

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

First, we will learn about the origin of each Bible book: who wrote it and when and where he wrote it. Second, we will learn about how the Bible book may be divided into parts. Third, we will learn the main contents and messages of each Bible book. Finally, we will learn how to understand some difficult parts of the Bible book.

Today's teaching is: THE ORIGIN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT – PART 1.

POINT 1. THE PERIOD OF THE EARLIEST BOOKS.

What three events would make it possible for the books of the Bible to come into being?

The earliest Bible books came into being by three important events. One, God spoke directly to people. Two, God commanded the people to pass his words on to the next generation. Three, God commanded some persons to record his words in books. Let us look more closely to these events.

First. God spoke directly to people.

Even before the first people, Adam and Eve, fell into sin, *the special revelation* of God began. God spoke directly to the first people who lived on the earth. God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When you eat of it, you will surely die!" (Gen 2:16-17).

In the book of Genesis, we read how God spoke directly to many people. He especially spoke many things to Adam, to Noah, to the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to Joseph.

Second. God commanded people to pass his words on to the next generation.

We do not know whether God's word was recorded at once or whether it was passed on orally from father to son. Probably both happened at the same time. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 is written, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." From this commandment it is clear that God himself is very concerned that his words will not be forgotten. He especially gave parents the responsibility to pass his words on to their children. They had to *impress* God's words in such a way on their children that the children would not forget them. The tradition of fathers teaching their children and of memorising God's Word became very strong in Israel. Later, there were even some schools where God's word was memorised without a mistake! The oral tradition remained without errors, because the human race was relatively small and not yet spread over all the earth. It remained without errors, because people became very old, lived several hundreds of years and many generations overlapped one another.

Third. God commanded some persons to record his words in books.

In the book of Genesis we read about several such written documents. In Genesis 2:4 we read, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created". In Genesis 5:1 we read, "This is the written account of Adam's line". Likewise, we read about other "written accounts" that were included in the book of Genesis: the accounts of Noah (Gen 6:9), of Noah's sons (Gen 10:1), of Terah and Abraham (Gen 11:27), of Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 25:12,19), and of Esau and Jacob (Gen 36:1; 37:2).

Already in the time of Abraham, 2100 years B.C., there existed libraries filled with documents, schools and teachers. The two big centres of culture in Abraham's time were Babylonia, where Abraham came from, and Egypt, where Moses was educated. More than 3500 years ago, several different ways of writing were widely known and used in the world. Before the time of Moses, 1400 years B.C., people were writing and sending letters from one country to another. Therefore, it is very probable that God's words and acts were recorded in several books. Later, Moses, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, used these books to write the book of Genesis. The oldest books were written on clay tablets and the later books were written on leather and papyrus.

POINT 2. THE PERIOD OF THE BOOKS OF MOSES.

How did the first five books in the Bible come into existence?

First. God spoke directly to Moses.

Moses grew up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. In Acts 7:22 we read that Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians and that he was a man of power in words and in deeds. Moses was an educated man and well acquainted with the geography, culture and language of Egypt and Sinai. God revealed his will to Moses by speaking directly to him. In Exodus 3 we read how God spoke the first time to Moses from a burning bush on Mount Sinai and revealed his

name and purpose to him. God spoke to Moses about many things, but especially about how he should lead Israel out of Egypt.

Second. Moses recorded the words of God.

After Israel had left Egypt, God spoke again to Moses on Mount Sinai and revealed to him the Ten Commandments and various social laws. In Exodus 24:4,7 we read, "Moses then wrote down everything God had said" and he called this book "the book of the covenant".

Again and again, God spoke to Moses and commanded him to record these words. Moses recorded these words in the Hebrew language on clay tablets (Ex 34:27-28) or in "books" or scrolls made from leather or papyrus (Dt 31:9,24). In this way, there came into existence several books, which contained the history of God's deeds with his people and also God's words.

The book of Genesis contains the history of God's deeds from the beginning of mankind up to the time Jacob and his family entered Egypt.

The book of Exodus contains the history of how Israel multiplied and became a big nation in Egypt, how they were oppressed and made slaves and how God rescued them and brought them out of their slavery. It also contains God's laws with regard to the tabernacle.

The book of Leviticus contains God's laws with regard to the sacrifices, the priesthood and the religious festivals.

The book of Numbers contains the history of how God led his people through the desert between Egypt and Israel for forty years until they reached the promised land of Canaan.

The book of Deuteronomy contains a reminder of all God's great deeds and laws. Moses called it "the book of the law" (Dt 31:24-26). "The book of the law" or simply "the law" usually refers to all these five books. The law was most probably divided into five volumes for the practical reason that each volume should fit the length of an average leather or papyrus scroll.

Third. The inspiration and authority of the books of the law.

Moses lived 120 years. After he had written down all the acts and words of God in these books, he commanded that these books of the law should be placed beside the Ark of the Covenant, the place which was best guarded. In Deuteronomy 31:10-13, he also commanded that these books of the law should be read to the whole nation of Israel at least every seven years, so that men, women, children and even foreigners in their towns can learn to fear the Lord and learn to obey all the Lord's words.

Joshua followed Moses as leader of Israel. In Joshua 1:7-8, God commanded, "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this "book of the law" depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Thus, from the very beginning, God himself confirmed that "the five books of Moses" was his inspired and authoritative Word and should be meditated and obeyed!

Throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament, the five books of Moses were a unity and were accepted as having divine authority. Jesus Christ himself said in John 5:45-47 that "the book of the law" was recorded by Moses. Also the apostles said in John 1:17 and Romans 10:5 that "the book of the law" was given through Moses.

Thus we may conclude that the five books of Moses called Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were inspired by God, recorded by Moses and completed before 1405 B.C.

POINT 3. THE PERIOD OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

How did the historical books in the Old Testament come into existence? "The historical books" are the 12 books from Joshua to Esther in the Old Testament.

First. God commanded the recording of history.

God himself commanded the Israelites in Exodus 10:2 and Deuteronomy 4:9 that they must not forget the things that God has done. They saw with their own eyes God's miracles and they must teach them to their own children and to the children after them! Such commands of God as these stimulated Israel to record its history and to collect them in books. The nations around Israel also wrote books, but they mixed their history with fantastic mythologies. In comparison, Israel's historians wrote real history that time and again has been confirmed by archaeology! The fact that the historians not only recorded the good parts of Israel's history, but also Israel's sin and rebellion against God, shows that the recording of the historical books did not depend on the decision and choice of the historians, but on God who commanded and inspired them! The historical books in the Old Testament describe God's acts within Israel and the nations round about them. It describes especially how Israel time and again broke God's covenant, how God judged their sin and how God saved only a remnant of Israel.

Second. The authors made use of smaller historical collections.

In the Old Testament we read that various shorter history books were written and later collected into the longer Bible books we possess today. Moses was the first historian and he collected the various “written accounts” of the life of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In Numbers 21:14 we read that Moses also made use of another book called “the book of the wars of the Lord”. By making use of these various “written accounts” and such “books”, Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

Later, several such historical collections were made. In Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18 we read that both Joshua and the prophet Samuel made use of a certain “book of Jashar”. *Jashar* means *the upright*. Several shorter collections were made of the history of the kings of Israel. In 1 Kings 11:41 we read of the existence of “the book of the annals of Solomon”. In 1 Kings 14:29 we read of “the book of the annals of the kings of Judah”. In 1 Kings 14:19 we read of “the book of the annals of the kings of Israel”. In Esther 9:32 we read that the regulations of the Purim festival were written down in the records.

Third. The authors were inspired by God.

Although we do not actually know who compiled the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, the viewpoint of these books is consistently “prophetic”. That is, the authors composed history from God’s point of view! In 1 Chronicles 29:29-30 we read “As for the events of king David’s reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet, and the records of Gad the seer, together with the details of his reign and power, and the circumstances that surrounded him and Israel and the kingdoms of all the other lands”. And in 2 Chronicles 32:32 we read of the existence of “the vision of the prophet Isaiah ... in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel”. We may conclude that the historical books were mainly written by God’s prophets and their disciples between 1400 and 460 B.C.

POINT 4. THE PERIOD OF THE POETICAL BOOKS.

How did the poetical books of the Old Testament come into existence? The poetical books in the Old Testament are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

First. Hebrew poetry.

The discovery of an increasing number of hymns of the Akkadians in Babylonia and the Egyptians has clearly established the writing of poetry by Israel’s neighbours as early as 2000 years B.C. Moreover, poetry was discovered that was written around 1500 years B.C. in a Canaanite language called “Ugaritic”, which is very close to the Hebrew language. These facts compel us to conclude that the Hebrews not only memorised their poetry and passed it on orally, but must have committed their poetry to the written form at the time they were produced. The Psalms were written between 1400 and 500 B.C.

Second. Hebrew wisdom literature.

Wisdom literature was extensively cultivated among the ancient nations around Israel. There are outstanding examples in the Akkadian, Egyptian and Aramaic literature.

“Wisdom literature” consists of all kinds of practical principles and precepts for how to live. It is based on clever observations of human nature and human behaviour. It records all kinds of rules how to succeed in social, commercial and political life. The wisdom literature of the Hebrews was of a practical rather than a theoretical-philosophical nature. “The wise man” was a person who knew how to do things with knowledge, ability and skill (Ex 31:3). He was also a person who could come up with the right answer in critical situations (Gen 41:39). Wisdom in Israel was applied to the art of getting along successfully with all kinds of people. Wisdom was the art of knowing how to relate to the rich and the poor, to kings and servants, to your neighbour and to people of the opposite sex.

The book of Job was written about 1900 B.C.

The book of Proverbs was written between 970 -710 B.C.

The books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs were written about 970 B.C.

POINT 5. THE PERIOD OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS.

How did the prophetic books of the Old Testament come into existence? The prophetic books are the five books of the Major Prophets: Isaiah to Daniel and the twelve books of the Minor Prophets: Hosea to Malachi.

First. God spoke through the prophets.

All the prophetic books in the Bible clearly say that God is their Author. More than 2700 times it is written in the prophetic books, “The word of the Lord, which came to the prophet, saying” or “Thus says the Lord, ...”! These words show that the prophets of the Bible were the inspired mouthpieces of God. God spoke through them and revealed his will to his people. The later prophets also pointed out to their readers that the books of the earlier prophets, who

prophesied before the exile, were truthful and trustworthy. For example, in Zechariah 7:6-7 we read, “Are not these the words the Lord proclaimed through the earlier prophets ...?” The prophets also regarded the books of the earlier prophets as God’s word, inspired by the Holy Spirit. For example, in Zechariah 7:12 we read, “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets.”

Second. God commanded the prophets to record the prophecies.

For example, in Jeremiah 36:1-4 we read, “In the fourth year of king Jehoiakim of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord; “Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of king Josiah till now.” “So Jeremiah called Baruch ... and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll.” Sometimes the prophet would dictate the words of God to a scribe, but other times the prophet would record the words of God himself. For example, in Isaiah 30:8 we read that God commands the prophet Isaiah, “Go, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness.” Isaiah had to write down the words of God’s message twice. First he had to write God’s words on a clay tablet in the presence of the people in order that they might read it right there. Then he had to write God’s words on a leather or papyrus scroll, in order that the message of God would be a witness to all the coming generations!

Third. The prophetic books were studied and quoted and they outlasted false prophecies.

The prophets studied the earlier books of other prophets. For example, Daniel studied the books of Jeremiah (Dan 9:2). The prophets also quoted from one another’s books and regarded those words as the eternal words of God. For example, the words in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are exactly the same. Because Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries of one another, we do not know who wrote those words originally. It is noteworthy that in spite of the fact that the prophets spoke many of their prophecies against Israel’s sin and hardened hearts, the Israelites did not and could not destroy these books. The words of the false prophets did not survive, while the words of the true prophets survived! God sovereignly preserved the prophetic books from annihilation.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Make a commitment to read through the whole Old Testament. During the next week, read Genesis chapters 1-25. After two weeks we will introduce the book of Genesis.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.