

# CHAPTER ONE

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# 1 THE UNIQUE BOOK

Over half of the world's population claims to follow all or parts of the most widely distributed and most vehemently disputed book in history. This book is called *The Holy Bible*. An additional percentage would state that it is a good book with many good things to say. These are impressive figures, but very few of the same people could explain even the most basic concepts found in the Bible.

Scholars agree that for centuries the Bible has been a best seller. It's ... *the most quoted, the most published, the most translated and the most influential book in the history of mankind.*<sup>1</sup> Yet, in spite of its distinction, it is a neglected volume, even among literature professors and students. A best seller? Seldom read? It doesn't make sense.

Why read it anyway? That question has many answers, but three are especially significant.

First of all, the Bible speaks about the source of joy and sorrow. It gives counsel on marriage, parenting, children, and employer/employee relationships. It talks about the wise use of money, talents, and time. It is a gold mine of facts about life in general, and much of that advice is couched in interesting stories—stories that have inspired countless books and movies.

Secondly, the Bible has much to say concerning what happens to us after we die. What makes this information so critical is that the Bible says *this life* affects the *next life*—one cannot wait till death to be informed. Then it will be too late.

Now I know there are those who say, *"I believe that when I am dead, I am dead. Nothing more!"* But that sort of thinking is like a fetus in a womb saying, *"I don't believe in life after birth. Life exists only for the here and now, right here in this dark, warm womb."*

It would be foolish for a fetus to say such a thing. No, at the very least, it would seem wise for one to investigate a book that talks about a "life to come," and see what it has to say, whether good or bad.

Thirdly, approximately 27% of the Bible is prophecy and a significant amount of it has been precisely fulfilled. Think of yourself predicting in writing the exact town in which a world-renowned leader would be born—700 years from now! In your prophecy you give the name of the town as well as the region. But at the same time, unknown to you, others have also been

making prophecies about that same leader. Hundreds of years before the fact, they have been putting in writing the exact family into which this leader would be born. Still others are predicting in detail the way this leader would live and die. What would be the probability of all these things coming true?

Well, the Bible records such prophecies being fulfilled, and not only once but a multitude of times. It really is astounding! And the Bible says the reason it gave those prophecies is so that we would be “astounded” enough to pay attention to the rest of what it has to say—about life, death, and life after death!

These three areas alone are valid enough reasons to gain a basic knowledge of the book called *The Holy Bible*.

The word *Bible* is derived from the Greek and Latin word for *book*—it has no mystical implications. The word *Bible* doesn’t even appear within the Bible’s pages! Instead the Bible refers to itself as *Scripture*, which simply means *writings*. That both *Bible* and *Scripture* should be referred to as *holy* has greater significance. The word *holy* means “*that which is set apart, that which is different.*” It has the idea of being unique. As I summarize the biblical story in the following pages, we will see just why it is called *The Holy Bible*—literally, *The Unique Book*.

## 2 PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Before we begin our overview, we need to establish ground rules for how we are going to proceed. As a starting point, I am going to assume that you have little acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures—perhaps no knowledge of the Bible at all. Now it might encourage you to know that by the time you have finished reading this book, the Bible will make remarkable sense. Nevertheless, read each chapter carefully, making sure you understand the content before moving on.

Many times I will be quoting directly from Scripture. When I do, it will appear as an indented paragraph in italics. At the end of each quotation I will give the *reference* or “*address*” showing its location in the Bible. It will look like this:

*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*     Romans 15:4 NASB

## A PUZZLE

As we begin, think of the Bible as a large puzzle with the pieces scattered loosely before you. We will be putting those pieces together one at a time. To ensure that we assemble the biblical puzzle accurately, we will apply four *universal principles of learning* that are used in school and university classrooms every day.

### 1. The Priority Principle

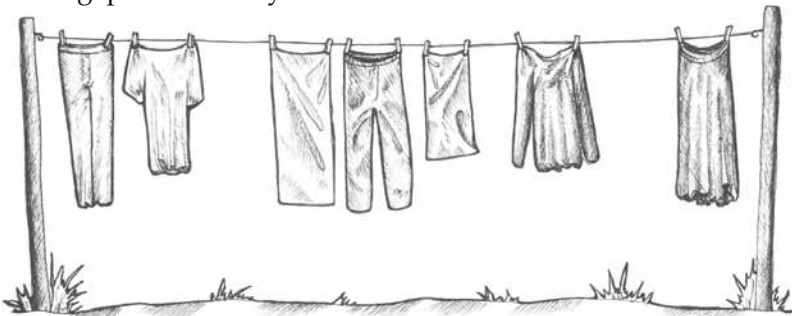
The first principle states that when you study a new subject, *learn the most important information first*. For example, if a builder wants to teach a person how to construct a house, he will stress the importance of laying a firm foundation, erecting solid walls and finishing with a tight roof. He will leave till later such things as choosing furnishings or paint colours.

In the same way, the Bible covers an incredible array of topics, but not all are of equal importance. In this book we will focus on the most significant theme in the Bible. Once you understand it, the Bible will make profound but simple sense.

### 2. The Storytelling Principle

This second principle is intuitive. When one reads a story, one doesn't start in chapter ten, jump to chapter six, read chapter two and conclude in chapter nine. No! We all know that to make sense of a story, one needs to *start at the beginning and move step by step through to the end*. That may seem obvious, but many people tend to read the Bible in bits and pieces, resulting in confusion.

Since much of the Bible is a narrative, we will simply follow its natural chronological progression. At the same time, we will apply the *Priority Principle*, covering the most important stories first, stringing them together in a row, like hanging laundry on a clothesline. Since this overview is far from comprehensive, expect some gaps in the storyline.



The gaps can be filled in later after one has the overall picture. Although this clothesline cannot include every story in the Bible, the events covered will tie together in one continuous narrative.

### 3. The Mathematical Principle

The third principle takes the above progression and adds another dimension to it. *In learning, start with the simple and move to the complex.* For example, children are not taught algebra in kindergarten. Rather, they learn basic arithmetic—equations such as *one apple + one apple = two apples*. Over time they move to complicated mathematics, such as in  $E=MC^2$ . Teaching algebra in kindergarten would result in confused children.

It's the same way with the Bible. If you skip the basics, your biblical understanding will incorporate unusual ideas, resulting in a muddled message. To avoid that problem, we will progress through the story building on previously gained knowledge.

### 4. The Clarity Principle

The fourth principle addresses two issues. The first area has to do with the *meaning* of certain words. Over centuries word meanings can change, but the Bible has a system that locks the meaning of a word in place. To define a word, the Bible tells a story. Through the story we learn exactly what the word means. It cannot be changed. In this regard, the clarity principle advises us to *let Scripture define its own words*.

The second area has to do with the study of topics. For example, normally we study sciences by subject—such as astronomy, chemistry or biology—without mixing them. For a beginner, listening to a lecture on the solar system and on the structure of the cell at the same time would be confusing. When content is new or unfamiliar, the clarity principle advises a teacher to stick to *one subject at a time*. We will be doing just that.

As we apply these four principles, we will clearly understand the Bible's message—the puzzle will be correctly assembled.

## 3 FORTY WRITERS

Just where did the Bible come from, and how did we get it?

The Bible was written by about 40 men. These men came from every imaginable walk of life—including kings, military generals, statesmen, scholars, peasants, philosophers, shepherds, poets,

fishermen, a prime minister, a doctor, a tax collector—to name just a few. Their writing crossed three continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe—with venues as diverse as palaces and dungeons, deserts and cities. They wrote during war and peace, sometimes in anguish, other times in gladness. They wrote in three languages—Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek—two languages from the east and one from the west. In all, they recorded 66 books across a span of 1,500 years. Those books, compiled into one volume, constitute the Bible.

**Although many of these 40 writers never knew each other, and though their subject matter included hundreds of controversial topics, what they recorded spoke with harmony and continuity from beginning to end.**

Now this is quite remarkable. Think about it for a moment. If we had just ten authors—all living today, all from the same generation, all in the same line of work, all coming from the same geographical background, all speaking the same language—what would be the odds of them agreeing if they were given only *one* controversial topic to write on and were unable to consult with each other? The likelihood would be extremely remote. And yet that is what happened with the Bible—not to ten men writing on one topic, but to 40 men writing on many controversial topics. Remarkable indeed! It's one of those things that makes the Bible unique—or holy.

### **ONE SOURCE**

So how did it happen? Simply put, none of these men claimed to be the *source* of the Bible's information. Instead they claimed a common origin for the thoughts they wrote, a source that spoke as one voice to them all.

**To discover the identity of that one source, we will launch into the biblical text, beginning with the man who wrote the first five books. His name was Moses. We'll be starting at a point in time about 3,500 years ago, with Moses retelling the events surrounding his own birth.**

### **A MAN NAMED MOSES**

Moses belonged to a group of slaves called *Israelites* or *Hebrews*—numbering about 2½ million—who had been in Egypt for over 350 years. The Egyptian king or *Pharaoh* was worried about their escalating population.

The story picks up with Pharaoh speaking. He said,

*“... the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.”*

*Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. ... But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves.* Exodus 1:9-13 ESV

When forced labor didn't whittle down the number of slaves, Pharaoh revised his plan for population control.

*Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives... “When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live.”*

*Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live.”* Exodus 1:15-16,22 NLT

Pharaoh's instructions were horrific, but even under difficult conditions, life goes on. The Scripture says a young Hebrew man took a wife and she ...

*... became pregnant and gave birth to a son.* Exodus 2:2 NLT

Pharaoh's orders were strict. The infant boy was to be thrown into the Nile River. But the mother ...

*... hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.*

*His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her*



*maid, and she brought it to her. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Exodus 2:2-6 NASB*

It's quite possible that Pharaoh's daughter wanted a child but was barren. When the baby came floating along, it was like an instant solution to her predicament. Moses' sister was watching and, when Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket, she slipped out of hiding and approached the princess.

*"Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked. Exodus 2:7 NLT*

Moses' sister was offering to find a slave to care for the baby.

*"Yes, do!" the princess replied. So the girl went and called the baby's mother.*

*"Take this baby and nurse him for me," the princess told the baby's mother. "I will pay you for your help." So the woman took her baby home and nursed him. Exodus 2:8-9 NLT*

Moses' mother was paid to care for her own son!

*So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses... Exodus 2:9-10 ESV*

So it was that Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace.

## 4 AN EDUCATION

The Holy Bible says,

*Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians...*

*Acts 7:22 NASB*

Even a brief walk through the ruins of ancient Egypt reveals the vast breadth of knowledge Moses received—from architecture to astronomy. Woven throughout every aspect of his schooling would have been the Egyptians' all-encompassing religion.

### NO SACRED BOOK

Though the ancient Egyptians had a well-developed system of beliefs, it would be hard to nail down a unifying theme for their religion. They revered no sacred book or texts; they held no body of teaching as the ultimate test for truth. Individual towns often venerated different gods and goddesses, and even those held in high esteem changed over time.

## ONE GOD VERSUS MANY GODS

It is still a matter of debate as to whether they worshipped one Supreme Being who manifested himself as many different gods, or whether they simply worshipped many gods.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps both were true. There is no doubt that the Egyptians were quite broad in their mindset, adopting new gods and adding them to the old, mixing one god's attributes with another, and holding stories as equally authoritative even when they disagreed.<sup>3</sup> All agree that they revered an immense pantheon of deities. Moses would have been well acquainted with all the primary gods and goddesses and probably many of the minor ones.

### THE SUN GOD

The ancient Egyptians worshipped the sun god, *Ra*, as the supreme deity. They believed that *Ra* created himself and subsequently he created all the other gods, goddesses, humans, and animals. *Ra* was sometimes referred to as the *father of gods* or the *god of gods*. He was portrayed as a falcon with a human body and a golden disk (the sun) on his head.



### VERY RELIGIOUS

Although the Egyptians respected their gods, they could also be quite demanding of them at times. But the gods were not ignored. Religion pervaded every facet of life—from the use of charms, magic, and secret incantations to the public celebration of religious holidays. Even their architecture was influenced by the gods.

### PRESTIGE RELIGION

Four thousand years ago the Egyptian way of life was highly respected. Their beliefs were considered the *prestige religion*.

It was in this world of ancient Egyptian thought that Moses received his esteemed education. But Moses also had the learning of a Hebrew. His true mother had cared for him as a child, and she undoubtedly tutored him in her own faith.<sup>4</sup> The two belief systems contradicted each other, but that made no difference to the Egyptians. They paid no attention to the Hebrew god. After all, a god of the slaves had to be very weak—no one even seemed to know the god's name!

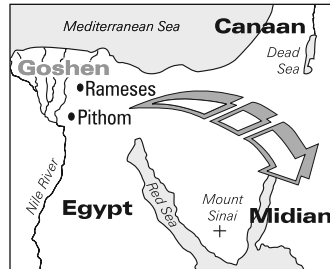
## 5 YAHWEH

In spite of Moses' extensive Egyptian upbringing, he had not forgotten his roots.

*One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.*

*When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian.* Exodus 2:11-12,15 ESV

As a "man on the run," Moses took deep cover. He married a local woman, became a shepherd, and learned to lead sheep.



*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law ... And he led the flock to the back of the desert ...* Exodus 3:1 NKJV

On this particular day he spotted a very unusual sight. Somehow a tree had burst into flames, but as Moses watched, it was evident that the wood was not being consumed. This was odd!

*So Moses thought, "I will turn aside to see this amazing sight. Why does the bush not burn up?"* Exodus 3:3 NET

As Moses approached the bush, a voice called out to him from within the fire.

*"Moses! Moses!"* Exodus 3:4 NET

You can imagine Moses' fright. Who was speaking to him from inside this burning bush? Was this some sort of god or goddess?

*And Moses said, "Here I am."*

*God said, "Do not approach any closer! Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*

Exodus 3:4-5 NET



Moses must have been bewildered! Why was this ground considered holy—*unique, one-of-a-kind*? If the voice was that of a god, who might it be? Before Moses could say a word, the mysterious voice spoke again.

*“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”*  
Exodus 3:6 NET

## God

The word *god* is a generic word meaning *strong one, mighty leader, deity*, and can be used in reference to any god. It’s a broad term. But this god specifically identified himself as the god of Moses’ father, and then he mentioned three names: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These three men were long-deceased relatives of Moses—the founding fathers of the Israelite nation, the nation of slaves. Clearly it was the god of the slaves speaking directly from the burning bush—not *Ra* or any of the other Egyptian gods.

Moses had heard stories from his mother about the god who conversed with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but that was long ago. Some wondered if those stories were true. Besides that, an Egyptian scholar would have told you that the gods never stooped to speak to a mere human. They were always distant, silent, or spoke through a temple priest. But now here was the god of the slaves speaking directly to Moses from a burning bush—as one person speaks to another. Truly this god was unique! The Bible says,

*... Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

Exodus 3:6 NET

God spoke again.

*“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land...*

*So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”*

Exodus 3:7-8,10 NIV

Moses was terrified! He had been a fugitive for forty years. His return to Egypt might be tolerated but it was doubtful Pharaoh would welcome his reappearance. How could he ever confront the most powerful man on earth and demand the release of all his slaves? And would his own Hebrew kinsmen accept him as their spokesman?

*Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”*

*Exodus 3:13 ESV*

## **POWER?**

We don’t really know why Moses requested the god’s personal name. One possibility relates to the Egyptian beliefs about the source of strength. According to their thinking, each god had a varying degree of power protected by the secret name of the deity. If you knew the god’s private name, you also possessed that god’s strength and ability.

Since this is what Moses had been taught concerning the Egyptian gods, perhaps he wondered if it also applied to the god of the Hebrew slaves. Conceivably Moses thought that if he could discover the name of the Hebrew god, then he would be better equipped to face a mighty man like Pharaoh. But there was a catch. Moses knew that the Egyptians believed that none of their deities ever disclosed their personal names. But maybe the god of the slaves would be different. What motivated Moses to ask for a name we really don’t know, but the reply was certainly clear.

*God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”*

*God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘[YAHWEH], the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever...”*

*Exodus 3:14-15 NIV*

## **THE NAME**

In the original language, the phrase *I AM* and the name *YAHWEH*<sup>5</sup> (*yah´way*) are essentially synonymous; they both mean: *I AM the one who is*, or *I AM the self-existent one*.

The god of the slaves, by his very name, was claiming to live by his own power. Whereas mankind needed food, water, air, sleep, light, shelter—an endless supply of essential items to live—this god was saying he needed nothing. Apparently this was so true that it was an intrinsic part of his name. He was the *self-existent one*, the *I AM*—*YAHWEH*. No Egyptian god or goddess claimed this. The god of the slaves was truly unique!

## YAHWEH

The ancient Israelites were in such awe of *YAHWEH* that in the centuries to come they refused to speak his name. In reading the Scriptures out loud, wherever they came to the word *YAHWEH* they would simply say “*LORD*” or “*THE NAME*” with everyone understanding that it was actually referring to *YAHWEH*. Even to this day, when you read God’s answer to Moses, it is written using the substitute word *LORD* in place of *YAHWEH*.

*God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever ...”*  
Exodus 3:15 ESV

So, in the Bible, whenever you see the name *LORD*, with all the letters capitalized, understand it as the ancients understood it. You are actually reading *YAHWEH*—the personal name of this unique god. To help us remember that connection I will sometimes refer to this god as *LORD YAHWEH*. Also, in the Holy Scripture, wherever you see the word *god* capitalized, as in *God*, it is referring to *YAHWEH*.

Some scholars feel Moses was the first person to know this unique God’s personal name. He was to tell everyone about him, that he was called *YAHWEH*. It was a name intended to be on everyone’s lips. And unlike the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses, the *LORD* God was not threatened by someone stealing his power.

*LORD, there is no one like you! For you are great, and your name is full of power.*  
Jeremiah 10:6 NLT

## SUMMARY

1. The generic name **god** means *strong one, mighty leader, deity*. Many other gods and goddesses are mentioned in the Bible. To differentiate between them, when *YAHWEH* is referred to, *god* is always spelled with a capital “*G*” as in *God*.
2. *YAHWEH* is often referred to as the *holy* God, meaning *unique, different, one-of-a-kind*.
3. Many centuries after the time of Moses, for purposes of respect, the personal name of *YAHWEH* was not spoken aloud. Even when written, it was substituted with the word *LORD*, as indicated by all the letters being capitalized.
4. The phrase *I AM* and the name *YAHWEH* are synonymous, both meaning *I AM the self-existent one*.

### THE POWER IN A NAME

This story is not found in the Bible—it is from Egyptian mythology. It illustrates the type of thinking prevalent in the time of Moses.

A story involving “power” is centered on the Egyptian sun god, *Ra* and his granddaughter, *Isis*—a goddess with aspirations to reign over heaven and earth. Jealous of *Ra*’s immense power, *Isis* asked him for his secret name. Of course, *Ra* did not divulge it. But that did not end the story. *Isis* privately created a venomous snake and put it in *Ra*’s path. As *Ra* took his daily journey across the sky, he “stepped” on the snake only to be bitten severely. As he cried out in pain, other gods and goddesses offered help, but none could relieve his misery.



Finally, *Isis* came forward. She promised to heal *Ra*, but only if he revealed his personal name. Well, of course *Ra* was not willing to do this. He stalled, and then with great reluctance, began to divulge names to her. This did not impress *Isis* who knew that *Ra* was trying to confuse her with fake personal names. She waited and waited. Finally, *Ra*, in deep agony, passed his secret name on to *Isis* and was healed.

As the story goes, *Isis* became a powerful goddess, equal to *Ra*. Often referred to as the *Queen of Heaven*, *Isis* was adopted by the Greeks and Romans along with many other nations, as the *mother of gods*.

An important distinction between *Ra* and *YAHWEH* is that the *LORD YAHWEH* made no attempt to conceal his personal name. Instead, he told Moses to reveal his name to the entire world. Moses did just that when he penned the first five books of the Holy Bible.

## 6 GOD-BREATHED

Moses' encounter with the *LORD YAHWEH* at the burning bush was just one of many exchanges to come. Moses was the first of the 40 men who recorded the 66 books that constitute the Bible. All of those men except one were Israelites.<sup>6</sup> And it was the *LORD YAHWEH* who spoke as the one voice—the common source for those 40 men—giving the Scripture its unique continuity and harmony.

### GOD-BREATHED

The *LORD* did not dictate Scripture to Moses as an executive would to a secretary. Rather, the process was paralleled to *breathing*.

*All Scripture is God-breathed...*<sup>7</sup>

2 Timothy 3:16 NIV

The whole concept of the *LORD breathing out* Scripture is a study in itself. Just as when one exhales his breath, that breath comes from his innermost being, so ultimately all Scripture was to be viewed as coming directly from the *LORD YAHWEH* himself. God and his words are inseparable, which is one reason the Bible is also referred to as *God's Word*.

*Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm...* Psalm 119:89 NIV

In the chapters to come, the story will unfold the foolproof system the *LORD* used to transfer his *Word* to these 40 writers. You'll be able to judge for yourself whether this system prevented con artists from "fabricating Scripture" and passing it off as coming from God. For now, it is important to understand that all 40 men wrote under the same God-inspired guidance.

### EXTREME ACCURACY

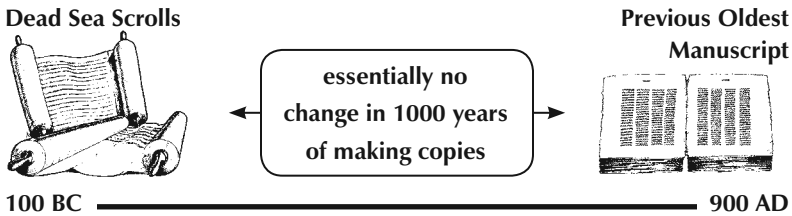
The *LORD's* words were first written on a scroll, usually an animal skin called *parchment*, or on paper made from the stem of a plant called *papyrus*. The originals were called *autographs*.

Since the autographs had a limited life span, copies were made of the scrolls. Of course, all of this was done by hand. The writers' awareness that what was being recorded was the *LORD's* own Word resulted in one of the most remarkable reproduction jobs ever done. In writing the Hebrew text,

*"They used every imaginable safeguard, no matter how cumbersome or laborious, to ensure the accurate transmission of the text. The number of letters in a book was counted and its middle letter was given. Similarly with the words, and again the middle word was noted."*<sup>8</sup>

This was done with both the copy and the original autograph to ensure that they were exactly the same.

These scribes were so accurate in their transcription that when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found (written in 100 BC), and compared with manuscripts resulting from centuries of copying and recopying to a period of time 1,000 years later (900 AD), there were no significant differences in the text.<sup>9</sup>



Josephus, a descendant of the Hebrew slaves and a historian from the first century AD, summed it up for his people when he stated, "... how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it [is] natural to all [Israelites] ... to esteem those books ... divine."<sup>10</sup>

These men were absolutely convinced that to meddle with the text was to tamper with the *LORD* himself. We have ample reason to be assured that what we have today is essentially the same as what the 40 men wrote.

## TRANSLATIONS

Both the autographs and copies were initially transcribed in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Since many of us do not know these tongues, the Scripture has been translated into many other languages. These translations work from early texts that find their roots in the ancient past. It has been said that the Bible may have been tampered with—changed—so that prophecies would appear to have been fulfilled. But with the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the ability to reach far back in history to see what had been written, reliable scholars agree that no such thing has happened. It is interesting that the ancient writers recorded the *LORD* himself as saying,

*The grass withers, the flower fades, But the Word of our God stands forever.*

*Isaiah 40:8 NASB*

...until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law [the five books written by Moses] until all is accomplished.

Matthew 5:18 NASB

## FORTY YEARS

We don't know specifically when or where Moses recorded all that the *LORD YAHWEH* told him, but we do know it would have been written in the last 40 years of his life. We will be following some of his experiences as we continue. As you read, keep in mind that the Bible claims to be the Word of the *LORD*. We are told that through its pages we can become acquainted with *YAHWEH* himself. The *LORD* says,

“...you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV

### NAVIGATION AIDS

As we begin to navigate through the 66 books found in the Bible, it is useful to know that each book is divided into chapters, and each chapter into verses. Many Bibles also include historical introductions, footnotes, cross-references, maps, and a concordance. These can be helpful, but we need to be clear in our minds that these “extras” were not part of the Scripture that was given to the 40 writers. They were added by men commenting on the Bible's content.

It is also helpful to understand that the Scriptures are divided into two major sections—the Old and New Testament. Historically, the Old Testament portion was divided into three categories:

1. The Law of Moses: This section is sometimes referred to as *The Torah*, *The Books of Moses*, or *The Law*.
2. The Writings: Sometimes called the *Psalms*.
3. The Prophets

In the Bible, the phrase, “the Law and the Prophets,” is a way of referring to the entire *Old Testament* portion, a part that comprises approximately two-thirds of the Scriptures. The remaining one-third is referred to as the *New Testament*.