

THE ORIGINAL WRITERS OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS
(Discourse by William Bertsche in the 1970s, transcribed from audio tape)

It is a source of inspiration if we can actually trace how the book of Genesis was brought to us. The Lord has given us very reliable information about how the book was provided, how all the information was given to us, and how it was brought to us. We find that the book of Genesis itself tells us who the authors are!

Devout Christians and Jews are glad to have light on the persons and places of the Bible and welcome new information about the background from which the Bible came to us. Many of the publications on Bible archeology are only good compilations of the discoveries of many expeditions conducted in the localities mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.

This work has progressed so far that it is now easy to identify many of the very early cities or places of habitation and there is little doubt now as to their authenticity. Occasionally these men unearthed articles and records that are very important today. Those which are of particular interest to us as Bible Students are the literary records.

How did these people write? How were their writings brought down to us? A knowledge of the proper manner in which the records were kept and the proper interpretation of these records has thrown entirely new light on the authors, those who actually wrote the book of Genesis. If we have had any questions as to how the records could possibly date back to Adam and Eve, and how the records of any family could be kept, there need not be any question today because we will discover just how this was done.

The book of Genesis contains the longest period of the history of man, and it presents the evidence of its own composition and tells us who its writers were. Never before has even the ablest Bible Student thought that it contained any statement concerning its authorship. Speaking personally, having been in the Truth for over fifty years, I recall that it was once freely stated that secular history dated back to only about 600 BC, and that only the Bible gave us historical facts prior to that date. Until the second advent of our Lord, the only history prior to 1000 BC was that which was contained in the Bible. There had been no discoveries of any writings old enough to prove otherwise.

The critics of the Bible used that as proof that the Book of Genesis must have been written much later than Moses. On the other hand, those who defended the Mosaic authorship could not prove it or even know that writing was used frequently as long as one thousand years before Moses. Both the critics and the defenders of the Bible thought that the contents of Genesis had been handed down by word-of-mouth because they both believed that the art of writing was unknown in those early days.

The increased knowledge foretold by Daniel has given us a basis for entirely new thinking; many thousands of tablets written in the times of the old patriarchs have been unearthed and can be studied. Some contain records of the lessons of the Rosetta Stone in which the same information, perhaps the same language, was written in three different types of writing, thus giving the key to the interpretation of the old writings. Now we are able to decipher them with astounding accuracy. Even the writings of Moses, who compiled the books as we now have them, plainly indicated the source of the information he used. Moses told where the information came from as he wrote. The large museums throughout the world now have in their possession many of the accounts written on ancient tablets, many of which have not yet been translated, although it is possible for them to do it.

Of course we would not expect that the forms of their literary style would in any way conform to those of the present day. It would be unreasonable to think that they would write as we write letters of books today. Therefore, we must look for a correct understanding of these forms.

Less than eighty years ago, the long desolate mounds of earth in the lands of the Middle East were sand and rubble covering over the remains of older civilizations; and are called *tells*, meaning *high places, covered over*. The archeologist usually digs a well, and carefully records everything found there — its level, its description, etc. From this, a determination is made whether or not it would be profitable, or even possible, or interesting enough for the excavation to continue. When enough information is found, the work is continued.

Jeremiah 51:43 describes the complete desolation of Babylon. The lands that are mentioned in Genesis were known as Mesopotamia until the First World War. Today, we know these lands as Iraq. It was here that ancient Babylonia and Assyria were located. Even older civilizations were here before Babylon — the lands of the *Fertile Crescent*.

Those who searched prior to eighty or ninety years ago, made little effort to obtain written records, probably because they could not read them! They were more interested in the art they could secure for the museums, pictures in stone describing something, etc. They discovered a bas-relief which described the activities of Sargon II, ancient king of Assyria, and his commander, Tartan. A description of the pictures is in written form. These records had been covered over for 2,500 years. Nearby they unearthed a black marble monument to another ancient king, and on it they read, "I received the tribute of Jehu, the Israelite, silver and gold."

This caused a great deal of interest. The work of the Bible archaeologist became more intense! In Nineveh there was a king who had a very famous library containing many hundreds of thousands of volumes (it is said 750,000). Not many were originals perhaps, but he had had copies made of the originals and it was plainly stated as to where the original was from. These are considered authentic. A few of these are in the museums today. Only a very small percentage of them have actually been translated; however, when they found that this contained a complete record of the flood, they started to work more progressively. They found many chapters of the early writings of Genesis in both the original form and copies.

Just as men in Washington today can break the secret code of any nation, so the code of interpretation was discovered. During the present period of the foretold "increase of knowledge" and because of it, we are able to get this information. This brought to light the laws that were prevalent in the days of Abraham, and a number of astounding and valuable facts relating the times that are covered in Genesis. Archeologists working under the strict control of the Department of Archeology in Israel, and other countries, are excavating sites that relate to the Genesis period from 3500 BC to 2000 BC.

The excavation of Ur of Chaldees revealed that a high state of civilization existed there 250 years before Abraham, throwing much light on the times of Genesis. An article in the *National Geographic* of three years ago depicts the life of Abraham. Shown there are the *High Places*, the *Ziggurat Temple*, which was built of bricks, each containing the name of the builder and date. They show a picture of two guards who are policing this ziggurat to prevent the stealing of the bricks.

The “so-called” higher critics, that is, the agnostics, the atheists, the non-believers had always argued that writing was an unknown art prior to the tenth century BC, and only until recently did we prove otherwise. They had all the proof on their side because nobody could prove our stand. Now all the world has undisputed proof that writing was common hundreds of years before Abraham, and also that writing was not unknown throughout the history of man. Very recently, a tablet was found about four miles from the ancient city of Ur. We have seen writings that are 5,000 years old!

In 1929 archeologists digging in Ur, unexpectedly came upon a remarkable change in the character of the soil. It was water-laid clay and it contained no minerals and salt. (It would have contained minerals and salt if it had come over a period of time.) Instead, it came about suddenly and confirms the flood. Then excavations were made below this level. They came upon what appeared to be a great cemetery, and it looked as though there had been extreme violence there. They found headdresses for women, gold pieces, beads, etc. Among the results of the work of these devoted men is evidence of the advanced civilization of people of ancient times — pre-Abrahamic days. Additionally, the culture and writing of 5,000 years ago, of which there had been no previous knowledge except for that of the Bible, was seen. The Scriptural accounts of this period had been considered legendary, even by the archeologists, before they attained this proof. And even though these men were making no attempt to find evidence which agrees with the Bible, they have been compelled by what has been uncovered to believe that the Book of Genesis is accurate. It has also changed their outlook on the Bible records as a result.

The high level of civilization that existed as early as 3000 BC is emphasized by the written records that illuminate, or describe, the items that they discovered, such as the *bas-reliefs*. The reason this is important is because the generally accepted belief had been that writing is only a recent accomplishment. Because some records go back as far as 5,000 years on papyrus (some of which we have seen ourselves.) And the bilingual texts that we have had, has made it possible for scientists to interpret them accurately. Actually, an accuracy test was made in which three students of these writings agreed to interpret one of the tablets that had never been translated. A comparison was made of the results of their findings and the three had translated in agreement in all the important facts. So we see that the key to deciphering the Babylonian cuneiform writing has been found, and because of this, an accurate science has been developed.

Now we have come to the point of all this detail. Since these tablets were usually small, how do we know that they were dated, how they were signed, and how to tell the pages apart so as to have consecutive order?

Whenever they had a series of consecutive tablets, the first tablet had a title and each additional tablet had that title also. Additionally, they had a serial number so the reader could tell the proper order. Then the last words of a tablet were “catch words.” In other words, the last words of a tablet were *repeated* on the following tablet so that these catch words always tied them together. It was invariably at the end (remember this point) of a tablet where the name of the writer appeared — never anywhere else. All this, together with the date of the writing and a description of all the writing that had preceded it tied everything closely together. Now, there is little doubt that the Book of Genesis was written on tablets, which were in use during the days of Moses. Some of this writing was used during the time Moses was in Egypt.

We notice that the writers of Genesis always refer to some of the earlier tablets. Repeatedly, we read in Genesis these words: “These are the generations of ...” or literally, “begettings of.” The proper understanding of this is the key that solves the criticism of the skeptics. This phrase is used eleven times in Genesis and it represents successive stages in the progress of this inspired account.

Their importance is proven by the fact that the translator gave this whole book the name of Genesis, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *generations*. Strangely, as important as this phrase is, many scholars and translators have misunderstood just as this was then used, and what its meaning was. They associate the phrase “these are the generations of” with the genealogical list which might follow after, using the phrase as an introduction or beginning. Whereas actually, as we have pointed out, the ancient writers used this phrase as an ending, a signature, not a beginning. Such an error does two things. First, it places the wrong people in the generation; secondly, it covers the wrong period of time. Let us note the last nine of the eleven times the phrase is used.

Noah, the sons of Noah, as well as Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, and again Esau, and finally Jacob; now if these were the important heads of a genealogical list, why wasn't Abraham mentioned? Certainly he was the most important person in Genesis. Isn't it remarkable that lesser persons were mentioned? Yet there is no place that it is stated, “these are the generations of Abraham,” furthermore, there is not always a genealogical list following the use of this phrase. But we find that the main account of the person mentioned is written *before* the phrase and not very often after it. Genesis 5:1 reads: “This is the book of The generations of Adam.” Nothing more is said of Adam except his age at his death. The record following Gen. 25:19, which reads: “And these are the generations of Isaac” is not so much of Isaac as that of Jacob and Esau.

After Genesis 37:2, “These are the generations of Jacob,” we read mainly about Joseph. These facts clearly point out that this phrase is not an introduction to the history of the person, as we had thought. There is no reasonable doubt about the meaning of the word, *toldah*, (Strong's #8439) which scholars say means *family history*.” It is a family history of what has already occurred. To better illustrate this we read in Genesis 2:4, “These are the generations (history) of the heavens and of the earth.” A better translation reads, “... the origins of “or” “... the story of the origins of the heaven and of the earth.”

Most Hebrew scholars today use the word *toldah*, the same as the English word *history*. For instance, Genesis 25:19, “The history of Isaac and his descendants.” In every case it points back to the origin of the family history and not to a later development through a line of descendants.

The only time the phrase is used in the New Testament is in Matthew 1:1, “The book of the generations of Jesus Christ, ...” This is followed by a list of ancestors, tracing back his genealogy to its origin, meaning the exact opposite of descendants. By correcting the erroneous supposition in Genesis, we find the words, “This is the history of Adam” to be the concluding sentence of the book already written and not the introduction to the following record.

Scholars are not always consistent. For instance, in the first use of the phrase in Genesis 2:4, “These are the generations of the Heaven and the Earth,” notice that the translators used the phrase in the right position. It points back to the record in the previous chapter since it could not apply to the account which follows. This is obviously a concluding sentence, and in this one instance, they ended it that way. Had they been consistent and recognized the fact that all sections of Genesis are concluded by the use of this form, they would have had the *key* to the writings of Genesis. What happened by using this phrase improperly resulted in using the key to the compilation of Genesis upside down!

Gen. 5:1, “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” Here the word *book* is translated from the Hebrew word *siphrah*, which means “written narrative,” or “a finished writing.” The same word in the King James in Genesis 2:4 reads, “These are the generations of heaven and earth,” but the Septuagint reads, “This is the book of the generation of the heaven and the earth.” The books of that time were tablets and the statement just means, “This is the record.” We see then that the earliest records of the book of Genesis claims to be written down, and were not passed down to Moses by word-of-mouth!

Who wrote these records? A careful examination of the use of the name stated at the end of the words, “These are the generations (origins) of” makes it plain that it refers to the writer of the tablet rather than the history of the person who is mentioned. For instance, “These are the generations of Noah,” does not necessarily mean the history *about* Noah, but a history written down and possessed *by* Noah.

Genesis 11:27, reads, “These are the generations of Terah,” but all we read about Terah is that he was the son of Nahor. This account is intended to indicate that Terah either wrote or had someone else write the list of ancestors which were listed in verses 10 to 27 — not descendants but ancestors! Nowhere do we read, “These are the generations of Abraham,” yet there is a great deal written about him by Isaac and Ishmael. So we see that these early records were *written*, and that the entire book of Genesis was a complete series of tablets. No doubt they were in the possession of those who are mentioned in them, and then came into the possession of Moses, who compiled the book as we now have it. He indicated the source from which the information was obtained. We now recognize that everything that was written was based on an intimate knowledge of everything recorded therein or was obtained from absolutely reliable information.

The written accounts show familiarity with details and names of towns which cease to exist long before Moses’ time. The style of the wording changed with each succeeding account, a fact which is very important. When Moses used the ancient names of places written on the tablets which he copies, he also inserted the new name of the place so that the Hebrews of his day could locate it. In Genesis 32:2, we read, “Sarah died in Kirjath-arba, the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.” Moses had to explain that this town was now called Hebron and was located in the land of Canaan. If this had been written later, no one would have had to tell the Jews that Hebron was in Canaan because David was there as King. The beginning of their own families was there. You will remember that Moses died before the people entered the land of Canaan.

Certainly none of the book of Genesis was compiled later than the age of Moses. It is reasonable to believe that the ancient prophets used records to explain in writing the

wonderful revelation that God gave to them. Surely if God gave these patriarchs all this information, they would have written it down! Nor is there any longer any doubt that the very earliest records in Genesis, those of the creation and fall were written down in a very early form of writing within the period which Genesis ascribes to Adam's sons. It is also very significant that the very first series of tablets do not state the author, or writer. It simply states, "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth."

As we have said, the others were written down and a name given. This one does not name anyone. No one could have written Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 2:4 from personal knowledge of the manner in which the world was created. So where did the record come from and who wrote it? Note here that the account is not a lot of guesswork on the part of an ambitious writer because the facts are actually beyond speculation. Modern scientific research has proven them so accurate that it is openly stated that it would be highly improbable for an ancient writer to anticipate so accurately the conclusions of modern science. Even if it were written centuries after Moses, no writer could have produced an accurate account of creation.

The remarkable thing here is that the wording is very simple, but the truth conveyed is profound. Only God could foresee that human language would be the best medium that He could use for those for whom it was intended. We can only conclude that God *taught* Adam in a simple but faultless way how the earth and all that Adam could see about him had been created. The Lord God *talked* to Adam in the garden. And the written account on the tablets is the record of what God said and what God did. Nothing was told that he could not understand, and had all the details been related, you and I could not understand it, and certainly Adam couldn't have. This first section of Genesis then is a record of what God told Adam and when that was recorded, it was *the most ancient writing of all!* These contained the elemental things about the Universe which *God taught the first man.*

Let us remember that later on, men worshiped the sun so that if the first chapter of Genesis had been written just before the flood, or even if it had been written as late as Abraham's day, the term "greater light" (Gen. 1:16) would not have been used. They would have used the Babylonian name for the sun, *Samish*. So we know it was not written that late. The names for the sun and the moon were among the oldest words in any language because of the heathen worship of them.

The first chapter of Genesis is written in a most unusual way "And God said," "And God called," etc. This was written just as Adam heard it from God. It was not written in the style of a vision. We hear *only the direct words of God.*

Language originated in Eden. Adam gave names to the living creatures and if he could do that, he could conceivably write in some form. Furthermore, this was written before man strayed from God. The record contains no mythical or legendary matter such as is given in every other account of Creation. Genesis, chapter one is as primitive as man himself, the very beginning of the history of man!

The second series of accounts starting from Genesis 2:5 and going to Genesis 5:2 also shows marks of being very ancient. These contain a very simple account of the test of obedience (to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree.) And the tempter is spoken of as "A serpent in the dust", a form of which no later writer of the Old Testament used. The first death is described in a very primitive way. (Genesis 4)

If the Jews had written Genesis, they would never have used terms such as, “The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.” They would not have used such an intimate phrase for God. The one who knew all the facts about the Fall had to be the one person who supplied the information that was recorded. This account leads up to the birth of the son of Lamech, soon after Adam died. The record concludes with, “This is the book of the generations (origins) of Adam.”—Gen. 5:1.

So the record continues — the genealogical record of the patriarchs, the eyewitness accounts of the flood, the tragedy that followed — all proving the authenticity of these accounts and the period of which they were written. The last 14 chapters of Genesis are mainly a history of Joseph in Egypt. The record begins with, “And Joseph being 17 years old,” and ends with, “And he, Joseph, was put into a coffin in Egypt.” They contain many purely Egyptian words and phrases as compared with those of Babylonia.

Is there any question in our minds now as to how the accounts in Genesis came down to us? The uninformed say Moses wrote it. There is no account in the Scriptures that say that Moses was told these things in a vision or from Heaven or a direct contact with God. Yet we remember that everything that did happen to Moses was clearly recorded. Where in Genesis is Moses spoken of as he is in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy? In fact, Moses is not mentioned in Genesis. If Moses had received this by direct revelation from God, it would have been recorded that way. The only conclusion possible is that the first written records, all of which were before the flood, were handed down from generation to generation and then came into the possession of Noah.

We know there were many ancient records written before the flood, as some of them rest in our museums today. We have records from before the flood, so why not those that were brought down from Adam’s time on? Noah passed them on to Shem together with his own tablets. These in turn were passed to Abraham by his father, Terah, together with his tablets. Abraham came into possession of valuable tablets telling of the God of his fathers, the Creator of the Universe. He would recognize his sacred charge, would he not? Then in Egypt they became the heritage of Joseph and the family that became Israel. They would naturally pass into the hands of Moses. If not the originals, they would be true copies and these would be translated into the language of the day.

The cuneiform script of Babylonia and early Egypt was the subject of the educated in the days of Abraham. There is little doubt that Isaac and Jacob would have used the same. The educated Egyptian of Moses’ day would be able to read these cuneiform writings about as easily as scholars today can read Greek or Latin. Even during the time of Moses, cuneiform writing was the diplomatic script, such as dispatches from foreign lands. The learned in the arts could read and translate them.

Until Moses was eighty years old, these tablets of Genesis were his only Bible. That was the only way in which God instructed him. There is no mention of God speaking with him until the end of the forty years in Midian, when God called him to return to Egypt and bring His people into the Promised Land. Exodus 3:6-10, 17. Now Moses became a scribe for God. Exodus 17:14. Many other instructions were given to Moses to write. He wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant recorded in Exodus 34:27, 28. Do we ever give thought as to why God had the infant, Moses, plucked from the water and brought into the Royal

household of Egypt? He grew up where he acquired all the wisdom of the ages, yet he retained the basic faith of his mother.

During his first forty years, he became learned in the arts with the ability to read the ancient script. Surely his second forty years were not spent in idleness as a herder of his father-in-law's flocks only! Somehow he had access to these precious records and he was fully acquainted with them. When God made himself known to him at the burning bush, Moses was ready.

We are sure now that Moses, with his ancient tablets before him, rewrote and compiled them into the language of the people.