

Study of Oral Transmission

1. Statements as to alleged accuracy of oral transmission (cont'd 2)

Albright, W.F. New Horizons in Biblical Research

- p. 10 If the customary law of Genesis is a faithful reflection of contemporary law, if the social and legal practices recorded in Genesis are correct for the Patriarchal Age but not for the post-Mosaic period, it follows that we cannot a priori dismiss the religious content of the Patriarchal narratives as late. These narratives are not retrojections from the age of the Prophets, but actual oral tradition, modified only slightly in the course of time - modified, that is, by the omission of mythical elements, by the heightening of certain elements regarded as important, etc. - but still generally valid as records of early periods. Thus, though we cannot write history in the modern sense directly from the book of Genesis, we can describe the general way of life and give a rough sequence of events.¹
- p. 11
- p. 13 From the early poetry of which we have spoken - full-length poems, shorter poems and poetic reminiscences, even a few single lines of verse - it is possible to write a sketch of Mosaic history which would in general confirm the prose account which has come down to us. In fact, the poetic version sometimes preserves a fuller record. For example, the prose traditions recorded in the 14th chapter of Exodus and the 4th chapter of Judges can only be understood, historically speaking, from the poetic accounts in the 15th and 5th chapters of the respective books. Though the Oracles of Balaam and the Song of Miriam were probably not written down for the first time until the tenth century, they certainly had a long oral transmission, deriving for the most part from Israel's beginnings. We thus have a solid background for Israelite tradition, which is quite independent of later editorial work on J,E,D, etc.
- p. 14

Harrelson 34-5 It is a difficult task to determine exactly how faithfully the stories of the persons named have been recorded. For example, Noth holds that the Moses traditions include many which were not originally connected with Moses himself, but have become associated with Moses because of the significance of his life and work for the later traditionalists. The same thing applies to particular places. Stories with a named place may originally have been connected with some other place. As the places of worship, the scenes of momentous events for Israel's history and faith, were dealt with in the narratives, other stories would be drawn to these places of special importance in order to indicate clearly their significance to the Israelite community. This does not mean that the Israelites were deliberately falsifying their early history; it only means that the traditions were rather fluid and that those who preserved them were filling out the basic themes of God's dealings with Israel, providing more comprehensive statements of the meaning of God's guidance of His people.

(3.41
xx-33a)

Kirk, G. S. Language and Background of Homer, 1964. p. 87

Vries, Jan De, Heroic Song and Heroic Legend (London:Oxford) 1963 pp. 204-206 for illustrations of some degree of alleged historical accuracy.