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978-1-108-06821-5 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:

Volume 2 – Part 2: A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament and Apocrypha

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION
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CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PENTATEUCH.

THE *Pentateuch*, by which title the five books of Moses are collectively designated, is a word of Greek origin, ἡ πεντάτευχος viz. βιβλος, the five-volumed or five-fold book; among the Latins *Pentateuchus*, i.e. liber. By the Jews it is usually called תּוֹרָה, *torah*, the law, or מִשְׁפַּח מֹשֶׁה, *the law of Moses*. Among the Rabbins it is styled תּוֹרַת חֲמִישֵׁי חֻקֵּי הַתּוֹרָה, i.e. the five-fifths of the law. It is fitly designated *the law*, because it contains the ordinances given by God to the Israelites. In the Hebrew MSS. the Pentateuch forms one roll or volume, divided merely into larger and smaller sections, or *parshioth* and *sedarim*. At what time the five-fold division took place, it is difficult to discover. Bertholdt¹ and Keil² think that it is original; while Michaelis³ regards it as older than the LXX. But it is most probable that it proceeded from the Greek translators, as Leusden⁴, Hävernick⁵, and Von Lengerke⁶ suppose. The names of the books are Greek; and Josephus, in his treatise against Apion⁷, says that five of the books belong to Moses. In like manner Philo was acquainted with it.⁸ We can perceive no internal evidence that the author himself marked the books in this manner, or at least the reviser of the canon; though Keil speaks of such evidence as decisive.

The division in question embraces a period of 2515 years according to the common computation, and gives an account of one nation, preceded by a brief outline of the original state of mankind. We cannot say with Bishop Gray⁹ that while there is admirable diversity of style it is always characterised by the stamp of the same author. The language is such as could scarcely have been exhibited in the earliest period of the Hebrew. It shows considerable cultivation.

The Jews have uniformly ascribed the Pentateuch to Moses, and from them the tradition passed over to Christians, and became universally current till the time of historical criticism. In addition to

¹ Einleitung, vol. iii. p. 757.

² Einleitung ins Alte Testament, p. 302.

³ Einleitung, i. 2. p. 156.

⁴ Lib. i. c. 8.

⁵ Key to the Old Testament, p. 42. ed. 1842.

⁶ Einleitung, p. 65.

⁷ Philologus Hebræus, p. 45.

⁸ Kenaan, p. lxxxii.

⁹ De Abraham, p. 274. ed. Colon.

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the Pentateuch, the Jews also allege that Moses wrote ten Psalms, viz. from xc. to xcix. inclusive. The title of the 90th ascribes it to him, *A prayer of Moses the man of God*. But this title need not be relied upon as authentic. The internal evidence of the Psalm itself must determine. As to the nine following ones, there is no proof whatever that they belong to Moses. Some have also thought that he wrote the book of Job. But this opinion must be discarded, as the book is not nearly so ancient.

Various apocryphal writings are also ascribed to the same source, as the Apocalypse of Moses, from which Gregorius Syncellus thought that St. Paul took Gal. v. 6. and vi. 15. The Anabasis or Ascension of Moses is mentioned by Origen¹, and in the Synopsis of Athanasius. From it the ninth verse of Jude's epistle is supposed to be taken. Little Genesis, another treatise, is mentioned by Epiphanius and Jerome, and was written in Hebrew. Cedrenus states that he took many things from it into his chronological history. Some other writings are also spoken of, to which references may be found in Fabricius.² It is evident that they are all fabrications belonging to the early times of Christianity.

GENESIS.

The first book of the Pentateuch is called by the Jews בְּרֵאשִׁית, *B'reshith*, from the initial word, i.e. *in the beginning*. Among Christians it is denominated *Genesis*, Γένεσις, the title which it has in the Septuagint, meaning *generation* or *creation*, because it gives an account of the production of all things.

It is divided by the Jews into twelve larger sections or פְּרָשְׁיֹת, *par-shi'oth*, and sometimes into forty-three smaller ones or סְדָרִים, *sedarim*. Neither of these divisions is suitable or useful. Nor is that of fifty chapters in the English Bible any better.

The most general division of the book is into two parts, viz. :— I. The original history of mankind. II. The early history of Israel. The former embraces the first eleven chapters; the latter from the twelfth to the fiftieth inclusive.

The first general division may be subdivided into the history of the world from the creation till the flood (chapters i.—v.); and from the flood till the call of Abraham (chapters vi.—xi.). The second general division resolves itself into three portions, viz. the history of Abraham (chapters xii.—xxv. 18.); of Isaac (chapters xxv. 19.—xxxvi. 43.); and of Jacob (chapters xxxvii.—l.). The following is a synopsis of the general contents according to these five parts.

1. An account of the creation of the world, of man's formation, his settlement in Paradise, his fall and expulsion from the garden. This is followed by an account of Adam's descendants to Noah, in whose time God determined to destroy men by the deluge, and to spare righteous Noah. (i.—v.)

2. Noah is commanded to construct an ark in which he and his

¹ *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, sive *De principiis*, lib. iii. c. 2. p. 274. ed. Redepenning.

² *Codex Pseudepigraphus*, p. 835. *et seqq.*

family should be preserved from the devouring element, together with the various classes of animals which would otherwise perish in the waters. After the flood, the fact of Noah's three sons being the sole fathers of the second world is then distinctly stated. The patriarch predicts the future fates of their respective descendants. This is followed by a brief genealogical notice of the immediate descendants of Noah's sons, comprehending certain nations of which they were the founders. We have next an account of the confusion of the one language and the consequent dispersion of mankind, with a list of Shem's descendants in the line from which Abraham sprang. (vi.—xi.)

3. The general history of mankind having been completed, we are next presented with a particular history of leading individuals commonly called *the Patriarchs*. Abraham is called out of Ur of the Chaldees into Canaan. The most prominent events in his life are noticed, such as, his separation from Lot, his meeting with Melchizedek king of Salem after the victory over the king of Sodom and his allies, the birth of Isaac under peculiar circumstances, Abraham's trial when he was commanded to offer his only son in sacrifice, the death and burial of Sarah, the marriage of Isaac to Rebecca, and Abraham's marriage to Keturah. The patriarch died at the age of 175. (xii.—xxv. 18.)

4. Here the history of Isaac, which was begun in connection with that of his father but subordinated to the latter, is resumed and continued till the period of his death. The most prominent particulars in it are the birth of twins, Jacob and Esau; the project of Rebecca to deceive Isaac, and procure the blessing for Jacob which was intended for Esau. This is followed by Jacob's departure into Mesopotamia to his uncle Laban, his marriage, his return to Canaan, his meeting with Esau, an unhappy event in the life of Dinah his only daughter, his removal to Bethel, the death of Rachel, an account of the age and death of Isaac, and a genealogical table of Esau's descendants. (xxv. 19—xxxvi. 43.)

5. This last part of Genesis contains the subsequent history of Jacob and his family till the death of Joseph. Owing to the envy of his brethren, excited by the father's undue fondness for Joseph, the latter is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar. This is followed by the conduct of Judah with respect to Tamar; and Joseph's prosperity and imprisonment. He is delivered, promoted in the court of Pharaoh: his brethren come into the country to buy corn, to whom on their second visit he reveals himself. Jacob comes down to Egypt and settles there with his family, pronounces prophetic blessings on his sons, and calmly surrenders his soul to him who gave it. His body is embalmed, and interred in Canaan. This is succeeded by the death and burial of Joseph, with which the book closes. (xxxvii.—l.)

According to the usual computation of time, the book of Genesis contains the history of about 2369 years; but according to the larger reckoning of Hales 3619 years. It is better to abide by the former, since the basis on which the latter is founded is insecure.

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The first three chapters, which contain a description of the creation and fall of man, have given rise to much discussion. The question whether they are to be understood in a literal or allegorical sense has been debated with great skill and vehemence. On the one hand, it has been affirmed, that the cosmogony is inconsistent with the conclusions of modern science, especially with geological phenomena; while certain particulars in Eve's temptation by the serpent are inexplicable or improbable on the supposition of its being historical. On the other hand, it is considered highly improbable that an allegorical description should be prefixed to and form a part of the literal history which follows; while the New Testament contains various allusions or references to the creation, temptation, and fall, implying that they are *truly* and *properly* described. The common view has always been, that the chapters in question present a literal account, in plain prose, of the origin of the human race and their fall. This is the more natural and obvious interpretation, such as would be apt to strike an ordinary reader of the Bible. In deciding between the mythic view and the purely historical one, there is not much proof or argument to rest upon. Most German divines adopt the former, even those of very different schools. On the contrary, English theologians adhere to the latter. It is true that a few in this country have advocated the mythic or allegorical view; but they have been chiefly of the Unitarian persuasion, with the exception of Geddes. What has helped to exclude the mythic from English theology is the notion ascribed by many to *mythus*, as though it meant *fable* or *fiction*, a *pure invention* on the part of the sacred writer. But this is incorrect. There are myths at the basis of which truth and history lie, which are built up on a foundation of real history; and even Knobel does not deny that there are historical elements in the mythic view given of the primitive race of mankind. Had he and his countrymen been less disposed to find *few* elements of the true and the historical in Genesis, they would have more effectually commended their sentiments to the calm attention of impartial inquirers. We do not think that the question is one of that vital importance which many attach to it. If it be held that God created man at first, male and female, in innocency and happiness; and that they fell by transgressing his command, entailing misery and death on all their posterity, it is of little moment in *what particular mode* these facts be described. Whether they be clothed in an allegorical dress or not, matters little, provided *the facts* be recognised. A mythic narrative may have a *real, historical* basis. And so in the present instance. The Almighty created all things out of nothing; he furnished the world with its multitudinous creatures; he formed man in his own image, a living rational creature, holy in thought and feeling; man was tempted of evil and fell into sin; in consequence of which he lost his purity of character and was doomed to toil, though a great Deliverer was provided for his deliverance from the curse to which he became subject; — these are great truths lying in the primitive record, which must be maintained, in whatever manner the narrative is regarded, whether literally or alle-

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gorically. They are recognised in the New Testament, and presuppose the necessity of redemption.

It is often said, as it is by Maurice¹, that the Mosaic narrative in the first three chapters is either wholly literal or wholly allegorical — that there is no medium nor palliation. So too Horsley² and Hengstenberg³ appear to think, in their reasonings respecting the serpent. But we do not take this view of the matter. Some parts may be allegorical, others literal. Some things may be symbolical without others being so. A resort to allegory may be defended on the ground of necessity, or because the literal involves inextricable difficulty. Accordingly, many think that *the serpent* is a figurative and symbolical name given to Satan apart from an animal being used as an organ, without doing violence to the literal interpretation of the rest of the narrative. The intermixture of the literal and the figurative is common in Scripture. Hence we believe that the leading facts are not impaired by such as assume allegory in some parts of the description; as in that of the temptation, and the agent employed in it.

It is no disparagement to the credibility of the account that the writer describes physical phenomena in the popular language of his day respecting them. He speaks of them *optically*, as they appeared then to an observer, not according to the principles of exact science. It was not his object to unfold scientific truth, but religious doctrine. He was not a natural philosopher, but a religious teacher raised up and qualified of God for the purpose of conveying moral and spiritual ideas to the Jews and to the world at large. Hence great anxiety need not be evinced in reconciling his statements with the conclusions of modern science. Astronomy and geology may be prosecuted by their respective votaries without impugning the record in Genesis, because it was not meant to be a scientific one, conformed to the certain conclusions of natural science as they were to be developed in future times. The writer used the language of his time as he shared the ideas then current, else he would have been unintelligible to those for whom he was prompted to compose his history in the first instance.

The question respecting the historical or mythical character of the earliest chapters of the book is only a part of the more general one relating to the contents of the whole. Here opinions are formed according to the doctrinal views of those who discuss the subject. Some, as Vatke, Von Bohlen, &c., affirm that all the contents of the book are unhistorical and mythological; others again, as Tuch and Knobel, think that they are interwoven with mythical elements, which can be separated from the historical; while many, as Hengstenberg and Hävernich, perceive throughout a consistent and truly historical impress. The latter justly remarks that “Genesis is a book consisting of two contrasting parts. The first part introduces us to the greatest problems of the human mind, such as the creation and the fall of man; and the second, to the quiet solitude of

¹ History of Hindostan, vol. i. p. 369.² Theological Works, vol. v. p. 17.³ Christologie, vol. i. p. 26. *et seqq.*

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a small defined circle of families. In the former, the most sublime and wonderful events are described with childlike simplicity; while in the latter, on the contrary, the most simple and common occurrences are interwoven with the sublimest thoughts and reflections, rendering the small family circle a whole world in history, and the principal actors in it prototypes for a whole nation, and for all times. The contents in general are strictly religious. Not the least trace of mystery appears in it. Consequently there are no mythical statements, because whatever is mythical belongs to mythology, and Genesis plainly shows how very far remote the Hebrew mode of thinking was from mythical poetry, which might have found ample opportunity of being brought into play when the writer began to sketch the early time of the creation. It is true that the narratives are fraught with wonders. But primeval wonders, the marvellous deeds of God, are the very subject of Genesis. None of these wonders, however, bear a fantastical impress, and there is no useless prodigality of them. They are all penetrated and connected by one common leading idea, and are all related to the counsel of God for the salvation of man. This principle sheds its lustrous beams through the whole of Genesis; therefore the wonders therein related are as little to be ascribed to the invention and imagination of man as the whole plan of God for human salvation. The foundation of the divine theocratical institution throws a strong light upon the early patriarchal times; the reality of the one proves the reality of the other, as described in Genesis."¹

The book of Genesis contains some direct prophecies concerning Christ, as in iii. 15., xii. 3., xviii. 18., xxii. 18., xxvi. 4., xxviii. 14., xlix. 10.

Those who hold that it was written by Moses differ about the time when he composed it. This was to be expected, since in the absence of all data for determining the period in his life, we are left to mere conjecture. Some think, with Eusebius, that it was written while he kept the flocks of his father-in-law in the wilderness of Midian; Theodoret and others suppose that it was written after the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai; while a third hypothesis has been proposed by some learned Jews, that God dictated to Moses all the contents of the book during the forty days he had intercourse with the Deity on Sinai, and that after his descent he committed the whole to writing. Such conjectures are worthless.

EXODUS.

The title of the book we are accustomed to call *Exodus* is among the Jews *שְׁמוֹת* *V'ellēh Shemoth*, that is, *these are the names*, which are the initial words. *Exodus* is derived from the Septuagint version *ἔξοδος*, a *departure*, because the book narrates the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. It is divided by the Jews into eleven *parshioth* or larger sections, and twenty-nine *sedarim* or smaller ones. In our English Bibles there are forty chapters.

¹ Kitto's Cyclopædia, art. Genesis.

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The book resolves itself into three parts, viz. :

I. The preparations made for carrying into effect the promises made to the patriarchs. (ch. i.—xii. 28.)

II. The conducting of Israel out of Egypt to Sinai. (xii. 29—xviii.)

III. The establishment of the theocracy. (xix.—xl.)

These leading divisions may be resolved into the following parts.

i. The increase of Jacob's posterity so that they became a numerous people; their oppression in Egypt; the birth and wonderful preservation of Moses; his calling and qualification to be the leader of Israel out of Egypt. (ch. i.—vi. 13.) ii. The steps which led to the deliverance of Israel, viz. the sending of Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, the signs and wonders which preceded and accompanied the march from Egypt, together with the institution of the passover. (vi. 14—xii. 28.) iii. The departure itself, with the arrangements respecting the passover and sanctification of the first-born. (xii. 29—xiii. 16.) iv. The passage through the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, and the thanksgiving of Moses for the miraculous deliverance. (xiii. 17—xv. 21.) v. The journey of the Israelites to the mount of God, and the arrival of Jethro at the camp, with his counsel. (xv. 22—xviii.) vi. The preparation of the people by Moses for the renewing of the covenant with God, the promulgation of the ten commandments, and the judicial law. (xix.—xxiv. 11.) vii. Commands respecting the erection of the tabernacle on receiving the tables of stone. (xxiv. 12—xxx. 18.) viii. A description of the idolatry of the Israelites and their restoration to the divine favour at Moses's intercession. (xxxii.—xxxiv.) ix. An account of the building and erection of the tabernacle, *i. e.* the execution of what was commanded in xxv.—xxx. (xxxv.—xl.)

Exodus contains a history of about one hundred and forty-five years, *i. e.* from 2369 to 2514. But Kalisch makes it to contain the history of 360 years, from 1910 to 2270 A.M.¹ Rivet has observed that twenty-five passages are quoted by Christ and his apostles out of the book in express words. This is not correct, unless passages quoted twice be numbered as two. The same writer states that there are nineteen general references or allusions to the sense.²

Those who think that Moses wrote the book of Exodus must refer it to a period subsequent to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai and the erection of the tabernacle, because things cannot be historically related till after they took place. The same critics also believe that there are some predictions in it of which it relates the accomplishment. Thus it foretells the deliverance of the Jews (vii. 4, 5.) which was effected. It predicts some events which were not fulfilled till after Moses's death, as that relating to the conquest of Canaan and the future division of the land. (xv. 14—17., xxiii. 22, 23. 31., xxxiii. 2., xxxiv. 23, 24.) And as the book represents the ancient church persecuted, delivered, and preserved, God exercising a providential care over it, we are warranted in applying many things

¹ Historical and Critical Commentary on Exodus, Introduction, p. xxi.

² Riveti Opera Theologica, folio, vol. i. p. 723.

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to the Christian church in her passage through this life to the heavenly Canaan; especially as some of the New Testament writers have used the history in this manner. (1 Cor. x. 1. &c., and Hebrews iii. iv. viii. ix.)

Though much has been written respecting the plagues inflicted on Egypt, and the imitations of them by the Egyptians, little light has been thrown upon the transactions by that means. Bryant has many fancies in his treatise on the subject.¹ Thus he supposes that they were adapted to display the vanity of the idols and false gods worshipped by the Egyptians. By the first plague the Nile was turned into blood. It is very true that divine honours were paid to the Nile, and that blood was an object of abhorrence to the Egyptians. But Hengstenberg thinks that blood here means no more than a blood-red colour.² In the second plague, frogs were produced in immense numbers, by which means both land and water were polluted. The plague of lice can hardly have been intended, as Bryant thinks, to reprove the absurd superstition of the Egyptians, who believed that it would be a great profanation of the temple into which they were going if they entered it with such animalcules upon their person; because the word translated *lice* means *gnats*. The plague of flies is supposed to refer to the gad-fly, a god which they worshipped, and which thus became their torture; but the fact assumed is questionable. The same observation applies to the next plague, that of the cattle. *Horses* are assigned the first place in the enumeration of the animals whom the plague should seize; and we do not know that the Egyptians worshipped horses. Neither can it be shown that the plague of boils was intended to show the vanity of their gods. Aaron and Moses were commanded to take ashes of the furnace, and to scatter them toward heaven that they might be wafted over the face of the country. The seventh plague was a severe tempest, accompanied with hail and rain. That this had a reference to Isis and Osiris, deities of water and fire respectively, as if they were unable to protect the country from the hail and fire of God, is fanciful. Nor had the plague of locusts allusion to Isis and Serapis, who were supposed to protect the country from locusts. In the ninth plague, the darkness, it were idle to refer to the same end, as if it were meant to show the vanity of their idol deities. It is merely imaginary to allege that the heavenly hosts, the objects of worship, are thus themselves shown to be under divine control. It seems evident that the last plague, the destruction of the first-born, was most equitable, because, after the Egyptians had been preserved by one of the Israelitish family, they murdered the children of that people to whom they had been so much indebted.

It is generally agreed, at the present time, that the Pharaoh in whose reign Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt was a prince of the eighteenth dynasty. Wilkinson supposes that the exodus took place under Thothmes III., 1495 B. C.; Kalisch, under Rameses V., Amenophis, the last king of the eighteenth dynasty,

¹ See his *Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians*, 2d edition 810.

² *Egypt and the Books of Moses*, translated by Robbins, p. 106.