Old Testament Introduction
The Bible’s Buried Secrets
Chapter 11, Moses

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/bibles-buried-secrets.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qalTJzk4kO0>

***About the Video***

What is for the most part an exact copy of the video script follows. There are a few places where individual speakers could neither be heard nor understood: for this we apologize. Every effort was made to be precise: there were just spots that defeated us. Since this is a quote in its entirety it seemed unnecessary to mark it with quotation marks. The notation for each speaker is tedious enough: Narrator, Reader, etc. If you discover bothersome errors, please reply to this website and point them out. You may verify the script more easily by starting to replay it where the “time” stamps indicate discussion begins. The second of the above links is free from advertising and thus easier to use.

***Overview***

There is no reason to doubt the claim that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, except for minor notations. The null hypothesis has not been disproved, so arguments to the contrary are statistically and scientifically in error.

The issue of Moses’ death is a minor scribal notation, a footnote or endnote, added at a later date, probably by Joshua, to clarify the point.

Since a thesis was proposed claiming that there are two distinct Flood records, we examined the material in greater detail. We are compelled to reject the two Flood record hypothesis as unproved.

Since discrediting Mosaic authorship and the Flood record are two, very possibly the only two, of the main foundation props for developing the various Documentary Hypotheses, we conclude that all Documentary Hypotheses, including this one, fail for lack of evidence. There is no material here which would warrant leaping to such false conclusions.

Other discrepancies are claimed. To those who make such claims, we reply, “State one.”

Moreover, our video has now leaped from Merneptah to Abraham, etc. to David, to Judges, back to Abraham, and now to Moses. What is the real purpose behind all this pseudo-historical leaping around? Is this a leap of logic, which is beyond all credulity? Is this an inconceivable leap of imagination? We think so….

***Script***

Moses (time 13:30)

Quote:

N: So, what was their objective? To find out, scholars must uncover who wrote the Bible and when?

R: “And the Lord said to Moses, write down these words, for in accordance with these words I make a covenant with you and with Israel.” — Exodus 34:27

N: The traditional belief is that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, the story of Creation[[1]](#endnote-1); Exodus, deliverance from slavery[[2]](#endnote-2) to the Promised Land; Leviticus[[3]](#endnote-3), Numbers[[4]](#endnote-4), and Deuteronomy[[5]](#endnote-5), laws of morality and observance. Still read to this day, together they form the Torah, often called the Five Books of Moses.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Michael Coogan:[[7]](#endnote-7) The view that Moses had personally written down the first five books of the Bible was virtually unchallenged until the seventeenth century.[[8]](#endnote-8) There were a few questions raised about this: for example, the very end of the last book of the Torah, the book of Deuteronomy describes the death and burial of Moses. And so some rabbi said, “Well Moses couldn’t have written those words himself, because he was dead and was being buried.”

N: And digging deeper into the text there are even more discrepancies.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Coogan: For example how many of each species of animal was Noah supposed to bring into the Ark? One text says two, a pair of every kind of animal. Another text says seven pair of clean animals and only two of the unclean animals.[[10]](#endnote-10)

N: In one chapter the Bible says the flood lasts for forty days and forty nights. But in the next it says, a hundred and fifty days. To see if the flood waters had subsided, Noah sends out a dove, but in the previous sentence, he sends a raven. There are two complete versions of the flood story interwoven on the same page.[[11]](#endnote-11) Many similar discrepancies throughout its pages suggest that The Bible has more than one writer.[[12]](#endnote-12) In fact within the first five books of the Bible, scholars have identified the hand[[13]](#endnote-13) of at least four different groups of scribes writing over several hundred years.[[14]](#endnote-14) This theory is called the Documentary Hypothesis.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Coogan: One way of thinking about it is as a kind of anthology that was made over the course of many centuries by different people adding to it, subtracting from it, and so forth.

Unquote.

***Moses***

Moses’ record reveals exactly what happened. Moses carried on an extended conversation with God, during which he made a record of the conversation.[[16]](#endnote-16) Joshua overheard much of this conversation and may have assisted Moses in the recording of it.[[17]](#endnote-17) The stone tables of the Decalogue were placed inside of the Ark in an official ceremony.[[18]](#endnote-18) The original written scrolls or Akkadian Cuneiform tablets were formally laid up beside the Ark in the most holy place.[[19]](#endnote-19) Seventy men were chosen to assist Moses in the explanation and application of Torah.[[20]](#endnote-20) So, yes, we believe that the traditional view is an accurate portrayal of the facts, and that any other view is a perversion of the facts. No evidence was adduced to suggest otherwise.

***Moses’ Death***

We are ignorant of the 1366 BC customs concerning adding notes to existing documents. We write in the margins, add footnotes, add endnotes, add parentheses, or take notes on a separate paper: the modern rules of notation are fairly well understood. Notations added to Torah circa 1366 BC are not so well understood: we really have no certain way of separating them from the original text. We don’t have the original text. We don’t even have a first-generation copy. Additions and notes have, long ago, blended seamlessly with original material in the copies. Additions by subsequent scribes, such as the note concerning the death of Moses, do not at all justify the rending of Torah into hypothetical documents, commonly called J, E, D, and P: it’s nothing more than a note: the problem is being exagerated.

***Noah’s Flood***

Careful reading of the Flood Record indicates the following:

* -120 years: The Flood prophesied 120 years in advance.[[21]](#endnote-21)
* -100 years: Japheth is born when Noah is 500.[[22]](#endnote-22)
* -99 years: Ham is born when Noah is 501.
* -98 years: Shem is born when Noah is 502.
* -35 years: Lamech dies.[[23]](#endnote-23)
* -7 days: Promise for rain to start.[[24]](#endnote-24)
* -6 days: Methuselah dies.[[25]](#endnote-25)
* Flood year 0, month 2, day 17: Noah is 600 years old;[[26]](#endnote-26) rain starts;[[27]](#endnote-27) the Ark is entered;[[28]](#endnote-28) Yahweh shuts the Ark.[[29]](#endnote-29)
* Flood year 0, month 3, day 27 (40 days later): flood has increased for 40 days;[[30]](#endnote-30) promise for rain to stop;[[31]](#endnote-31) rain stops.[[32]](#endnote-32)
* Flood year 0, month 7, day 17 (110 days later, 150 days from the start of the flood: the flood has remained at high level for 110 more days;[[33]](#endnote-33) waters begin to decrease;[[34]](#endnote-34) Ark is rested.[[35]](#endnote-35)
* Flood year 0, month 10, day 1: mountain tops are seen.[[36]](#endnote-36)
* Flood year 0, month 11, day 11 (40 days later): Noah opens Ark window;[[37]](#endnote-37) raven and dove both sent.[[38]](#endnote-38)
* Flood year 0, month 11, day 18 (7 days later): dove sent a second time; dove returns with olive leaf.[[39]](#endnote-39)
* Flood year 0, month 11, day 25 (7 days later): dove sent a third time.[[40]](#endnote-40)
* Flood year 1, month 1, day 1: Noah is 601 years old;[[41]](#endnote-41) Ark covering is removed.[[42]](#endnote-42)
* Flood year 1, month 2, day 27: soil subsurface is dry enough to walk on;[[43]](#endnote-43) the Ark is abandoned.[[44]](#endnote-44)
* Flood year 2: Shem is 100 years old.[[45]](#endnote-45)

We used the six-hundredth year of Noah’s life as our baseline. All of the numbers add consistently as stated, producing equally consistent dates. Since the span of one-hundred fifty days correspond exactly to five months, simple division causes us to believe that Noah considered a month to be exactly thirty days long.[[46]](#endnote-46) As far as Noah was concerned, the Flood lasted one year, ten days.

Some of the language is difficult, and the translation rather wooden. Since there are no real tenses or participles in Hebrew it is difficult to say the ground was drying, is dryer, is dry on the surface, is completely dry, or is dry enough to walk on. We know that this drying out is a process from our own experience, and from the fact that the raven found suitable shelter on the first attempt; the dove a branch on the second attempt; but the dove did not find suitable shelter until the third attempt. Obviously, doves are not as flood hardy as ravens, and require a dryer habitat.

Since Shem is one hundred years old at year two after the start of the flood, Shem must be one-hundred years old when Noah is six-hundred two years old. Therefore Shem must have been born when Noah was five-hundred two years old. This indicates that the order Shem, Ham, and Japheth is the reverse of birth order; evidently Shem is the youngest child. Shem is listed first because, in the eyes of the Covenant, Shem is the heir of the Covenant headship. Clearly Japheth is the eldest, because he is listed first in the Table of Nations;[[47]](#endnote-47) Ham is the middle child;[[48]](#endnote-48) while Shem is the baby of the family.[[49]](#endnote-49) Before we dispense with the Table of Nations, we should note that Shem is the base word for Semitic and anti-Semitic; the Table of Nations lists a vast number of ethnic peoples who are Semitic, but are neither Israelites nor Jews.

***Noah’s Ark***

One very controversial topic that should not be overlooked here is the popular quest for Noah’s Ark. A computer search will turn up more information than we can ever hope to digest. We do not believe that Noah’s Ark, the location of Noah’s Ark, or anything else about Noah’s Ark has ever been found. We do not expect such evidence to be found. Noah landed in strange territory, with a great need for building material of all sorts, in order to construct houses, barns, corrals, and other such like buildings. He used the most readily available building materials; he disassembled the Ark to provide for his construction needs: the Ark is most likely gone.[[50]](#endnote-50)

While we would be overjoyed if Noah’s Ark were ever found, the fanaticism and hyperbole associated with such quests causes as much harm to the truth as the Documentary Hypothesis causes harm. Our focus needs to be on evidence, rather than on that which is spectacular. Look at how much damage has been done by focusing on the spectacularity of the Merneptah Stele, rather than on the solid evidence contained in it. Spectacular discoveries only distract attention from more balanced analysis.

***Noah’s Flood***

Of far greater concern than the spectacularity of Noah’s Ark is whether the Flood was global or more local. There is plenty of extra biblical evidence to indicate that the Flood was global. There is equally compelling evidence that the Flood was broadly local; yet still, overwhelming for Noah. For the present, such evidence cannot be resolved. To be fair about the debate from a biblical perspective, Noah writes from the limitation of his own eyesight, which cannot be much more than 100 miles in a calm sea. There are serious studies that evaluate how far Noah could have seen, given various mountain heights. The only way Noah could possibly have known of a global flood, given his technological and other limitations, would be that God told him by special revelation: there is nothing in the biblical account that certifies any such special revelation was given to Noah. Conclusions must remain unresolved and unknown.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Other questions relate to linguistics: what are the connections between Noah’s speech, Sumerian, Akkadian, Luwian, or any of the rest of the Indo-European language family, as well as all those languages for which no connection is known.

Still other disputes center on the shape of the Ark: was it a coracle or cube; the depths of Euphrates and Tigris silt deposits. So far, the jury is still out. Corroboration for the shape of the Ark neither supports nor refutes the biblical account; supposedly, there are structural reasons to reject the biblical design: we do not find these compelling, since copper could have been used to build anything we might build today. The usual pictures of core samples are about a yard long, when such core samples would need to be over 10,000 to 50,000 feet in length to establish much of anything: there in nothing more laughable than to see a three feet core sample, together with the proclamation that there was no flood.

Our video is hopelessly out of date as far as such issues are concerned.

***Conclusion***

There is no reason to doubt the claim that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, except for minor notations. The null hypothesis has not been disproved, so arguments to the contrary are statistically and scientifically in error.

The issue of Moses’ death is a minor scribal notation, a footnote or endnote, added at a later date, probably by Joshua, to clarify the point.

Since a thesis was proposed claiming that there are two distinct Flood records, we examined the material in greater detail. We are compelled to reject the two Flood record hypothesis as unproved.

Since discrediting Mosaic authorship and the Flood record are two, very possibly the only two, of the main foundation props for developing the various Documentary Hypotheses, we conclude that all Documentary Hypotheses, including this one, fail for lack of evidence. There is no material here which would warrant leaping to such false conclusions.

Other discrepancies are claimed. To those who make such claims, we reply, “State one.” Three claims were made; three claims were rebutted. Since we have refuted every claim made thus far, we conclude that all of them are without substance: the point could not be proved.

[[52]](#endnote-52)

1. Genesis contains far more than the story of Creation; it provides all of the available background for the rest of the Mosaic corpus: without which, Torah cannot be properly understood. If Genesis is shredded into threads, then there is no compelling reason for the rest of the Mosaic corpus to ever be written. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Exodus has far more to say about avoiding future slavery than it does about deliverance from slavery. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Leviticus details the core of the Old Testament iconography about the death of Christ: we cannot understand the crucifixion without it. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Numbers recounts the unbelief of the older generation; explains why they fell short of the eternal Sabbath rest of God; and establishes the necessity of Covenant Renewal in Deuteronomy for the younger, surviving generation. Without this picture, we would not understand why salvation requires redemption (Pesach), spiritual power (Shavuot or Pentecost), as well as a life of suffering (Sukkot or Tabernacles). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Deuteronomy is the necessary Covenant Renewal document precipitated by the failure in Numbers. This whole video presentation has been a gross oversimplification of the reality. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. There is no statistical reason to doubt the claim that Moses wrote the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, except for minor notations by scribes. Since we don’t know the rules for adding notations in 1406-1366 BC, we are not in any position to comment further. A few passages are obviously scribal notations. We know this because it is impossible that they be otherwise. In any case, the null hypothesis has not been disproved, so arguments to the contrary are statistically and scientifically in error. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Michael D. Coogan is a lecturer at Harvard Divinity School and professor emeritus at Stonehill College with no special qualifications in archaeology.

“The text is not, except perhaps in the abstract, intrinsically authoritative: it derives its authority from the community.” He favors “thinking of the Bible in a more nuanced way than simply as the literal word of God” and identifies the Bible as “one foundational text in American society” which along with our Constitution must be interpreted critically.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Coogan> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. We simply do not know if Moses used scribes to assist in the completion of his task. We are not told. Considering the enormity of the works of leadership and writing, we expect that Moses used scribes to make necessary copies to assist in the dissemination of information. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. We cannot deal with alleged discrepancies. The fact that they are not explicitly named and enumerated, indicates that they do not really exist. So until the critics produce chapter and verse we will ignore this comment as an irrelevancy: it is inane. If you have evidence, produce it: we will deal with evidence once it is seen. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The issue over animals clearly indicates that pairs are in view; a distinction is drawn between clean and unclean animals. To make such a distinction into a contradiction, or into separate versions is trivial, since any reader can grasp the point. The reality is that our understanding of the Hebrew language is so poor that much of its idiomatic expression escapes us. Here, the real problem is whether 7 individuals, or seven pairs are meant. This hardly constitutes two versions.

Since the thesis was proposed, that the Bible presents two different intertwined Flood records, we are compelled to examine the material in greater detail. Since the dates will be shown to fit together with considerable accuracy for the time and conditions, we are compelled to reject the two different intertwined Flood record hypothesis as unproved. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Likewise scrutiny of the chronology of these texts reveals that all of the details are necessary to construct a single consistent timeline. The idea of duplication is fabricated from non-existent evidence. It fails to account for the fact that the Hebrew method of reporting seems to be providing the evidence in layers, so that one phrase, sentence, paragraph or section is repeated, continued, or opposed in structures called parallelism. Such structures frequently employ grammatical devices such as chiasm and repetition for emphasis. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. All such falsely claimed discrepancies are easily discredited by careful reading of the text. Such claims are devoid of merit. If there were any merit to them, they would have been listed for public evaluation. Until such alleged discrepancies are specifically enumerated and defended, we are forced to reject them as non-existent inventions. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. It is impossible to discover “the hand,” the writing style of original writers from printed texts far removed from these writers, or even from hand lettered copies that are over two thousand years removed from such originals. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls are copies removed from Moses by one thousand years, even possibly by language, and there is no readable surviving Dead Sea Scroll copy of the Torah text; only a few illegible Torah text fragments survive: so how, pray tell, is anyone supposed to distinguish “the hand” from these non-existent evidences?

<http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/?locale=en_US> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. If the Documentary Hypothesis is believed, 950 to 500 BC (450 years); rather than what the Bible claims, 1406 to 516 BC and afterward until 4 BC (roughly 1402 years). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Actually, these hypotheses relate, almost exclusively, to Torah. Except in rare incidences, JEDP hypotheses do not consider the Nebiim or the Ketubim at all; and when they do, only as afterthoughts. The simple fact is that Documentary Hypotheses are too cumbersome for evaluation of the rest of the Old Testament with its Deuterocanon, and break down under their own weight. As each new book is examined, the many flaws in the hypotheses increase in exposure, until even the “scholars” must give up in defeat. These hypotheses all eventually fail due to lack of evidence and numerous internal contradictions. The Bible is reliable. Documentary Hypotheses are not reliable. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Exodus 33:11 a; Deuteronomy 31:9, 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Exodus 33:11 b [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Exodus 25:16, 20-22; 4:20 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Deuteronomy 31:26; 1 Samuel 10:25 (a process repeated by Samuel) [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. This is the origin of the Sanhedrin. Numbers 11:16-17, 25-29 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Everyone had ample warning. Genesis 6:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Genesis 5:32, 6:10; 9:18; 10:1; contrasted with 11:10 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Genesis 5:31 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Genesis 7:4, 10 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Genesis 5:27 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Genesis 7:6, 11 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Genesis 7:10-12 [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Genesis 7:7, 13 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Genesis 7:16 [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Genesis 7:17-20 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Genesis 7:4, 10 [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Genesis 7:17 [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Genesis 7:24; 8:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Genesis 8:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Genesis 8:4 [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Genesis 8:5 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Genesis 8:5-6 [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Genesis 8:7-9 [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Genesis 8:10-11 [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Genesis 8:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Genesis 8:13 [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Genesis 8:13 [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Genesis 8:14 [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Genesis 8:18 [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Genesis 11:10 [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Since a synodic lunar month is actually 29.53 days long; nowadays, we would expect to make a correction. 29.53 \* 12 = 354.36 and yields a lunar year of 354 days. The solar year is 365.24 days, which yields a difference of 10 or 11 days, depending on when the moon is first seen. We suspect that this correction would mean that Noah was on the Ark for exactly one year. However, the Bible makes no such correction and suggests that Noah was on the Ark for exactly one year, ten days (year 1, month 2, day 27 minus year 0, month 2, day 17 = 1 year, 0 months, 10 days). This does not surprise us, because it is unlikely that Moses could measure the ecliptic precisely, or that he could even make regular monthly corrections of half a day. We suspect that Moses kept his calendar by marking on the Ark wall in charcoal or limestone: he would doubtless know when the sun came up; but he was in poor position to identify the phases of the moon with accuracy. Besides all of this the lunar calendar is only measured from Jerusalem: Noah would have no means of knowing that, or any notion where he might be on earth, nor would any of these astronomical details be important to him.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_month#Synodic_month>

<https://answersingenesis.org/the-flood/how-long-did-the-flood-last/> [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Genesis 10:2 [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Genesis 10:6 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Genesis 10:21 [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Searches_for_Noah%27s_Ark> [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea_deluge_hypothesis>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood_geology>

<https://creation.com/review-young-and-stearley-bible-rocks-and-time>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horizon> [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
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