

# How Moses Compiled Genesis<sup>1</sup>

## A SUGGESTION

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The battle of the Pentateuch has been long and arduous. It has not yet been won by the hosts of Wellhausen, nor lost by the die-hards of the Conservative camp. In recent years the Conservatives have been treated like a by-passed city. The other side has felt itself to be in secure possession of the field, and is prepared to ignore the stubborn defences of the city until in process of time the defenders die out. But for the moment the defenders have no intention of dying out, and they are quite prepared to join battle again at any time.

I have likened the Conservative position to one of defence, and so it is. But a battle cannot ultimately be won by defence. Similarly we cannot be content merely to reply to attacks on the composition of the Pentateuch. To argue against the late date of J, E, D, H, P is a useful and vital part of the defence. But unless we can show from a positive standpoint that the differences, which have caused people to believe in the existence of these documents, are fully to be expected if Moses was the author or compiler, we are left with the feeling that after all there must be something in the modern theories. This is a great pity, for I believe that if it were possible to wipe the slate clean and to start our investigation of the Pentateuch afresh without seeing the books through the spectacles of Wellhausen, we should, on intellectual grounds, decide that Moses was the author.

It is obviously impossible to deal with the whole Pentateuch here, so I have chosen Genesis in order to show that its form and contents make it likely that Moses was the author. If you ask me why I should be concerned to prove the Mosaic authorship of Genesis when neither the Old nor the New Testament asserts it, I should reply, first, that the Jewish tradition of Mosaic authorship is unanimous; and secondly, that it is obvious that Genesis is closely linked with the rest of the Pentateuch. The Documentary Theory does not separate J, E, and P in Genesis from J, E, and P in Exodus and the Law. This means that the same hand, or hands, is found in both Genesis and the other books. Since then the Law claims to be given (and in some cases written) by Moses, I feel that it is at any rate worth exploring the possibility of the traditional Mosaic authorship of Genesis being correct.

In what I shall say I am not proposing any new theory. I am merely working upon what others have suggested, but am giving it a presentation of my own.

### I.

Our story begins a little before 1500 B.C. in the household of Pharaoh. Here is one of the centres of education in the civilised world of the day. Under the XVIII Dynasty, in which Moses lived, no pains were spared to secure the highest possible education for the royal princes and for others who were brought up with them. These others were frequently the sons of chiefs from various parts of the empire, and it was regarded as a high honour to be brought up in Pharaoh's court. It was no coincidence, but the direct hand of God, which accounted for the presence of a young Hebrew there. If we believe in divine providence at all, it is clear that

God had a special purpose in securing this education for Moses. And since the education would be not only for leadership but also in reading and writing, one might hazard a guess that God's future plan for Moses would be one in which reading and writing would play an important part.

The New Testament description of Moses is that he "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works" (Acts vii. 22). If this is a true picture of him—and there is no reason to doubt it—we can imagine him as one who loved learning and scholarship for its own sake. If you have a love for scholarship, put yourself in his place for a minute or two and imagine what you would do. As a member of the royal household you would have access to the best teachers in Egypt, and to foreign teachers from that other centre of civilization, Assyria and Babylon. At the court and in the temples there would be libraries in which you would read the literature of the world. Queer old records would be there, stories, hymns, proverbs and histories, written sometimes on clay but more frequently on papyrus, wood or skin. If the Egyptian libraries were like those of Nippur and Ras Shamra, there would be translations and dictionaries to help the reader. I fancy that you would have a longing to read these languages for yourself, and I believe that Moses took steps to become a master of languages.

What languages would he learn to read and to write? I should think that he knew three well. *Egyptian* would be the language that he normally spoke and wrote. He would learn to read and write both the formal hieroglyphic pictures and also the simpler hieratic script, which was easier to write. Then he would learn the *Babylonian* language with its cuneiform script. Like Greek at a later date, this was the language and script of international communication. That Egypt also used this language and script is proved by the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. These were found in Egypt and are part of the official Egyptian correspondence of about 1400 B.C. But to the Egyptians this cannot have been an easy language to study, since cuneiform can only be printed on clay or, with some labour, engraved on stone, but cannot be printed on papyrus or wood, which were the writing materials chiefly used in Egypt. None the less, the educated Egyptians did know it, and Moses would have known it too.

But from boyhood Moses had heard another language spoken too. His nurse had been his own mother, who by permission of the princess had brought him up during his first few years in the home where he had been born (Ex. ii. 9, 10). Here he would have picked up the *Hebrew* language, though the Hebrew of those days must not be thought of as the developed Hebrew of our present Bible. Perhaps we can regard it as bearing the same general relation to the Bible Hebrew as Langland's *Piers Plowman* bears to modern English.

We are not told the age at which Moses' mother finally handed him over to Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. ii. 10). Moses' Hebrew vocabulary was probably not large by that time; but two things would have helped him to keep up his knowledge of the language. First, he would undoubtedly have visited his mother and his home from time to time. Apart from the family tie, there would be nothing strange in this. The old nurse was regarded with the greatest respect in the ancient world. When Rebekah goes to be the bride of Isaac, her nurse goes with her (Gen. xxiv. 59); and Gen. xxxv. 8 even records her death and the place of her burial. Secondly, it is quite likely that, as Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* says, "the Hebrew language may be appropriately termed the Israelitish dialect of Canaanitish" (Art. Language of the Old Testament). There are certain glosses on the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, in which the writers add a Canaanitish equivalent for some Babylonian word, and these glosses, written in cuneiform, resemble the Hebrew in sound. The Moabite Stone of a later date is in a dialect

resembling Hebrew. We may suppose then that during their time in Palestine the patriarchs had gradually dropped the Sumerian language of Ur, and adopted the speech of Canaan. This is what normally happens after one or two generations of living in a foreign country. It was this language of Canaan that the Hebrews were now speaking in Egypt, though during their three or four centuries there they must have produced their own dialectical version of it.

But you will remember that I mentioned earlier that at this period the sons of foreign chiefs were educated in the royal household in Egypt. These included young men from Syria, and presumably from Canaan too. And as they spoke to each other in their own tongue, Moses found that it was almost identical with the language that his parents and brothers and sisters spoke at home. And I have no doubt that Moses soon learned to join in their conversations.

## II.

I have spent some time on these preliminaries because it is essential to see the background against which Moses grew up. But now we must turn to the writing of Genesis.

Part of Moses' education was history. His teachers taught him the history of Egypt. The Pharaohs had left records in their own praise, and other stories were written down on papyrus rolls. Amongst them Moses was particularly interested in the story of a certain Hebrew, Joseph, who some 350 years earlier had become prime minister and had saved the land of Egypt from starvation. His body was embalmed in a coffin in Egypt, and an outline of his life was written down. It was of course in the Egyptian language. How much of our present story was in the Egyptian records I am not prepared to say, but that a part of it was originally in Egyptian has been demonstrated by Prof. A. S. Yahuda in his book *The Accuracy of the Bible*, and elsewhere. Personally I should not be in the least surprised if the greater part of the story of Joseph in Egypt was written down by Joseph himself, in Egyptian.

Now Moses was quite well aware of his parentage and ancestry, and here was the story of a man who was the son of Jacob, from whom Moses himself also claimed descent. Who was Jacob, then? Certainly he was a great man, since the story was told of the way in which Pharaoh had honoured him (Gen xlvii). But great men generally kept some record of themselves and of their ancestors. Had Jacob left any records? Moses began to make enquiries. And amongst the chiefs of his own people he came across what he was looking for. Here were old records. Some, it is true, were more recent than the story of Joseph that Moses knew already. In fact Moses gathered that Joseph himself had set down some personal matters that could not very well appear in the public documents. He had, for example, set down the blessings that his father had given to his sons and grandsons; and here Moses was interested to see that, in place of the general name for God that had appeared in the public records, a new title occasionally appeared. Thus the title *Shaddai* was used twice (xlviii. 3; xlix. 25), and the name *Yahweh* appeared (xlix. 18). Some other writings also helped to fill out the life of Joseph by telling the reactions of the brothers and their father in Canaan. Here also the title *El Shaddai* occurred (xliii. 14). In all probability Moses had learnt of this God from his parents. This was the name under which He had revealed Himself to Moses' ancestors in the dim past.

Moreover, in addition to these records there were others as well, some of them apparently very old. One cannot say in whose possession they were, but probably they would be kept by the chief man of one of the tribes. The most likely would be the head of the tribe of Reuben

or Judah. Personally I should say Judah, for this reason: in Gen. xxxvii-1 Judah is the most prominent of the brothers after Joseph. One whole chapter, *i.e.* ch. xxxviii, is devoted to him and his descendants, and he plays an important part in the dealings with Jacob and with Joseph. Thus from internal evidence I should hold that while a large part of the Egyptian story comes from Joseph, the story from the Hebrew point of view comes from Judah. In that case the records were probably in the keeping of the tribe of Judah.

Now let us see what we have assumed so far. We have assumed that the Hebrew patriarchs followed the practice of great men and kings in other races and kept records of their doings. I want to emphasise this point, because we are inclined sometimes to think of these early civilizations in a somewhat patronising way and fail to visualise the tremendous quantity of writing and literature that were produced. In Babylonia hundreds of thousands of clay tablets have been discovered dealing with all manner of things; and yet a Professor of Assyriology (Edward Chiera) has estimated that only one per cent has yet been found. Ninety-nine per cent are still awaiting the shovel and pick of the archaeologist. As Prof. Chiera says in his book *They Wrote on Clay*, "In spite of the immense wealth of Latin and Greek literature, we do not know nearly so much of the aspects of daily life in Greece and Rome as we know about similar phases of life in a little corner of the Mesopotamian plain."

These, however, are clay records only. There were other materials in use as well, though these have perished. For example, we have the record of the import of 500 rolls of papyrus into Syria in the 12th century (Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology*, pp. 166, 211). Babylonian inscriptions show scribes writing on rolls, which were probably leather. But these other materials have long since perished, except in Egypt where the climate has allowed the papyrus records to survive. But I want you to see that the civilised world from 3000 B.C. onwards was full of literature and records, and that if the Hebrews had no records they were exceptional. But if they did have them, Moses must have seen them; and if Moses saw them his training had fitted him to put them together into a coherent whole.

I have up till now purposely used the neutral term "records", because I do not think that we can say for certain what material they were written on. The Babylonian practice was to have clay records and to store them on a shelf or in a jar. The latter was often buried under the floor of the house. The patriarchs do not appear to have settled in one place for any length of time, so that they would not have buried their records; but one can imagine that they might have been kept in a stone jar.

The records may not all have been on clay, though there is very little doubt that some of them were. Those that Abraham brought from Ur would certainly be on clay and written in cuneiform. But some of the records made in Palestine may have been on wood or papyrus, or even skin. In that case they would not have been in cuneiform but in some script that later developed into the Phoenician script and the old Hebrew.

### III.

Now at some time in his life I maintain that Moses was moved to blend these records into a continuous history. It may have been while he was in Egypt, or it may have been during the 40 years in the wilderness. In Egypt he had greater facilities in the way of dictionaries and foreign teachers. On the other hand, since he was doing other literary work during the wanderings, and recording the laws and the journeys, he might easily have compiled Genesis

in addition. Forty years is a long time for a scholar to go without considerable literary production. We might combine the two ideas and suppose that Moses drafted the work in Egypt, and revised it during the wilderness wandering.

Prof. Naville suggested that Moses originally compiled Genesis on individual clay tablets in cuneiform script, and that Ezra was responsible for combining these into a book. I see no reason why Moses should not have combined either the original clay records, or his own first drafts, into a book-roll during the wanderings. I think a leather roll would have been the most likely material to use in the wilderness. The difficulty is that it is uncertain when leather rolls were introduced, though some think that the Egyptians were using them before 2000 B.C. If so, the sacrifices in the wilderness would have provided an abundance of skins. Whilst it is true that the Ten Commandments were inscribed on stone tablets, and another part of the Law was written on stone covered with plaster (Deut. xxvii. 4; Josh. viii. 32), other references to writing in books show that leather was in use. Thus in Num. v. 23 the priest has to write curses in a book and blot them out in water: this could not be done with clay or stone tablets.

All this may seem an unnecessary digression, but its importance will appear in a minute or two. In the meantime we will return to the records that Moses had in front of him. Unless one of the patriarchs had already done some editing (and this is possible), Moses was faced with a collection of old writings, probably in several languages and dialects. Added together they formed a chain that ran back from Joseph to Adam. Prominent among them were genealogies. A genealogy is a very precious thing in the East, and is carefully kept. Then there were stories, some written fully, some more sketchily, according to the author. Upon these Moses set to work, translating, editing, and combining, so that the nation of Israel might have its records to place alongside those of the other nations of the earth.

Israel's records, however, were different from those of the other nations. Through them ran a revelation of God, His character and His will, that was absent from ordinary records. The nation of slaves that was coming out of Egypt was the heir of certain promises of God, and the means of God's manifestation of Himself to mankind. This became clear to Moses as he studied the old records, and he determined that his history should concentrate on this theme. Other nations must be included too, for the people needed to feel that their ancestors, who knew God, were real men and women. And brief facts must be set down about the other races whose names they knew. So, under the guidance of God, Moses set to work on his history.

Perhaps he started first on the more recent records. At any rate I propose to start there. There was an Egyptian record of Joseph's public career, which furnished the bulk of ch. xl-xlvii. Moses translated this, and blended it with a record left by Judah, which told the story briefly from the brothers' point of view. Ch. xlviii-1 appears to be a Joseph account, and ch. xxxix, with its story of Potiphar's wife, may also belong to Joseph's private record rather than to the Egyptian account. If Moses is using some records of Judah, we can see why ch. xxxviii, with its rather unpleasant story of an incident in Judah's life, comes in here, even though it interrupts the story of Joseph. The Judah and Joseph records may also account for the well-known difficulties of ch. xxxvii. There is not the least necessity to split this chapter up into snippets and evolve two contradictory stories out of it. The story as it stands at present is a far finer and more complete picture than either of the two stories that are supposed to go to make it up. But it is possible that one of the brothers spoke of the travellers as Midianites and the other described them as Ishmaelites, and Moses has woven both names into his final narrative. That one and the same people could be called Ishmaelites and Midianites is clear from Judges viii. 24 and context.

Will you notice how the names for God are used in this section. In the Egyptian section the general *Elohim* is used exclusively. Jacob uses the Covenant name *El Shaddai* in ch. xliii. 14; xlviii. 3; and xlix. 25; and *Yahweh* in ch. xlix. 18. In what I have called Joseph's private account in ch. xxxix—the incident of Potiphar's wife—*Yahweh* is used eight times in describing God's special care of Joseph; But when Joseph addresses Potiphar's wife he uses the general word and says, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God (*Elohim*)?"

The next block of records came from Joseph and Esau. P. J. Wiseman believes that the phrase "these are the generations of—" is, in Genesis, intended to mark the close and not the beginning of a section, and that the person named is the one who closed the record of this particular section. I propose to follow this theory here, though its acceptance is by no means essential to what I shall say. But according to this theory the Jacob and Esau section runs from ch. xxv. 19 to ch. xxxvi. 9 (Esau) and ch. xxxvii. 2 (Jacob). Let us take Esau's account first, since it is the shorter. It seems that Esau's record was almost entirely genealogical. I should ascribe to him the account of his own marriage in ch. xxviii. 5-9, and the table at the beginning of ch. xxxvi. I do not think that we can say for certain how much of ch. xxxvi was actually in the document that Moses had. It is perfectly possible that these tables were brought up to date after the time of Moses. In fact, verse 31, referring to a king over Israel, implies that the final additions were made in the time of the Monarchy. To say this does not invalidate the essential Mosaic authorship of the book. It merely indicates that genealogical lists were sometimes brought up to date by means of additions.

The bulk of ch. xxviii-xxxv is clearly by Jacob. They are a courageous record of his own folly, impulsiveness, astuteness, and humiliation. In this section, which begins with Jacob's flight into Syria, the title *Elohim* predominates. It is used some 49 times in comparison with 14 times for the name *Yahweh*.

#### IV.

This raises the whole question of the use of the names of God in Genesis. How far are they due to the original writer, and how far to Moses? And again, how far was the name *Yahweh* in use in the time of the patriarchs? Did they know it at all? Or did they use as their Covenant Name only *El Shaddai*, for which Moses, in his translation, has substituted the Covenant Name of his day, *i.e.* *Yahweh*, except where there is deliberate stress on the older title? Exodus vi. 3 can be interpreted in two ways. God says there, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as *El Shaddai*, but by My name *Yahweh* I was not known unto them." This may mean that God did not previously make a covenant on the basis of His name of *Yahweh*, though *Yahweh* was even in patriarchal times a known title of the true God. Or the words may be interpreted absolutely literally in the sense that God was never known previously by the name *Yahweh*. In this case the occurrence of the name in Genesis is due entirely to Moses, who has substituted the newer Covenant Name *Yahweh* for the older Covenant Name *El Shaddai* wherever this occurred in the documents, except in the places where there is the actual record of the making of the Covenant or a reference to it.

Personally, I find it difficult to suppose that the name *Yahweh* was a completely new name at the time of the Exodus. Otherwise I think that the people would have gathered the impression that this was some new God, whereas all the emphasis is upon the continuity of their God.

But at the same time I think it quite likely that Moses did frequently substitute the newer name for the old, chiefly to impress upon the readers that this was one and the same God. However, whether *Yahweh* or *El Shaddai* stood in the original documents, we see that there is a variety in the use of the two names in Genesis. Whether the original writers or Moses were responsible for using now one name and now the other, it is undeniable that there is a general method behind the usage. It is the instinctive method that we employ ourselves. When we are speaking about the deity worshipped by non-Christians, we almost always speak of "God." But when we are speaking to Christians and about the Christian God, we frequently use the warmer word "The Lord." Similarly if we are regarding Jesus Christ from the aspect of His humanity and speaking of Him as a Man for whom all nations must feel some respect, we speak of Him as "Jesus." But amongst Christians we use at least the title of "Christ," and commonly "the Lord Jesus Christ."

Likewise in Genesis the general title "God" or *Elohim* is used when dealing with foreign countries, while "The Lord" or *Yahweh* has close association with the Covenant relationship. We have already seen the consistent use of *Elohim* in the Egyptian narrative. Here, too, in ch. xxviii-xxxv *Elohim* predominates, since Jacob is an exile in Syria and, when he returns, is wandering about among the Canaanites. At the same time the fourteen *Yahweh* references are significant. Four come in the Bethel vision (ch. xxviii), when God makes a Covenant-promise to Jacob. Four more come at the end of ch. xxix, when the story is concerned with the birth of Jacob's three eldest sons, Reuben, Simeon and Judah. It occurs again at the birth of another important son, Joseph (xxx. 24). Four more uses refer to the fulfilment of *Yahweh*'s promise of blessing at Bethel (xxx. 27, 30; xxxi. 3; xxxii. 9). The final one is at the agreement made between Jacob and Laban, where a Covenant Name is very fitting (xxxi. 49). If you will observe carefully the different uses of the names of God, you will generally find the reason for the particular name in any place, though we must sometimes allow the writer a little latitude for the sake of variety, such as we commonly use ourselves in writing. The Bethel vision in ch. xxviii is a clear instance of this.

## V.

I have separated the bulk of ch. xxviii-xxxv from ch. xxv. 19-xxvii, which I previously said belonged to the Jacob and Esau records. The reason is that ch. xxvi, the story of Isaac's pretending at Gerar that Rebekah was his sister, makes sense only if it took place before the birth of Jacob and Esau. So presumably although it now forms a part of the Jacob and Esau records, it was incorporated there by Jacob from some memoirs of Isaac and Rebekah. In that case the story of the birth of the two boys (ch. xxv), and even the story of the blessing (ch. xxvii), may belong to the same memoirs. In any case we are here in close connection with the Covenant and the line of blessing again, so that it is not surprising to find that the name *Yahweh* occurs some fourteen times as against the four occurrences of *Elohim*.

If now we continue to work backwards, we have a set of records that have the names of Ishmael (xxv. 12) and Isaac (xxv. 19) at the end of them. The phrase "These are the generations of" does not occur between ch. xi. 27 ("the generations of Terah") and ch. xxv. 12 (Ishmael). If this phrase is intended to mark the divisions of authorship or possession, we must suppose that Abraham left the compiling of the incidents of his life to his sons. But it is not of any great importance whether Abraham wrote down the incidents himself, or whether he told the stories so frequently to his sons that they knew them as well as he did.

In most of this section the name *Yahweh* predominates, but there are a few interesting exceptions. In chs. xx and xxi *Elohim* is used sixteen times and *Yahweh* only four times, two of the latter having reference to the birth of Isaac in the line of promise. The rest of the two chapters is concerned with Abraham's stay at Gerar amongst foreigners, and with the turning out of Hagar and Ishmael. The use of *Elohim* in the first case is consistent with the general method of Moses, and in the second case Moses is marking the breaking away of Ishmael from the line of promise.

Ch. xvii is specially interesting in view of the possibility that Moses frequently substitutes the later Covenant Name *Yahweh* for the older *El Shaddai*. This is the record of the institution of the Covenant of circumcision, and here we should have expected the name *Yahweh* to predominate. Instead of that, *Elohim* occurs nine times and *Yahweh* once only. I have no doubt that there is a psychological reason for this. Here we have the revelation to Abram of God as *El Shaddai*, and Moses is concerned to emphasise two things. First, he wants to focus his spotlight on this great Covenant title; so for the rest of the chapter he uses the general title *Elohim*. "I am *El Shaddai*" stands in solitary state. But secondly, he wants to keep the theme running through and to show the Israelites of his day that the appearance to Abram was only one in a succession of appearances that culminated in the appearances to Moses himself. Hence he makes one exception to the use of *Elohim*, and begins his chapter, "When Abram was ninety years old and nine, *Yahweh* appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am *El Shaddai*."

In this group of records there is the extremely interesting ch. xiv. It is clearly old, but from the way in which Abram is introduced in v.13 as "Abram the Hebrew—as though he was a new character—I do not think it can be regarded as part of the family records. I suggest that it comes from records made by Melchizedek. In that case this chapter may have been added after the time of Moses. When David finally captured the citadel of Zion, he would have found old records there. It was doubtless at this time that God let him see that his son, the true Messiah, would be a priest-king for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. cx), into whose throne David had now stepped by conquering Jerusalem. This story of how Melchizedek met and blessed David's ancestor, Abraham, would then be of special importance, and may have been added to Genesis at this time. The place names are brought up to date with the equivalent of modern footnotes in vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 15, 17. Incidentally, the only other place in Scripture where the King's Vale of v.17 is mentioned is in David's reign. It is the place where Absalom set up his memorial pillar in 2 Sam. xviii. 18.

## VI.

We must now leave these records and go back further into the past. There is a genealogical section from ch. xi. 10-27, with Terah's name at the end. Before this there is the section ch. x. 2-xi. 9, which describes the re-peopling of the earth and the spread of the nations after the Flood. This has Shem's name at the end of it, but one wonders how much of these records came from him, and how much is due to Moses' knowledge of a later time. Possibly Shem recorded the incident of the tower of Babel and left some family genealogical records. But the details of the origins of the nations are probably due to Moses, and we cannot dismiss the possibility of later additions to bring the lists up to date. At the same time there are very early elements in this record. For example, ch. x. 19 must have been in writing before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, since these cities are there referred to as well-known landmarks. I do not see that we can be dogmatic about the origin of ch. x; but I would suggest that Moses'

contact in Egypt with the literature and wise men of the chief countries enabled him to build up an outline of the relationship between the different nations.

These compressed records are preceded by the fuller story of the Flood. At the end of the story stand the names of Shem, Ham and Japheth (x. 1), and the story itself runs from ch. vi. 9 to ix. 29. If these names indicate the source of the Flood records, we have an indication that more than one hand was involved. The story itself bears this out, and it is likely that Moses himself, or some earlier writer, wove together records that were kept by two or three of the sons. The records, however, are not contradictory. Thus although one of the sons kept the dates of the events of the Flood by means of a calendar, the other adopted the rougher method of notching the days on a stick from the beginning. So we have the two methods together in the text, one telling us the day of the month on which some event happened, the other telling us how many days elapsed between one event and another. But the two harmonise perfectly. Incidentally, one son may have used the name *Elohim* and the other the Covenant Name; or Moses himself may have alternated the names for the sake of variety. Ch. vii. 16 would appear to be an obvious example of literary variety: "They went in as *Elohim* commanded him; and *Yahweh* shut him in."

The previous records run from ch. v. 1 to ch. vi. 9, and here Noah's name is at the end. Apart from the short narrative about the sons of God and the daughters of men, and the threat of the Flood, this record, like Terah's, is a detailed genealogical list. These lists demand a special note to themselves. Their detailed figures suggest that they are to be interpreted literally as complete records of everyone in the line from Noah to Abram. If so, we are led to a date between 4000 and 6000 B.C. for the creation of Adam, according to whether we follow the figures of the Hebrew, Samaritan, or Septuagint MSS. Now these records may be absolutely accurate if Adam was the first of the true modern civilised men. Some of you may have heard the B.B.C. Brains Trust in the spring declare unanimously that modern civilised man began in the Mesopotamian region about 6000 B.C. Prof. A. D. Ritchie speaks of this civilization beginning six or seven thousand years ago (*Civilization, Science, and Religion*, p. 15, Pelican Series); and Prof. Gordon Childe says it was "perhaps not more than 10,000 years ago" (*What Happened in History*, p.22, Pelican Series). This new civilization, which began in the Mesopotamian region, is distinguished by the first signs of the knowledge of cultivation, and possibly domestication of animals. Certainly the story of the Garden of Eden stresses that the plants in the garden were of a type suitable for cultivation. Moreover, Sir Richard Paget in a recent article in *Nature* gives it as his view that language also originated at about this date. Modern discovery and theory, therefore, tend to support the view that Adam was the first real man, and that he came into being some 6000 to 8000 years ago.

We have now come right back almost to the beginning, and ch. ii. 4-v.1 probably represents the Adam record, though items in ch. iv. 16-24 may be drawn from other sources. It would be fascinating to speculate how these earliest records were written. They may not even have been written, but drawn. Writing has been discovered as far back as about 3000 B.C., but it was not alphabetic writing then. It is of the hieroglyphic or picture type. Writing may go back to the time of Adam, though if it was written on perishable material, none of it will ever be discovered. But if it should be discovered, I think we might be able to understand it, because it would resemble drawing. Did Moses handle these actual records made by the man who lived in Eden? Or had they been carefully copied by some other hand when the originals became worn and old? Again, how many of the words were drawn in some ancient script, and how often did one picture stand for a whole sentence? Who can tell? But I firmly believe that as Moses pored over this old writing, praying for wisdom to interpret it, he was divinely

guided to give us the beautiful story that we now read in our Bibles. And Moses gives God here the distinctive title of *Yahweh Elohim*, to indicate that the Creator of ch. i is the same as the Covenant God of the burning bush.

There remains one more chapter, the first, together with ch. ii. 1-4, which closes with the words, "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth." Who wrote this chapter originally? No eyewitness could have written it, for there was no eye to witness all that is there described. Yet the order of creation there is absolutely accurate by modern scientific standards. There must have been some eyewitness: coincidence, is a feeble explanation. Well, of course there was an eyewitness: there was God. And God had someone to whom He spake "mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches" (Num. xii. 8); one whom He "knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10); one to whom He spake "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. xxxiii. 11). That one was Moses and therefore God spoke that majestic first chapter of Genesis to Moses. If that is too sweeping, then I would say that God showed Moses those seven pictures of the steps in His creation of the universe and the world, that in vivid language they might form the preface to his book—and not to one book only, but to the whole Bible. For when the stream of revelation began to flow, God planned that the river which began in Genesis with the making of the heavens and the earth should end in the Book of Revelation with the new heavens and the new earth. Two pens wrote the records, but one Mind planned the contents.

## VII.

Here, then, is a reconstruction of how Moses wrote Genesis. We have accounted for the tradition that Moses was the writer or compiler. We have seen a reason for God's causing him to have the best education possible in his day. We have accounted for the different styles in Genesis by realising that Moses was only a compiler, though at the same time he has imposed a definite unity upon the whole. We have accounted for the varying names of God, partly by seeing a certain method that Moses employed in their use, partly by the fact that the authors of the original records may have preferred one name rather than another, and partly by remembering that all of us tend to use a certain amount of variety. We have accounted for a certain Egyptian flavour that some scholars have detected, by recognising that Moses spoke Egyptian, and in one case probably transcribed records from the Egyptian language. We have accounted for certain Babylonia parallels that other scholars have found by accepting the fact that up to the time of Abraham the first records of the race were kept in the region of Babylon. The structure and contents of the book point to one man as the author, and that man is Moses.

## J. STAFFORD WRIGHT

Endnotes:

- 1) A paper read the I.V.F. Theological Students' Conference at Cambridge, January, 1946.