

Historical Evidence of Post-Mosaic Authorship

Higher criticism has shown that the Pentateuch contains a number of references to events, locations, and comments that point to non-Mosaic authorship. These inconsistencies can be categorized into two groups:

- 1) a-Mosaic, awkward if ascribed to Moses, and
- 2) p-Mosaic, likely written after (post) Moses

A- Mosaic- awkward if ascribed to Moses

There are portions of the Pentateuch that speak of Moses in the third person. Deuteronomy has many examples of this third person perspective such as "Moses spoke", "he commissioned", etc. (Deut 1:1; 4:41; 4:44-45; 29:1-2; 31:1; 29:7; 29:22-26).

Writing in the third person does not conclusively deny Mosaic authorship. Another possibility of this literary style is the use of scribes under the direction of Moses. Based on ancient extrabiblical evidence, it is also possible that Moses himself wrote in the third person as exemplified by other ancient writers (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 1st century AD; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 5th century BC; Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1st century BC) (1). While the presence of A-Mosaic does suggest that Moses did not directly write some portions of the Pentateuch, it is not sufficient proof alone, and this does not deny the *essential* Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Yet there are portions of the Pentateuch that is difficult to understand if Moses did author these portions such as references to his humbleness or recount of his death and obituary (Deut 34:5-12).

In the case of Deuteronomy 34, tradition believes that Joshua, an inspired author, added the obituary of Moses. This is consistent with the fact that Joshua worked closely with Moses for over 40 years in which he served as military leader, served as assistant, accompanied Moses part way up Mount Sinai for the first set of laws, and assisted at the Tabernacle of Meeting (Ex 17:8-14; 24:13; 32:15-17; and 33:7-11).

Post Mosaic- likely written after Moses

Some of the verses identified as p-Mosaic are the consequence of *scriptural glosses*. The term *gloss* originated from the Greek term *glossa*, which literally means "tongue" or figuratively as "language".

In the course of studying the works of Greek authors, Greek grammarians used the term **glossa** when identifying a word that needed explanation and the explanation itself. Thus glosses explained any word that was difficult to understand.

Usually these glosses pertained to: a) foreign words, b) provincial words, c) obsolete words, d) technical words, or e) words used in an unusual form or sense.

Hebrew glosses (see the article "What is the Masorah?") were often short notes on questionable spelling or reading. These glosses would indicate a removal, transposition, or restoration of a consonant.

In some cases, the gloss indicated a removal or insertion of a whole word. Their purpose was to render the correct reading and understanding of the original Hebrew.

These Hebrew glosses were later collected and formed the basis of Rabbinical glossaries or lexicons that eventually were published such as the *Greek lexicon of Hesychius* (5th century AD). Today's Bible study tool, lexicon, is based on this concept.

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Greek and Latin glosses were more extensive annotations reflecting exegetical and critical study. Historical, geographical, and biographical information may also be included.

Like Hebrew glosses, they were collected and formed the basis for later commentaries. The *Glossa Ordinaria* (started in the early 9th century AD) is one such example.

There isn't any question that glosses have ended up as textual additions; but, there is large debate of what are glosses, how the glosses got there, and who authored them.

The Old Testament has some examples of textual changes. Ezra, author of the book of Ezra, was a Jewish scholar - priest and scribe (*sopher*).

Ezra, and *Sopherim* who followed him, namely (by tradition) Nehemiah, Zechariah, and Haggai, began to make emendations to the Text (alterations with the intent of recovering the original meaning) approximately during 440 BC – 331 BC.

They desired to a) update the script, b) correct errors that had crept into manuscript copies, c) clarify the original intent of the Canon, and d) demonstrate extreme reverence to God.

For example, they altered the script from its angular paleo-Hebrew form to the square Aramaic form and changed the spelling by inserting certain consonants to express long vowels (called *mattes lectionis*) to aid in reading the Text.

In another example, the name of God, *Yahweh*, was too sacred to read aloud, so it was replaced with *Adonai* in 134 verses. These changes were handed down to a later group of scribes, the *Masoretes*, who introduced the written vowel system and copied with extreme fidelity as custodians of the Text.

The Masoretes refer to the emendations of the Sopherim as *Tiqqune Sopherim*, which was a list of eighteen alterations. At some point, this list of eighteen became twenty-six. The Sopherim were careful to account for their alterations and kept a record of these glosses called the *Masorah*, which were critical notes in the margins between or along side the Text. Masoretic scholarship continued the tradition of the Masorah until 1425 AD.

In the case of the New Testament, the scribal tradition was not as disciplined as the Masoretes. Most of the suspected textual changes are believed to be the result of copyists including some of the glosses into the Text itself, possible completion of Old Testament quotes, and possible inclusion of parallel passages. While these changes introduced variant readings of the Text, these variations only account for .5% of the entire New Testament; thus, the New Testament is considered 99.4% pure with no part of the .6% representing any part of doctrine.

One possible clue of scriptural glosses is the presence of *anachronisms*, which is a term describing the misplacement of some event(s) or person(s) in the wrong historical setting. There are portions of the Pentateuch that contains geographical or historical information that could only be known after Moses. The following are often cited examples of this p-Mosaica:

Anthropologic anachronisms

Canaanites - Genesis 12:6

Edomite Kings - Genesis 36:31-39

Philistines - Genesis 21:32-34; 26:1-8, 14-18

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Geographic anachronisms

Ur of the Chaldeans - Genesis 11:31
Dan - Genesis 14:14
Across the Jordan

Temporal anachronisms

This Day / As This Day

The presence of post Mosaic additions does not deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Many of the additions were explanatory notes of the passage authored by Moses. Furthermore these additions do not upset the doctrine of biblical inspiration. Biblical inspiration refers to the final product rather than to the manner of writing. The Holy Spirit superintended the work of editors so that the final words of the Text, though obtained by different methods, are the words intended by God. It was this final Text (including editorial insertions) that Jesus Christ pronounced perfect (Matt 5:18 and John 10:35) (2).

References:

1. McDowell J, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers (1999), p.516-517.
2. Walvoord JF and Zuck RB, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books (1985), p.266.

Canaanites - Genesis 12:6

In Genesis 12:6, "At that time the Canaanites were still in the land" is helpful information only if Canaanites were not in the land. When Moses wrote this, the Canaanites were largely vanquished during his lifetime.

The Canaanites were a tribe of people that settled in the land of Canaan well before 2000 BC. They were displaced when Joshua led the crossing of the Jordan river and conquest for the Promised Land. Records of Canaanite history ended during that period.

As in other cases of possible scribal gloss, Genesis 12:6 and 13:7 point to the antiquity of the document.

Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. (Gen 12:6)

And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. (Gen 13:7)

Edomite Kings - Genesis 36:31-39

In Esau's list of descendants (Gen 36:9-43), Genesis 36:31 ("Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel,") suggests the existence of an Israelite monarchy that has yet to occur hundreds of years later. And the following verses listed the names of Edomite kings who were born after Moses' time (Genesis 36:31-39).

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Edomite Kings - Genesis 36:31-39 (page 2)

The first problem: did Moses know that there would be Hebrew kings when he wrote the Pentateuch? It appears that Moses records the prophetic promises that God had made to Abraham, Jacob, and himself that explicitly mention Hebrew kings. God foretells that a Jewish monarchy will arise under two conditions: 1) when Israel is in the Promised Land, and 2) when the nation of Israel asks for a king (Gen 17:15-16; 35:9-11; Deut 17:14-15).

The second problem: the Edomite kings listed are kings that existed well after Moses.

Moses: 1527-1406 BC

The reign of Saul: 1020-1000 BC

The reign of David: 1000-961 BC

The reign of the 8 Edomite kings: 1152-995 BC

Despite Moses' knowledge of the future of Israelite kings, many scholars are of the opinion that Genesis 36:31-39 was added to the genealogies of Esau sometime after Kings Saul or David and represents evidence of scribal gloss. One possibility for this insertion was to place a contextual perspective to the Edomites that Saul was fighting against and finally conquered by David.

References:

1. Sarna N, Genesis, New York: Jewish Publication Society (1989), p.252.

Ur of the Chaldeans - Genesis 11:31

Ur was Abraham's native city in southern Mesopotamia. During Abraham's time of approximately 2000 BC, it does not appear that Chaldeans were present at Ur. The first documented evidence of Chaldeans in that area is found in the annals of Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (who reigned 884/883-859 BC), and Chaldeans did not contend for Babylonia until the middle of the eighth century BC. Thus the reference to "Ur of the Chaldeans" in Genesis 11:28, 31 *may* represent a scribal updating to distinguish Abraham's Ur from other cities that may share the same name. (1)

References:

1. Arnold BT, "Babylonians" in *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (ed. Hoerth A, Mattingly G, and Yamauchi E), Grand Rapids: Baker (1994), p.57.

Dan - Genesis 14:14

In this often cited example, Genesis 14:14 has the updated name for the city Laish; the city of Laish was changed to Dan in Judges 18:29 roughly 400 years after Moses, yet Dan was used in Genesis 14:14 and Deuteronomy 34:1.

Laish is mentioned in the ancient Mari Tablets that date about 1800 BC and is archeologically located at the site Tell el Qadi. Some scholars maintaining Mosaic authorship believe that Dan was a city name as Matu Dan-nu-na as early as 2700 BC; however, the location of this city is unknown. (1) (2)

Dan - Genesis 14:14 (page 2)

In Genesis 14, there are five instances where such updating has been noted. These are considered scribal glosses where scribes attempted to make the Text more relevant to their readers. But while critics use this scribal gloss as evidence of late authorship, the use of contemporary names for areas with long forgotten and precise names is evidence for the antiquity of the document.

Bela (that is, Zoar)

that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Semeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). (Gen 14:2)

valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)

All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). (Gen 14:2)

En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh)

Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar. (Gen 14:2)

Bela (that is, Zoar)

And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, (Gen 14:2)

valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley)

Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). (Gen 14:2)

While archeology has not found records of the kings listed in Genesis 14:1-3, this is the only period in history when such an alliance as is depicted here would have been possible – only in the early second millennium BC. This is the only time when the Elamites were aggressively expanding their kingdom (2000-1800 BC) at the expense of Mesopotamian states, and the only period in which Mesopotamian alliances were unstable enough to permit such a confederation as is described in Genesis 14. (3)

And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Semeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). (Genesis 14:1-3)

References:

1. Archer GL, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Chicago, IL: Moody (1974), p.221.
2. Sarna N, *Genesis*, New York: Jewish Publication Society (1989), p.108.
3. Kaiser WC, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (2001), p.91.

Across the Jordan

Another form of alleged geographical anachronism takes into account the perspective of the author as exemplified in Deuteronomy 1:1, 5; 4:41, 43, 46, 47, and 49. Because the Hebrews approached the Promised Land from the east side of the Jordan river and had not crossed yet, critics charge that these verses indicate that the author was writing from the west side; thus, they represent editorial additions that took place after the conquest of the land and after Moses died. A map here may be helpful to understand the geography.

The debate centers about the Hebrew term *ēber hayarden* ("across the Jordan"). The first term, *ēber*, means "*transition or translate*," and based on its root words *abar* or *aw-bar'*, the translation becomes "*traverse, cross over, or across*."

Some scholars believe that when *ēber* is used as an **adverb** with *hayarden* (Jordan), the terms are taken to mean "across the river" (usually east). However, when one examines the use of the terms *ēber hayarden*, this is not true. In these instances, the term refers to "across the river" *westward* and as a **proper noun** (Deut 3:20, 25; 11:30; Josh 5:1; 9:1; 12:7).

Deuteronomy 3:20 - this is a reference to the land of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 3:25 - Lebanon is west of the Jordan river.

Joshua 9:1 - Great Sea refers to the Mediterranean Sea.

As in the above example, the term *ēber hayarden* appears to also refer to the region that is known as the Transjordan, which is the area *east* of the Jordan river as these examples indicate (Josh 1:14-15; 2:10; 7:7; 12:1; 14:3; 17:5; 20:8, 22:4, 7; 24:8

Joshua 1:14-15 - Just before crossing the Jordan river in the conquest of Canaan, Joshua reminds the tribes Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that, though they received their inheritance, which was land east of the Jordan river, they were committed to fight with the others in the Conquest on the west side of the Jordan.

Joshua 2:10 - Rahab speaks of Sihon, who ruled the south end of the Transjordan from Aroer, and Og, who ruled as far north as Mount Hermon from Ashtaroth.

Joshua 7:7 - After the defeat at Ai, which is west of the Jordan river, Joshua laments.

Joshua 12:1 - Joshua recounts the kings defeated by the Hebrews beginning with the kings who resided on the east side of the Jordan river from the Arnon river, which is the south end of the Transjordan to the north all the way to Mount Hermon.

Joshua 14:3 - Joshua is referring to tribes Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe Manasseh who received their inheritance in the Transjordan.

Joshua 17:5 - Gilead and Bashan are in the Transjordan.

Joshua 22:4, 7 - Joshua, speaking from Canaan, honorably discharges the tribes Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe Manasseh so that they can return home to the Transjordan.

Joshua 24:8 - Joshua refers to the Amorite kings who ruled the whole Transjordan: Sihon in the south and Og to the north.

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The term *`ēber hayarden* can refer to either Canaan (west of the Jordan river) or Transjordan (east of the Jordan river), regardless of the position of the speaker. The term functions as a **proper noun** and also serves as the root word for Hebrew! To learn more, see "The origin of the term 'Hebrew'" at the end of this article. Thus the Hebrews are grammatically and geographically identical with the Promised Land. Destructive critics seeking evidence of post Mosaic authorship fail to understand that the term *`ēber hayarden* is in the form of a proper noun. The reading is literal; however, when taking the terms as an **adverb** or **proper noun**, one can reach very different interpretations.

Until This Day / As This day

Critics, who assume a late dating of the Pentateuch, have indicated that the use of the phrase "until this day" or "as this day" presents a lapse of time or an anachronism and evidence against Mosaic authorship. In their view, they see a historical or chronological implication to the verse in question. However the use of this phrase is often within the context of the time and / or reminds the Israelites what they have seen or what God has done as in these examples:

Deuteronomy 2:30 - the initiation and decisiveness of Sihon's conquest.

Deuteronomy 3:13-14 - Jair, the abbreviated name of Havvoth-jair and of the half-tribe Manasseh, is given honorary mention by Moses for his heroics in the conquest of the Transjordan.

Deuteronomy 4:20 - a reminder that Israel continues being as the covenant nation.

Deuteronomy 4:38 – a reference to the imminent conquest of Canaan as Israel's inheritance.

Deuteronomy 8:18 - a hope that God's favor in the future may continue as it is right now in Moses time.

Deuteronomy 10:8 – a reminder of the levitical priesthood that began 40 years earlier in light of the recent passing of Aaron.

Deuteronomy 10:15 - confirms the permanency of God's choice of Israel as His people.

Deuteronomy 11:2 – a reminder that these Hebrews saw God's awesome power against the Egyptians.

Deuteronomy 29:4 – a statement of Israel's faith.

Deuteronomy 29:28 - has a prophetic perspective as it predicts a future judgment upon the disobedient nation.

There are instances of the phrase "until this day" or "as this day" that cannot be conclusively determined if they represent editorial additions. However, if an alleged phrase was introduced, critics do not consider the possibility that an earlier inspired author, such as Moses, may have made the editorial use of the phrase "until this day" to events that occurred historically before his time (Gen 26:33; 32:32; 47:26; Deut 2:22).

Until This Day / As This day (page 2)

In some cases, the term "this day" emphasizes and memorializes an incredible victory over a fearsome opponent. In the conclusion of the Israel's conquest of the Transjordan, Deuteronomy 3:8-11 describes the defeat of and the size of the bed or sarcophagus of the giant King Og of Bashan (13 feet long and 6 feet wide). Some Scholars consider this an editorial inclusion; they claim that the statement would not make sense since King Og was vanquished just a few weeks earlier, and thus, they date this gloss to King David's time. However, this passage summarizes the impressive conquest of Transjordan, covering an expanse of roughly 430 miles long and 30 miles wide, and King Og ruled the largest kingdom that the Hebrews faced on the east side of the Jordan river. It is quite possible that this message was for the non-combatants who were in Gilead (mid-Transjordan) and far from the fighting (Deut 3:8-11; Num 21:33-35).

Giants were held in awe for their immense physical stature and strength (see the article "Giants of the Bible"), and the following two example are often cited as more instances of alleged inspired textual updating found in Deuteronomy 2 (Deut 2:10-12, 20-23).

But do these passages really represent post Mosaic additions? Roughly 600 years earlier, God had given the land of Moab and Ammon to the sons of Lot, and these two passages recount the early history of these two areas. As a consequence of the 40 years of wandering, Moses is now the oldest Hebrew and likely the only one who would know of this early history. Rather than being an editorial addition by a late author (who would not likely know much about various giant groups), it is very possible that Moses added this editorial comment after the conquest of the Transjordan was completed.

In some cases, the verses are difficult to rationalize when the supernatural is involved. Deuteronomy 34:6 presents a perplexing text that is difficult to understand. Moses has died amidst his people, God has buried him, and the burial site of this revered leader is unknown. Destructive critics who deny any supernatural possibilities point to the phrase "to this day" as suggesting a late authorship, which would explain why the burial site is unknown.

And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. (Deut 34:6)

But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 1:9)

Constructive critics, who would consider a supernatural possibility, would disagree and place authorship closer to the time of Joshua not long after Moses died (1400 BC). A supernatural explanation is also consistent with the New Testament reference in Jude 1:9. However, contributing to the difficulty of interpreting this passage is the question of who wrote Moses' obituary, which ultimately questions the authorship of the book of Joshua.

The use of the phrase "until this day" or "as this day" may, on some occasion, be evidence of post Mosaic authorship by another inspired author. However these editorial comments were not made long after the biblical event and not done by hypothetical editors of the Exile as destructive critics propose. Furthermore, these changes were made for the purpose of clarifying the Text for later generations and did not alter the doctrinal message or substance of the Bible.

The origin of the term "Hebrew"

The origin of the term "Hebrew" is a mystery to scholars. Some believe the word came from Eber, a descendant of Noah through Shem and an ancestor of Abraham (Gen 10:21, 25; 11:16-26). Eber, literally meaning "on the other side of or to cross over," may allude to Abraham's departure from a region east of the Euphrates River.

This possibility harmonizes with the statement made by God to the Israelites in Joshua's time: "Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau" (Josh 24:3-4).

Of Eber's descendants, Abraham, Nahor, and Lot stand out. The genealogical list in Genesis 10 and other passages indicate that Abraham was the ancestor of the Hebrews; Nahor was the ancestor of the Arameans; and Lot was the ancestor of the Moabites and the Ammonites (Gen 10:21, 24, 25; 11:14-27). (1)

References:

1. Youngblood, RF, Bruce, FF, and Harrison RK, eds, Nelsons' New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers (1995), p.551.

Who Wrote the Book of Joshua?

Destructive critics doubt if Joshua even authored the book with his name. Some consider Joshua as being part of the Pentateuch thus forming the Hexateuch where most of its narrative is regarded as legendary instead of historical. The destructive critic's view is that the book of Joshua arose from sources dated 10th-8th century BC and composed in its final form by a post exilic author. In a variant theory, some destructive critics see the book of Joshua as a part of Deuteronomistic history that was developed by an editor in the 7th century BC.

While the authorship of Joshua is in question, there is ample evidence to show that Joshua was authored during his time and no later than 25-30 years of his death (1400 BC).

Extrabiblical sources such as the Jewish Talmud states that Joshua wrote the book with his death recorded by Eleazar son of Aaron and whose death in turn, was recorded by his son Phinehas.

Internal evidence reveals historical details consistent with an early authorship.

Joshua is recorded as the author (Josh 8:32; 24:26).

Rahab was still alive (Josh 6:25).

The Gibeonites provided wood and water for the tabernacle "to this day" (Josh 9:27) until later during the Israelite monarchy when King Saul killed them (2 Sam 21:1-2).

Sidon was an important and wealthy port city of Phoenicia (Josh 13:4-6) until it was conquered by Tyre in the 12th century BC.

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The Jebusites occupied Jerusalem (Josh 15:8; 18:28) until King David captured it in the eighth year of his reign (2 Sam 5:6).

Canaanite cities are named by their archaic names: Balaa for Kirjath-jearim (Josh 15:9), Kirjath-arba for Hebron (Josh 15:13), and Kirjath-sannah for Debir (Josh 15:49).

The Canaanites were in Gezer "to this day" (Josh 16:10) until they were captured and routed by the Egyptians during King Solomon's time (1 Ki 9:16).

This evidence is contemporary and consistent with Joshua as being the author of the book named after him. However there are recorded events that occurred historically after his time although not long after his time.

There is mention of his death (Josh 24:29-32).

The fall of Kiriath-arba occurs after the death of Joshua (Jos 15:13-19; Judg 1:8-15)

The tribe of Dan's conquest of northern Israel occurred after Joshua's death (Josh 19:47; Judg 18:27-29).

While most of Joshua was authored by Joshua, the post Joshua events indicate that there was some additional material added by a later person such as the priests Eleazar or his son Phinehas. This editing was most certainly done before the Exile.