

Did Moses Write the Jewish Pentateuch

Written by Administrator

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The first five books of the Bible bear the name of Moses - implying that he was their author. As a matter of fact, the adherents of Pharisaic Judaism and traditional Christianity insist that Moses wrote these books and that every word is authentic and inspired. However, if we carefully study these books it would become obvious that they were written by more than one person. They reveal different styles and vocabulary, various dubbings and most importantly, teachings and doctrines that are mutually contradictory and therefore could not have originated with Moses.

In Numbers 34 the death and burial of Moses is described. Obviously this was written by another hand. Many suppose that Joshua wrote this chapter. But the final remarks prove otherwise. Verses 10-12 state:

"Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt - to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no-one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel."

Whoever wrote this lived centuries after the death of Moses - since he was able to compare the deeds of Moses with other prophets of Israel. In several places we can plainly see that Moses could not have written certain passages and that the author [authors] lived well after the death of Moses.

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In Genesis 14:14 we read:

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“When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit *as far as Dan*.”

The chapter describes the liberation of Lot. It alleges that Abram pursued the captors of Lot and slaughtered them. The author states that Abram pursued his enemies as far as the city of Dan. Now Moses could not have written this. The city to which the author referred to was known as Dan only *after the death of Moses* - when the conquest of Canaan took place. The city of Dan was called Leshem or Laish in the days of Abram and throughout the life of Moses. Please note the text of Joshua 19:47:

“But the Danites had difficulty taking possession of their territory, so they went up and attacked Leshem, took it, put it to the sword and occupied it. They settled in Leshem and named it Dan after their forefather.”

The conquest of Leshem did not take place during the lifetime of Joshua even though this text is found in the book that bears his name. The merciless slaughter of the innocent and peaceful people occurred after Joshua and all his generation died. This fact is evident from the book of Judges. Please note the following quote:

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“After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take their possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel...After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals” [Judges 2:6-11].

This text states that all the tribes of Israel settled in the land that was allotted to them. This however is contradicted in Judges 19 where the real story is told and when the real conquest of Leshem [that is, Laish] actually took place. Verse 1 states that in those days - after the death of Joshua and all his contemporaries - there was no king in Israel. It also says that the Danites had not as yet had any allotment in the land of Canaan. [This contradicts Joshua 19:41-48 where we are clearly told that the Danites received their allotment and their borders were clearly defined]. According to Judges 18 the Danites sent five warriors to spy out the land of Laish. When they returned they gave a report to their brothers. The Council decided to send 600 warriors and take the possession of the land. Please note the following text:

“Then they took what Micah had made and his priest, and went on to Laish, against a peaceful and unsuspecting people. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city. There was no-one to rescue them because they lived a long way from Sidon and had no relationship with anyone else. The city was in a valley near Beth Rehob. The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there. They named it Dan after their forefather Dan, who was born to Israel - though the city used to be called Laish” [Judges 18:27-29].

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Verse 30 states that the son of Gershon, the son of Moses, and his descendants continued to serve as priests *until the captivity of the land* - proving that the author who wrote this text lived sometime after the Babylonian exile. In the light of all this clear evidence, it follows that Moses did not write Genesis since throughout his lifetime the city of Leshem or Laish was not known as Dan nor did the Danites as yet murder the peaceful and innocent citizens of Laish.

In Genesis 12: 6-7 we read:

"Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. *The Canaanites were then in the land* , but the LORD appeared to Abram and said..."

It is very obvious that Moses did not write this since the Canaanites were in their land throughout the lifetime of Moses. The conquest of the Promised Land did not take place during the lifetime of Moses. In Genesis 13 we are told that Abram left Egypt and went to Bethel. In verse 7 we are informed that at that time the Canaanites and Perizzites *were still living in that land* . Moses could not have made this statement since these peoples continued to live in that land throughout the life of Moses. The land was not conquered until Joshua's conquest. And even then many of these peoples continued to live in that land [Judges 1:27-35]. In Judges 3:5-6 we find this statement:

"So the children of Israel dwelt among the Cannanites, Hivites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hittites,

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and Jebusites; And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods."

In Joshua we are told how the whole land of Canaan was conquered and that all these seven nations were completely wiped out from under heaven, but here we find that all these seven nations were still very much alive and powerful. So the author who made a statement that the Canaanites and the Perizzites were then still in the land lived long after the death of Moses when these nations were finally subdued under the reign of King David.

In Genesis 36 we are given a list of kings who ruled in Edom. Moses could not have written this since many of these kings ascended the throne long after Moses was dead. The final remark concerning these kings states:

"These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned."

The author obviously lived after the time of King Saul since he was aware of the Israelite monarchy - a thing Moses did not witness. There are other remarks which positively exclude Moses as the author. In Deuteronomy 3:11 we read:

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"King Og of Bashan was the last survivor of the giant Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It can still be seen in the Ammonite city of Rabbah."

"Jair, a leader from the tribe of Manasseh, conquered the whole Argob region in Bashan, all the way to the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites. Jair renamed this region after himself, calling it the Towns of Jair, as it is still known to this day" [verse 14].

This land was conquered after the death of Moses and that a significant amount of time had passed since this writing is indicated by the phrase "to this day."

That Moses did not write Deuteronomy is strongly implied in Deuteronomy 1:1 where the author states that Moses spoke the words recorded in Deuteronomy "beyond Jordan" in the land of the Moab. Moses did not cross the Jordan River into the land of Canaan but died and was buried in the land of Moab - beyond Jordan. This proves that the author who wrote this book lived in the land of Israel.

In Numbers 15:32 we read:

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day."

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Moses could not have written this but only a person who lived after the Israelites left the wilderness and entered the land of Canaan. Moses could not have said this since he lived with the Israelites all forty years in the wilderness.

If Moses wrote the Pentateuch then he would have surely known just when and where did his brother Aaron die. But we find two conflicting stories concerning Aaron's death. In Numbers 33:38 we are told that Aaron died on Mount Hor in the fortieth year since exodus from Egypt:

"And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of Yahweh, and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. And Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor."

But in Deuteronomy 10:6 we read:

"The people of Israel journeyed from Beeroth Benejaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried; and his son Eleazar ministered as priest in his stead."

According to Deuteronomy 10:6 this was the route Israel took immediately after Aaron's death:□

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"The people of Israel journeyed from Beeroth Benejaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried... From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with brooks of water." □

According to Numbers 33:39, 41-49 the route they took was different:

"And Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor. And they set out from Mount Hor, and encamped at Zalmonah. And they set out from Zalmonah, and encamped at Punon. And they set out from Punon, and encamped at Oboth. And they set out from Oboth, and encamped at Iyeabarim, in the territory of Moab. And they set out from Iyim, and encamped at Dibongad. And they set out from Dibongad, and encamped at Almondiblathaim. And they set out from Almondiblathaim, and encamped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. And they set out from the mountains of Abarim, and encamped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho; they encamped by the Jordan from Bethjeshimoth as far as Abelshittim in the plains of Moab."

Clearly two different authors wrote the texts following the different tradition.

In Genesis 32:3 we are told that Seir is Edomite territory. Edomites were descendants of Esau, the son of Isaac. In Deuteronomy 2:29 we are told that Edomites and Moabites permitted the Israelites to pass through their borders without any incident:

"The descendants of Esau who live in Seir granted us passage, and so did the Moabites...But king Sihon of Heshbon refused to grant a passage."

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Exodus 15:15 agrees with this:

"The chiefs of Edom were dismayed, trembling seized the leaders of Moab. Through the might of your arm they stayed still while your people passed, Yahweh, while the people whom you made passed by."

In Deuteronomy 2:4-5, 9, 19 and 24 we read:

"...you are about to go through the hill country of Edom, the territory of your distant relatives, the descendants of Esau. They will be afraid of you, but you must not start a war with them...don't trouble the people of Moab, the descendants of Lot, or start a war against them...today you are to pass through the territory of Moab by the way of Ar...After we had passed through Moab..."

Let us summarise these passages. They plainly say that the Edomites permitted the Israelites to cross through their land and so did the Moabites. In fact, they say that Edomites were dismayed and the leaders of Moab trembled and that they stayed still until the Israelites passed through their land. If Moses wrote these passages then he surely could not have written the passage of Numbers 20:14-21:

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"Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. They said, this message is from your kinsmen, the tribes of Israel...Now we are at Kadesh, a town at the border of your territory. Please permit us to pass through your land...But the Edomites answered, we refuse to let you pass through our country! If you try, we will march out and attack you. The people of Israel said, we will stay on the main road, and if we or our animals drink any of your water, we will pay for it - all we want is to pass through. The Edomites repeated, we refuse! and they marched out with a powerful army to attack the people of Israel. Because the Edomites would not let the Israelites pass through their territory, the Israelites turned and went another way."

A clear contradiction and this proves that the same author did not write both passages.

Did Moses know who was his father in law? If he wrote the whole Pentateuch as claimed then obviously not. For one author consistently refers to his father in law as Reuel [Genesis 2:18]. In fact in this chapter we are told that Reuel was the father of seven daughters. Moses lived with him and he gave him Zipporah, one of his daughters, in marriage. But in Numbers 10:29 this is brought into question. Here we read the following:

"And Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Medianite, Moses' father-in law."

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Admittedly this passage is ambiguous. It could mean that Hobab was the father-in law of Moses or Reuel. But Reuel did not have any sons but only seven daughters. If we base ourselves on Judges 4:11 then we must conclude that Hobab was Moses' father-in law and not Reuel. For there we read:

"Now Heber the Kenite had left the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab the father-in law of Moses."

Here we are told clearly that Hobab was the father-in law of Moses and therefore the text of Numbers 10:29 contradicts the text of Exodus 2:18 for Reuel and Hobab are definitely two distinct persons and therefore both could not have been Moses' father-in law. But another author of the Pentateuch brings even further confusion for he consistently refers to Moses' father-in law as Jethro in Exodus 18 and Exodus 3:1.

When we read the story of Joseph in Hebrew, we can clearly detect two sources and two different authors. They use different words for a servant girl and different word for sacs. One states that they discovered that their money was returned in their sacs while they were still on the road while the other when they have arrived back home. Another important difference lies in the fact who sold Joseph to Potiphar in Egypt. This is interesting one because the Hebrew Masoretic Text, the Aramaic Peshitta and the Greek Septuagint differ on crucial key points.

The Masoretic Text states that Midianites pulled Joseph out of the cistern and that they sold him

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to the Ishmaelites who brought him to Egypt where they sold him to Potiphar. The Aramaic Peshita states that the Midianites pulled Joseph out of the cistern and that they sold him to the Arabians who took Joseph to Egypt where they have sold him to Potiphar. The Greek Septuagint however states that it was not Midianites who took Joseph out of the cistern but rather Madanites and that they sold him to Ishmaelites who took Joseph to Egypt where they sold him to Potiphar. Midian and Madan were brothers and therefore Midianites and Madanites were distinct tribes or clans.

If we take the version of the Masorites and the translation of the King James translators there is a problem. In Genesis 38:28 we are told that the Midianites pulled Joseph out of the pit and that they sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. How then could we be told in verse 36 that the Midianites sold Joseph to Potiphar in Egypt when he was not in their possession? But in chapter 39:1 we are told that the Ishmaelites brought Joseph to Egypt and that they sold him to Potiphar. If we remove chapter 38 which is awkwardly inserted in the narrative we have two verses next to each other contradicting each other. There is no escape. Two authors and two different versions were later intertwined. Moses was not the author.

In the narrative of the Flood two different versions are detected. One author consistently uses the term Elohim for God while the other Yahweh [Jehovah]. One states that a pair of all animals were in the ark while the Yahwist states that a pair of the unclean and seven pairs of the clean. One states that Noah entered the ark with his family and all the animals seven days before the rain began. The other states that they entered on the very day the rain began. The Yahwist author presents Yahweh in anthropomorphic language: Yahweh grieves, personally shuts the door of the Ark, smells Noah's sacrifice. The Elohist consistently states "man and his wife" while the Yahwist "male and female." Yahwist states that "everything died" while the Elohist "everything expired." Yahwist uses the term "ha'adamah" for the Earth, while the Elohist "ha'eres."

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The book of Deuteronomy is written in the first person:

“The LORD our God said to **us**...At that time **I** said to you...You answered **me**...**We** set out from Horeb...Then all of you came to **me**
...The idea seemed good to **me**
...then **we**
turned back...”

This verifies the fact that the book of Deuteronomy was written in the first person. But now please note how the book of Exodus does not portray Moses as the first person speaker but rather another person writing on his behalf:

“Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that **he** was a fine child, she hid **him** for three months. But when she could hide **him** no **h**
longer... **is**
is sister...she opened it and saw the baby. **He**
He was crying...One day, after **Moses**
Moses had grown up... **He**
Moses saw an Egyptian...Now **Moses**

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“Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he commanded them to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. These were the heads of their families...These were the heads of the Levite families, clan by clan. *It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, “Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.” They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. It was the same Moses and Aaron*”

[Exodus 6:13-27].