

# A Hypothesis Concerning Why the Book of Genesis is Internally Inconsistent

The book of Genesis appears to be a collection of writings that were hastily assembled in order to unite various tribes of Hebrews under a single mythology while respecting the somewhat different traditions of each tribe.

The Hebrew people were originally tribes of nomads. These tribes had no central repository of knowledge and information until the construction of Solomon's temple long after the establishment of Mosaic law. Furthermore, it seems likely that the sacred stories began to circulate prior to the invention of Hebrew writing. There may have been an original source for most of what is in Genesis, but it was probably not originally written. Scholarly tradition indicates that the sacred stories were transmitted orally.

People err when copying writing. They err even more when orally transmitting information from memory. Assuming an original narrative, it appears to have been transmitted imperfectly. The more that tribes traveled, the more distinct their oral traditions were likely to have become. The more interactions with other cultures, the more options there were for including lore from those cultures.

Apologetics is nothing new to religion. Rabbis were expected to answer questions. They were expected to know the answers. They may have known some of the answers, and they may have invented others. Such apologetics would have resulted in permutations of the narratives. The book of Jubilees represents a compilation of such apologetics.

Whether Genesis is an epigraph or a pseudo-epigraph ascribed to Moses, it is reasonable to assume an authorship of the first written version around the time of the exodus from Egypt, possibly directly ordered by and even supervised by Moses. Whether his hand did any of the writing is a matter of pure speculation.

Whoever dealt with the compilation of Hebrew lore and law would have been facing some tremendous difficulties. The post-Mosaic Old Testament includes frequent descriptions of the Hebrews as stubborn (i.e., 'stiff necked'). When versions of the narrative differed, there would likely have

been political struggles. To claim that one version of a story was superior to another would likely have fomented resentment and possible rebellion. In short, any editor who invalidated particular religious leaders ran the risk of alienating some of the people he was endeavoring to unite.

An eloquent political solution could easily have led to the rather ineloquent version of Genesis extant today. A diplomatic solution would have been to write down each tribe's official version of events, collate them as best as possible, and canonize whatever resulted.

If such a process was used, it would account for three glaring deficiencies in Genesis. The first is in the two mutually contradictory accounts of Creation given in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, respectively. The second is the switch from singular to plural in reference to Elohim found in various places in Genesis. The third is involved with the repetition of the motif of 'Tell them you are my sister'. The first time (Gen. 12:10-13) Abram uses the motif in Egypt, it makes sense. The lie may have kept him alive. The second time (Genesis 20), Sarah is already past the age of ninety, yet Abraham uses the story again, and Abimelech, the king of Gerar takes Sarah with the intention of having sex with her. In this case, it seems to make no sense unless Abimelech had a nonagenarian fetish and that fact was known in advance to Abraham. The third time the motif is used (Gen. 26) is with Isaac and his wife, Rebekah. While the story again involves Abimelech, apparently he himself is unmoved by the young woman owing presumably to his fetish for nonagenarian women. By this point, however, repetition of the motif has become absurd. This repetition of a motif that made sense only once or possibly only in the first and third cases could easily have resulted from confusion in attempting to accredit disparate tribal narratives regarding the original progenitors of the race.

In conclusion, the book of Genesis appears to be an attempt at amalgamating various narrative traditions in an effort to mollify the religious leadership of various tribes which the prevailing leadership desired to galvanize into a single united race.