

## Transmission of the Scriptural Information

**Objective:** To discuss how the Old Testament writings were preserved over centuries of time through the various forms of transmission

**Key Thoughts: Language, Oral Transmission, Authority and Sacredness of Transmission, from Oral to Inscribing**

### *Pre-requisites to the Bible*

In Scriptures, it is stated that God commanded Moses several times to record specific information for the benefit of future generations (Ex. 17:14; 24:3-4; 34:27; Num. 33:1-2; Duet. 6:6-9; 11:18-20; 31:9, 11, 22, 24). Some biblical scholars have argued that Moses could not possibly have written the Pentateuch because writing was believed to be unknown in Palestine at his time.

Archaeological discoveries have proven otherwise. Drawings, picture writings, even pictograms drawn on damp clay using pointed tools have been discovered throughout the archives of findings across the world – Sumerian, Egyptian, Native American, etc. Logograms (pictures that represent a concept), Syllabic writings (sound representations), and eventually alphabets are evidence of human capability to record language.

What is language? Language is defined as the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of symbols in a structured and conventional way. It consists of the development, acquisition, maintenance and use of complex systems of communication to do so. Language expresses thought and gives insight toward culture. The original languages of what comes to be known as our canonized bible were Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Through the aforementioned forms, transmissions of thought and concept were inscribed on stone, and later on clay tablets, papyrus, parchment, wooden and/or ivory tablets, potsherds, precious metal, and eventually paper.

It appears that the earliest transmission of biblical material was oral. Moses commanded the people of Israel to teach their children God's laws and statutes and to make them know to their offspring. How long these traditions were transmitted orally is not known, but at some point they were committed to writing to better ensure accuracy and consistency.

Several biblical texts indicate that original transmissions and inscriptions were treated with great reverence and were considered to be Authoritative as the Oracles of God (Ex. 17:14-16; 24:3-4, 7). The stone tablets upon which the Lord inscribed the Ten Commandments were stored in the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:16, 21; Duet. 10:2-5; I Kings 8:9; Heb. 9:4). The Laws given to Moses for the people of Israel were taught to the priests and commanded to be publically read aloud so that the Israelites would not forget God's laws (Duet. 31:9-11), and nothing was to be added to or deleted from its words. It was the Law of God that would be found among the ruins of destruction, and spark a revival. Not only were the Law of Moses of great importance and authority, so were other transmitted prophetic oracles, historical records, and writings.

Scribes were of great significance to the transmission of information, and the alphabetic script that probably developed by 1600 BC simplified the process of people being able to record information. Readers and writers in ancient Israel were plenty and few Israelites would have been unaware of writing, however the more professional tasks of composing letters and forming contracts was left to professional scribes. Scribes were trained with a very strenuous process, and became very knowledgeable of scriptures. Scribes were called *soph(f)erim* because they would count [sfr] all the letter in the Torah.