes Elihoreph and Ahijah were listed amongst the princes at Solomon's court (1 Kings 4:3), another indication of the importance of the scribes at court. That these court scribes would have been trained in careful copying is highly likely, although whether the duty of producing copies of the holy writings belonged to them or to functionaries of the temple is not discernible.

In any event, because of their official sponsorship, during the reigns of David and Solomon there would have been little danger to the religious texts associated with the worship of Yahweh. Their careful preservation and copying would have been attended to as a matter of course. How many copies of key religious texts existed during this time is impossible to estimate, but because of the great expense associated with their production, it is unlikely to have been a great number, many of which are likely to have been associated with the temple in some way. But further challenges to the preservation of texts associated with the worship of Yahweh arose from the fact that, as both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles outline, kings who were official sponsors of the worship of the one God, Yahweh, were actually a minority during the period of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

The kings of Israel and Judah are evaluated in one of two ways in 2 Kings. They either did evil in the sight of the Lord, or they did right in the eyes of the Lord. Interestingly enough, a positive judgment is only given to kings of Judah, and of them only eight of the twenty who ruled. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah are all said to have done what was right in the eyes of the Lord. In the judgment of 2 Kings, then, all the kings of Israel and most of the kings of Judah are said to have done evil in the sight of the Lord! Second Kings 21:1-9 even recounts that King Manasseh erected altars to the host of heaven in the temple courtyards, and set a graven image of Asherah in the temple originally built by Solomon for the worship of Yahweh. Things had reached such a state that knowledge that the book of Deuteronomy even existed had been lost. It was rediscovered when the temple was being restored under King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-10). Thus, the existence of the holy books of Yahweh was precarious during the time period of the kings of Israel and Judah. But worse was to come. First, the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 722/721 BC, and the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587/586 BC. The destruction of Jerusalem was particularly thorough. The whole city was burned to the ground, its walls destroyed and most of its people deported to Babylon (2 Kings 25:8-11). That the holy writings were amongst the few things that survived this terrible destruction, and that they were treasured and maintained in Babylon – a foreign land – is remarkable.

Only a small group of Jews returned from the Babylonian exile to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, which was finished approximately 515 BC.[35] Prominent amongst these returning exiles was a certain scribe called Ezra, who was both a scribe and a priest (Ezra 7:1-11). Rabbinic tradition gives great prominence to the role that Ezra played in gathering together the materials that are in the Hebrew Bible, including the works of the prophets who had prophesied during and just after the Exile in Babylon.

What can be said about the accuracy of the copies made during the period of the monarchy, Exile and the immediately post-Exilic times? Of crucial importance is the fact of sporadic royal sponsorship of the worship of the one God, Yahweh. Such sponsorship would have meant the provision of skilled

scribes allocated to the task of copying manuscripts that were in need of replacement. While one cannot know for sure that these scribes would have been as meticulous in their care to avoid copying errors as were the scribes of later times, the work of later scribes shows how accurately trained scribes can work. Indeed, the evidence from rabbinic and Masoretic times reveals that skilled scribes not only sought to preserve ancient documents by copying them with great accuracy, but where it is possible to check their work on the Hebrew Bible using such evidence as the Dead Sea Scrolls, they succeeded in their aim of faithfully preserving the text. Consequently, as James Barr points out, "The Hebrew manuscript text of the Old Testament shows a high degree of uniformity. This characteristic constitutes a peculiarity of Old Testament textual criticism."[36]

The Credibility of Genesis in the Light of Nearly 2500 Years of Copying

What, then, can be concluded about the credibility of Genesis given that it was preserved by a process of copying that could have lasted up to twenty-five hundred years? Like the rest of the Hebrew Bible, the text of Genesis was very carefully copied by skilled scribes for most of this time period. It must be conceded that copying would inevitably introduce changes into a text, and that there is evidence for some such changes. On the other hand, there is substantial evidence that great care was taken in copying the text of the Hebrew Bible at each stage for which there is surviving evidence. The Masoretic scribes were inheritors of a strong tradition of careful scribal practice, a tradition that is detectable in the rabbinic writings and in the oldest substantial manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible found at Qumran. This evidence suggests that the changes that have occurred as the text of Genesis was copied would have been few in number, and unlikely to have changed the basic meaning of the text.

The stories in Genesis comprise some of the earliest texts that found their way into the Hebrew Bible. As part of the five books of the law, the "Torah," the text of Genesis appears to have been given very great respect from the earliest time. This is the most likely reason for the very literal translation of Genesis that is found in the Septuagint. Genesis is also one of the works for which there was a great number of different manuscript copies kept at Qumran. Thus, the text of Genesis has one of the best surviving bodies of manuscript evidence from which a judgment can be formed as to the text of its earliest copies.

The "textual history" of Genesis, like that of the whole Hebrew Bible, is one of remarkable survival and of great care taken in ensuring that accurate copies were made. Most who know about this history conclude that while the credibility or otherwise of the book of Genesis depends on many factors, whether or not an accurate copy of the original text has survived is not one of them. The text we have today, while it may show some minor changes, is essentially what was originally written, a fact that strongly suggests that the text of Genesis is indeed credible.

Notes and References

1. Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), 59; see also Bleddyn J. Roberts, *The Old Testament Text and Versions: The Hebrew Text in Transmission and the History of the Ancient Versions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1951), 85-91. The first portion of the Hebrew Bible to be printed was the Psalms, in 1477, while the Prophets were printed in 1485-1486 in Soncino and the Writings in 1486-1487 in Naples.

2. The following sources are mentioned explicitly in the Hebrew Bible: "Book of Jasher" (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18); "Book of the Acts

of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41); "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (*e.g.,* 1 Kings 14:29; 22:45; 2 Kings 8:23; 12:19); "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (*e.g.,* 1 Kings 14:19; 15:31; 2 Kings 1:18; 10:34). Many of these appear to be official court records. One can only speculate on the reaction if one of these accounts were to be found by an archaeologist.

3. The editors of the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) have included some words after First Samuel 10:27, which are found in a manuscript from Qumran (4QSam^a) but which are not found in the standard (Masoretic) text of 1 Samuel 10 used by previous Bible translations. First Samuel 10:27-11:1 from the NRSV reads: "But some worthless fellows said, 'How can this man save us?' They despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace. Now Na'hash, king of the Am'monites, had been grievously oppressing the Gad'ites and the Reu'benites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Na'hash, king of the Am'monites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Am'monites and had entered Ja'besh-gil'ead. About a month later, Na'hash the Am'monite went up and besieged Ja'besh-gil'ead." This text may be compared to 1 Samuel 10:27-11:1 in the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) that follows the Masoretic text: "But some worthless fellows said, 'How can this man save us?' And they despised him, and brought him no present. But he held his peace. Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Ja'besh-gil'ead." The NRSV editors added the additional words because the standard text of 1 Samuel 10 appears to lack some information provided by the words found in 4QSam^a, and it was concluded that a scribe had omitted the words through a process of *homoioteleuton*; Eileen Schuller, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: What Have We Learned 50 Years On?* (London: SCM, 2006), 43-44. *Cf.* other examples of possible *homoioteleuton* in Roberts, *Text and Versions*, 96, and Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 238-240.

4. In fact, two sets of possible errors can arise from mistaking letters of the alphabet that are quite alike, as a different Hebrew script was used before the Exile in Babylon compared to the one that was introduced after the Exile and that eventually replaced it. Both scripts have letters that can be mistaken for each other (not necessarily the same letters).

5. Tov, *Textual Criticism,* 12-13, lists other examples of variants that appear to have arisen from mistaking one letter for another; as does Roberts, *Text and Versions*, 92-93.

6. Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph explain in the foreword to BHS: "There is no need to defend the use of the Leningrad Codex B19A (L) as the basis for any Bible. . . . In any event, L is still 'the oldest dated manuscript of the complete Hebrew Bible' " *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia,* 4th edn. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990), xi.

7. *Biblia Hebraica Quinta Editione cum Apparatu Critico Novis Curis Elaborato: General Introduction and Megalloth* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), ix. They also point out that the year of the production of L is given in five different calendars, which yield dates between AD 1008 and 1013, although they think 1008 is the most likely, xix.

8. Brotzman, *Textual Criticism,* 49-55.

9. The complete Masorah for L may be found in G. E. Weil, ed., *Massorah Gedolah iuxta codicum Leningradensem B 19 a* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971).

10. Roberts, *Text and Versions*, 60. Several versions of vowel systems were developed and some variation can be observed between L and some manuscripts from the same era regarding which vowels belong on which words. See Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 43-50.

11. Fred Skolnick, ed., *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* 2nd edn. (Detroit and Jerusalem: MacMillan, Keter, 2007), 19:470.

12. Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 30a.

13. Babylonian Talmud, *Ketubbot* 106a.

14. The so-called Letter of Aristeas that is cited by first-century writers dates the translation to the reign of the Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC). Some modern scholars have dated it as late as 100 BC. Natalio Fernándes Marcos dates it between 127 and 118 BC, and most scholars appear to accept dates around this time; *The Septuagint in Context* (Boston and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 41. See also Arie van der Kooij, "The Promulgation of the Pentateuch in Greek According to the Letter of Aristeas", in Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta, eds., *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2008), 179-191.

15. In the Masoretic text the oracles against the nations are found at the end of the Jeremiah, in the LXX in the middle (after 25:13 [v. 14 missing in the LXX]). Their order is also different; Masoretic text has the order: Egypt (40:2-28), Philistia (47:23-27), Moab (ch. 48), Ammon (49:1-6), Edom (49:7-22), Damascus (49:23-27), Kedar (49:28-33), Elam (49:34-39), Babylon (chs. 50-51). LXX has the order: Elam, Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Edom, Ammon, Kedar, Damascus, Moab.

16. Daniel J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 4.

17. Georg Walser, "The Greek of the Bible: Translated Greek or Translation Greek", in Voitila and Jokiranta, eds., *Scripture in Transition*, 456.

18. These possibilities are canvassed by both Anthony Gelston, "Some Difficulties Encountered by Ancient Translators", 47-58, and Jan de Waard, "Lexical Ignorance and the Ancient Versions of Proverbs", in Y. A. P. Goldman, A. van de Kooij and R. D. Weis, eds., *Sôfer Mahîr: Essays in Honour of Andrian Schenker Offered by Editors of Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2006), 261-268.

19. Jan Joosten, "Reflections on the 'Interlinear Paradigm' in Septuagintal Studies", in Voitila and Jokiranta, eds., *Scripture in Transition*, 177.

20. The temple was destroyed *c.* 129/128 BC.

21. Magnar Kartveit, *The Origins of the Samaritans* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2009), 351, 207.

22. Bruce K. Waltke, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament", in J. B. Payne, ed., *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970), 212.

23. James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 34-53.

24. Schuller, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 39; Tov, *Textual Criticism,* 103.

25. How extensively the manuscript discoveries from Qumran and other nearby locations cover the Hebrew Bible may be observed in

the "Index of Biblical Passages", in Eugene Ulrich, ed., *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcription and Textual Variants* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2010), 783-796. This index lists all the biblical passages for which there is a manuscript. The texts themselves are printed in the main body of this book.

26. Ulrich, *Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 779-781.

27. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 104, 106.

28. The Qumran manuscripts are identified by the cave in which they were found, the title of the work and how many copies of that work were found in the cave. Thus 1QIsa^a was found in cave 1 at Qumran, it is the book of Isaiah, and it is the first of the copies of Isaiah found in that cave.

29. A. A. Fischer dates 1QIsa^a between 125 and 100 BC, in *Der Text des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009), 80. These dates correspond to the dates based on the shape of the letters (paleography) cited in Table 30 of VanderKam and Flint, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 30. The same table indicates that Accelerator Mass Spectrometry readings date the scroll between 288 and 208 BC. In any event, 1QIsa^a is quite old!

30. One of the better preserved manuscripts of a proto-Masoretic type found at Qumran is 1QIsa^b, which includes segments of forty-six different chapters of Isaiah. Emanuel Tov gives the following statistics of differences between 1QIsa^b and L: omission of words: 5; addition of words: 6; different words: 7; different prepositions: 9; different grammatical forms: 24; differences in pronouns: 6; missing letters: 6; differences in consonants: 10. Across such a large amount of text, these differences are small in number. Tov concludes, "Because of the meticulous care of those who were involved in the copying of m [his symbol for the group of texts that include the later Masoretic texts], the range of the differences between the members of the m group was from the outset very small." He even quotes with approval the conclusions of Andersen and Freeman in their analysis of 4QSam^b: "we can infer that the Massoretic system and set of spelling rules were firmly in place in all principles and particulars by the third century BCE." Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 31-32.

31. In his article, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Scriptural Texts", in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 1:77-99, Eugene C. Ulrich provides examples translated into English showing where some of the Qumran scrolls exhibit characteristics of the Samaritan Pentateuch and while others exhibit characteristics of the LXX.

32. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 115-117. The citation is from p. 114.

33. Leonard J. Greenspoon, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek Bible", in Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years* (Leiden, Boston and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1998), 101-127.

34. Magen Broshi, "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4/2 (June 1978) 10-15. See also Hershel Shanks, *Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), 123; Robert K. McIver, "The Archaeology of Palestine From the Maccabees to the Second Jewish Revolt (157 BC – 135 AD)", in Mark Harding and Alana Nobbs, eds., *The Content and Setting of the Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 1-26.

35. Both Broshi, "Population of Ancient Jerusalem", 10-15 and Shanks, *Jerusalem*, 122, suggest the population of Jerusalem in the immediate post-Exilic period to be about forty-five hundred, much less than the twenty-five thousand or so during the reign of the pre-Exilic king Hezekiah.

36. J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 1.