

The Amazing Bible



Part 1

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*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep
the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
Revelation 14:12*

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What do you know about the Bible? If you are not a Bible student, you will be totally unaware of its amazing qualities.

It is a book that changes people's lives.

Many men and women have begun reading the Bible as sceptics, only to find themselves changed into believers. Others have thought the Bible might be true, but it meant nothing to them.

Herb Larson was one of these men. He decided to challenge God – *If this is Your Book, make it real to me. I will read one hour every day for a month, and if You don't speak to me from its pages, I am finished with it forever.*

And so he read. Nothing happened, but on the last day everything changed. The words leapt out at him. It was awe-inspiring. Herb was amazed – *the Bible is not an ordinary book. It is alive with power.* Herb read and read. Then he prayed. And he hasn't stopped praising the Lord for His wonderful Word.

The Bible is a collection of Jewish writings – thirty nine books – written in Hebrew, known in Judaism as 'the Law' (the Torah) – the five books of Moses; 'the Prophets' – the prophetic writings; and 'the Psalms' – the psalms and other musical books. The New Testament part of the Bible has twenty seven books written in Greek by seven Jews and one Gentile.

Imagine forty men writing over a period of 1500 years without consulting each other on subject matter. And yet the Bible is in complete harmony all the way through, as millions of Bible students attest.

The Jewish priests and scribes were extremely knowledgeable of the Scriptures, knowing whole books by heart. They had many oral traditions regarding the sacred writings, eventually writing them down as the Talmud. Later the Mishnah, another commentary, was added to the Talmud. Later again the Gemara was written, a commentary on the Mishnah.

Although the Jewish priests knew the Scriptures, they did not understand them. Jesus said, **"Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."** John 5:39. ('Ye' is implied in context)

These men knew the Bible contained the way to eternal life, but they rejected the One who was revealed in its pages as the Life-giver.

Today there are no originals; copies have been made from copies.

Has the true message been lost?

When the Jews returned from Babylon (between 536BC and 457BC), they brought with them the holy Scriptures, however, when Ezra the scribe began to read the words to the people, they did not understand. Over the years, Hebrew had been largely forgotten, and so a number of the scribes began to **"give the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."** Nehemiah 8:1-8.

Later Ezra and Nehemiah chose faithful scribes who became known as the Sopherim to set the sacred text in order. (Sopherim from *saphar* – to count or number) Their work was completed by the men of 'the Great Synagogue', lasting in all approximately 110 years, from Nehemiah to Simon the first, 410-300 B.C. The completed work was called the Massorah, a 'fence to the Scriptures', locking in the words.

The Massorites were authorized to be the custodians of these Scriptures. They were men who lived for one purpose – to copy the sacred writings. They studied the language and the grammar. Being very particular, they invented vowel points and accents to stereotype the correct reading.

They were also *sopherim*, as they counted the words of each scroll, noting the middle verse, middle word, and middle letter, so that it was virtually impossible for gross mistakes to occur.

Dr Wheeler Robinson said in his book 'Ancient and English Version of the Bible', "Everything that could be counted, seems to be counted." p29.

Elias Levita, a medieval writer on the Massorah said, "The Massorettes by their diligence have learned and marked the middle of all the letters of the Pentateuch. This they have done in all the sacred books.

They have counted each separate letter in the Scriptures, and noted that there are 42377 of the letter Aleph

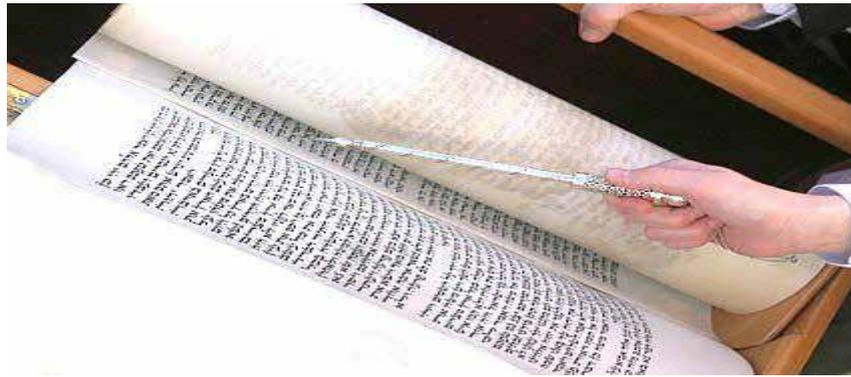
a, 38218 of the letter Beth **B**, 29537 of the letter Gimel **g**, and right on to the last letter tav **u**, of which there are 59343....

They also noted: there are two verses in the Torah (Pentateuch, five books of Moses) beginning with M **m**, eleven verses in which the first and last letter is N **n**; there are forty verses in which L **l** is three times, and so forth." The Massoreth ha-massoreth of Elias Levita.

The ink of the Massoretic text must be pure black, made of a prescribed recipe of charcoal and honey. The parchment must be the skin of a clean animal, never unclean, such as swine, camel, rabbit, and all words must be spoken orally before written down.

Each time the sacred name of God was written, the scribe must wash his pen and his whole body.

The manuscript must be examined within thirty days of its completion, and if more than three mistakes were found, the copy was condemned as profane. From A Critical Study of the Scriptures. T.H. Horne BC .Vol 11. p37.38.



During the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. This Bible is known as the Septuagint (which means 70) or the LXX. Beginning with the Torah, they completed their work no later than 117BC.

The Septuagint became the Bible of the Christian Church during the first centuries of the new era.

There was another group who helped to preserve the Scriptures, known as the Essenes. In their possession were a great number of very ancient Hebrew manuscripts, which they held as a sacred trust. They considered themselves the guardians of the Divine Teaching.

They lived in Qumran and began their copying about 200BC.

Fearful of a Roman invasion, the Essenes carefully placed the Scriptures in pottery jars and hid them in a number of caves. Two hundred caves were found, with eleven containing manuscripts.

In AD68, the Essene community was completely destroyed by the Romans, nothing remaining but their ruined stone communal home, and their life work.... the precious manuscripts known today as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The most ancient Hebrew scroll extant (still existing) today was 1000 years old, but in Qumran between 1947 and 1956, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, revealing parchments a thousand years older.

Every book of the Bible was found, except Esther. There were also 25 Deuteronomy scrolls, 30 Psalm scrolls, plus commentaries, hymns, benedictions, laws, war conduct, wisdom writings. Over 900 scrolls in all.

One of the scrolls was the priceless 2000-year-old Isaiah scroll, displayed in the Shrine of the Book museum in Jerusalem. God not only preserved a *complete* Isaiah scroll, but *fifteen* of them!

Scholars anxiously compared it with the Hebrew Massorite text, and with joy discovered it was almost word for word, with 97-99% agreement between them. Most of the discrepancies are grammatical and make no difference to the meaning of the text.

The important chapter of Isaiah 53 has been especially analysed, and apart from grammatical differences, it

boils down to one three-letter word in dispute, and this word does not alter the meaning.

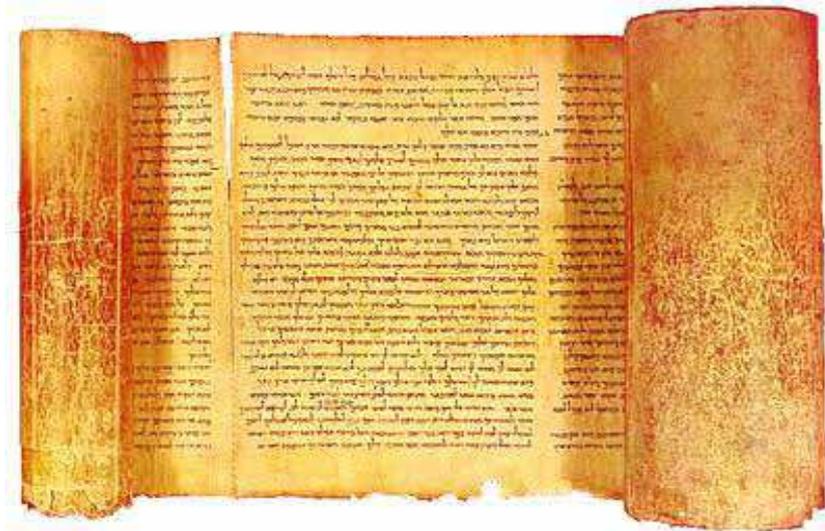
So if you are reading a Bible in English, particularly the King James Bible, you can be confident the message is the same as when holy men became its penmen. In court, a few disputed words would actually make a credible witness, as do differences between eye-witnesses.

Yes, you can trust the Bible. And you can trust its divine Author – the King of the universe.



Above: Caves in Qumran.

Below: Great Isaiah Scroll



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