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[Slide 1]

ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS and WRITING

OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

Not one of the autographs of any book in the Old Testament still exists today.

Jewish and Christian scribes throughout the ages have made copies of God's Word. Jewish scribes took meticulous care in producing copies of the Scripture because they regarded the text as being God given and authoritative to the very letter.

[Slide 2] *One's beliefs about the origin and nature of the Bible will determine how one handles it.*

[Slide 3]

[Slide 4] Josephus: "We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. Time and again ere now the sight has been witnessed of prisoners enduring tortures and death in every form in the theatres, rather than utter a single word against the laws and the allied documents." (*Against Apion* 1. 42f.)

[Slide 5] The Masoretes (500 – 1000 AD – the successors to the scribes) used every imaginable safeguard, no matter how cumbersome or laborious, to ensure the accurate transmission of the text.

Jesus held the same high regard for the Old Testament text; He affirmed the authority and immutability of the text—even down to the very letter. (Matthew 5:17-18)

[Slides 6-10]

[Slide 11] The Isaiah scroll is a testimony to the providence of God, the high regard with which the Jews held the Scriptures, and the meticulous efforts of the Jewish scribes. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, the oldest existing complete manuscript of the Old Testament was the Leningrad Codex.

[Slide 12] Most passages in the Dead Sea Isaiah scroll are indistinguishable from the corresponding passages in the *Leningrad Codex*, the oldest and best complete exemplar of the Masoretic Text (named for the Masoretes, from *masorah* – that which is handed down). The esteem with which it is regarded is indicated by the fact that it was chosen as the textual basis for *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensis* (1977), the standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament used today by Jewish and Christian scholars alike.

What is amazing is that, apart from differences in spelling and minor scribal errors, the text of the Leningrad Codex virtually identical to the Isaiah scroll discovered at Qumran! The scroll, which can be shown by its script to have been copied c. 100 B.C.E., is roughly 1,000 years older than any Hebrew text of Isaiah known before 1947. The Hebrew text used in worship today is a text of high antiquity, having been transmitted by Jewish tradition with extraordinary fidelity.

Other important Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts:

The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 916), containing the Major Prophets

[Slide 13] *The Aleppo Codex* (A.D. 900–925), originally complete, ¼ now missing from the front and back

The Cairo Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 895), containing the Prophets

The British Museum Codex Oriental 4445 (9th or 10th century), containing a large portion of the Pentateuch