

- I. We can know the words of the Old Testament Part 1
- a. Establish the need: Have you hear people say things like the Bible that has existed for thousands of years and you can't believe the words as coming from God since it has been changed over time?
 - b. Purpose: In this session we shall consider definitions and then four reasons why we can believe why we can know the actual words of the Old Testament so that we will have faith in God's Word being God's Word.
 - c. Introductory matters: Definitions
 - i. What is textual criticism?
 1. According to Mark Rooker: "The textual criticism of an ancient document involves the critical study of the available manuscripts and translations in order to determine the original reading of the text."¹
 2. According to Mark Rooker: "Textual criticism tries to uncover the original copy (autograph) of a piece of literature by comparing available copies, all of which inevitably contain transmission errors or mistakes."²
 3. Defining textual criticism outside of just Old Testament specialization and by scholar on Homer's Illiad: "The primary goal of textual criticism has traditionally been to establish the actual text that the author wrote, so far as this is possible."³
 - ii. What are witnesses?
 1. According to Mark Rooker: "All the available Hebrew manuscripts as well as the translations of the OT are called "witnesses" as they give evidence to the original form of the OT text."⁴
 2. This include manuscripts in the Hebrew language and also other manuscripts in other ancient languages.
 - iii. What are variants?
 1. This refers to differences in wording.
 2. There two types: Material variant and recurrent variant.
 - a. "A material variant is a divergent reading of major import and circumstances. It is beyond the recurring minor differences of grammatical or syntactical structure, mere simplification of expression, contextual adjustment, and other similar sources for variant readings."⁵
 - b. "A recurrent variant is a divergent reading of minor import and circumstances stemming from minor differences of grammatical or syntactical structure, mere simplification of expression, contextual adjustment, and other similar sources for variant readings."⁶

¹ Mark Rooker, "The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 3968-3969.

² Mark Rooker, "The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 3970-3972.

³ Graeme Bird, *Pointing at the Past: From Formula to Performance in Homeric Poetics* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies), chapter 1. Accessed at <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/4742.1-textual-criticism-as-applied-to-biblical-and-classical-texts>.

⁴ Mark Rooker, "The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 4009-4010.

⁵ William Barrick, *Old Testament Textual Criticism Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master's Seminary), 37.

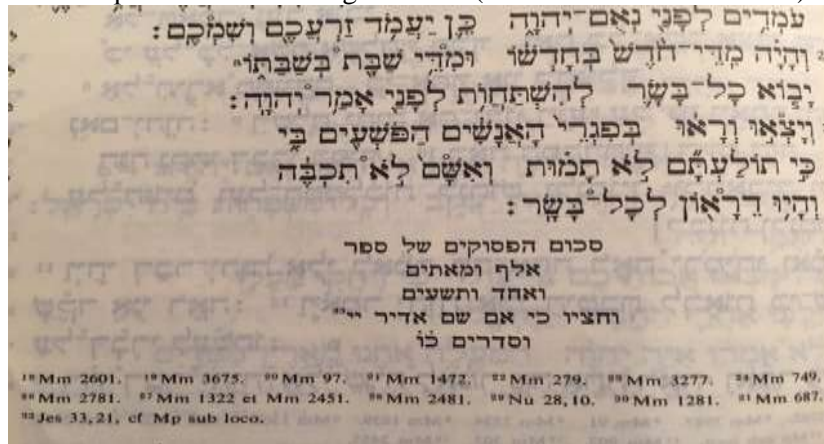
⁶ William Barrick, *Old Testament Textual Criticism Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master's Seminary), 37.

- d. Reason #1: God's Word says the Word of God will endure forever
 - i. Scripture is clear God's Word is forever and will not be changed: "*The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.*" (Isaiah 40:8)
 - 1. Note here that God's Word is stated as standing forever.
 - 2. Yet also note the contrast of God's Word with flowers and grass, both of which has a short life span.
 - ii. Isaiah 40:8 is also re-stated in the New Testament by the Apostle Peter: "*For, ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.*" And this is the word which was preached to you." (1 Peter 1:24-25)
 - 1. Notice this is stated by an Apostle, God's Mouth piece.
 - 2. Notice also that in the New Testament era this verse is still truth.
 - 3. Furthermore Peter says this word was preach to his hearers which shows God's Word endured for thousands of years.
 - iii. See also Psalm 119:89: "*Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven..*"
 - 1. If God's Word is forever then it will be preserved even as others try to change it and suppress it.
 - 2. God's Word has been attempted to be censored and changed in history; yet it will remain forever.
- e. Reason #2: The Old Testament was written down.
 - i. Interactive lesson⁷
 - 1. Part 1: Phone tag
 - a. Line up and play "phone tag" where one person whispers to the next person a sentence.
 - b. Very likely the result is not the original sentence!
 - c. This kind of argument is used all the time against the Bible. But is this a good objection?
 - 2. Part 2: Groceries' list
 - a. Everyone have paper to write down what is read.
 - b. Collect the paper.
 - c. Note any possible errors (spelling, wrong order, wrong words, etc).
 - d. Yet notice one can reconstruct the list from other "manuscripts."
 - ii. In Scripture you see God's Word is aware of copies of God's Word
 - 1. Look at Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22.
 - 2. Both passages are the same.
 - 3. Note Psalm 18 is liturgical use by David himself.
 - 4. Meanwhile 2 Samuel 22 is an archival copy for historical purposes.
 - 5. Notice that these two passages preserve the divine Psalm from copies in different functions!
- f. Reason #3: Temple officials were intentional in checking the manuscripts
 - i. According to Mark Rooker in summarizing the Jewish tradition: "The Babylonian Talmud refers to temple officials who had the task of revising manuscripts and restoring mistakes (b. Ketub. 106a). Once a year texts were taken to the temple for revision (b. Mo'ed Qat. 18b) and compared to the three authorized manuscripts (y. Ta'an. 4: 2)."⁸

⁷ What follows below is from memory of a newsletter from Stand to Reason many years ago.

⁸ Mark Rooker, "The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 3995-3998.

- ii. This shows clear desire to be accurate to God's Word and even to double check for error at the highest (centralized) level.
- g. Reason #4: *Masora Finalis*
 - i. Definition of *Masora Finalis*: "Masoretic lists that follows each book of the Hebrew Bible...These lists are usually merely a count of the verses that of the book, but they may also include additional information about the book or about larger sections of the text."⁹
 - ii. There are *Masora Finalis* after each book in the Hebrew Bible except for 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, Ezra and 1 Chronicles since *Masora Finalis* appear at the end of 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Nehemiah and 2 Chronicles summarizing those books together, since the Jewish scribes saw them as one book.¹⁰
 - iii. Here's a picture of the ending of Isaiah (note the smaller characters):



- iv.
- v. In Genesis this is what it says, translated into English:
 1. The sum of verses of the book:
 2. thousand and five hundred
 3. and thirty and four.
 4. 1 + 20 + 30 +4.
 5. And its half: "And by your sword..." (Genesis 27:40).
 6. And orders: 40 +5.
- vi. Interpreting the example in Genesis:
 1. The sum of verses of the book is 1534 verses.
 2. There are 45 sections.
 3. The middle of the verse is Genesis 27:40 which says And by your sword..."
- vii. Reason why this is important?
 1. It shows there's an attempt to have "quality control" over manuscripts that everything was copied down without mistake.
 2. Note they would have to count to confirm the accuracy of the copy with the amount of verses, sections and even what the middle verse of the book is!
- viii. Going back to the analogy
 1. Remember the shopping list analogy?
 2. Imagine now having a shopping list that not only listed things out but now counted how many lines there are, and tells us what the middle item on the list is!

⁹ William Scott, *A Simplified Guide to BHS* (North Richland Hills, TX: Bibal Press), 11.

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3. This would mean you can spot more errors and way to correct error.