

# **Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 3, Scribal Copying of the Old Testament Text Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

**Scribal Copying of the Old Testament Text**

## **1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 3, Scribal Copying of the Old Testament Text, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt discusses the transmission of the Bible, exploring the processes of canonization and the criteria used to determine which books were included in the Old Testament canon. He addresses challenges to the canon's authority, such as apparent contradictions and questions raised by Jewish scholars regarding certain books. The lecture also examines scribal errors in manuscript transmission, different types of errors and methods for evaluating manuscript accuracy, and the significance of discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls in verifying the accuracy of biblical texts. Finally, Dr. Hildebrandt offers a perspective on why God might have allowed for some imperfection in the transmission process.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 3 – Double  
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament  
Literature).**



**Hildebrandt\_OTLit\_  
Session03.mp3**

### 3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 3, Scribal Copying of the Old Testament Text

#### Old Testament Transmission Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What are the five books that make up the Antilegomena?
2. Name at least three criteria that were used to determine if a book should be included in the canon of the Old Testament.
3. Why was the book of Proverbs questioned?
4. Explain why the book of Esther was questioned despite its acceptance in the Jewish canon.
5. What is the difference between the Old Testament Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha?
6. What is the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the study of the Old Testament text?
7. What is the scribal error found in 1 Samuel 13:1?
8. Define the scribal error known as "homeoteleuton" and provide an example.
9. What does the term "conflation" mean in relation to the transmission of Biblical manuscripts?
10. What principle does the phrase "older and shorter" refer to in the evaluation of Biblical manuscripts?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The Antilegomena are the books that were at one time "spoken against" or questioned by the Jewish people; they include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ezekiel. These books were questioned for various reasons, such as apparent contradictions or the absence of God's name.
2. The three criteria for canonization are: does the book claim to be from God, was it written by a prophet, and does it agree with previous revelation. Other criteria

include whether the book comes with the power of God and if it was accepted by the people of God.

3. The book of Proverbs was questioned due to seemingly contradictory verses, such as Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5, which appear to give conflicting advice about answering a fool. The apparent conflict calls for a wisdom and discernment on the part of the reader.
4. The book of Esther was questioned because it doesn't explicitly mention the name of God, though the story shows His divine providence. Despite this, the Jews accepted Esther due to its historical importance and because it portrays God's activity, even though it is implicit.
5. The Old Testament Apocrypha consists of books accepted by the Catholic Church but not by Protestants, while the Pseudepigrapha are books that were written using a false name and are not accepted by either Protestants or Catholics as canonical or divinely inspired. The Apocrypha is considered historically important but not the Word of God, whereas the Pseudepigrapha are generally regarded as bogus texts.
6. The Dead Sea Scrolls are significant because they provide the earliest known Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, dating back to before the time of Christ. They confirm that the later Masoretic texts are quite accurate and give scholars a 1000 year jump.
7. The King James version of 1 Samuel 13:1 says "Saul reigned one year, and then reigned two years over Israel" but this doesn't make sense grammatically. The original Hebrew texts did not have the ages so it is likely that the numbers given in later versions was a scribal error.
8. "Homeoteleuton" is a scribal error that occurs when a scribe's eye skips to a similar-ending word later in the text, causing the omission of words in between. This was a problem in manuscripts because sometimes phrases ended with the same or similar words.
9. In relation to biblical manuscripts, "conflation" refers to the process where a scribe combines readings from different manuscripts into a single, longer reading. This can sometimes cause the text to grow longer than the original.
10. The phrase "older and shorter" refers to the principle used in textual criticism that older manuscripts are considered more reliable than newer ones, and when

comparing variant readings, the shorter reading is preferred over the longer one. This is because texts tend to grow with conflation over time.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question in essay format (minimum 500 words).

1. Discuss the criteria used for canonization of the Old Testament. How do these criteria help determine which books were considered sacred scripture, and what limitations do these criteria have?
2. Describe the challenges and controversies surrounding the Antilegomena. Why were these books questioned? Why were they ultimately included in the Old Testament canon?
3. Compare and contrast the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. What is their significance, and why are they excluded from the Protestant Old Testament canon?
4. Explain the various types of scribal errors that can occur during the transmission of biblical texts. How do textual critics identify and correct these errors in order to determine the original readings?
5. Assess the reliability of the Old Testament text. How do the number of manuscripts, the geographical spread of those manuscripts, and discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls contribute to our confidence in the text? Why do some variations exist, and what does that tell us about the transmission of God's word?

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Antilegomena:** Books of the Bible that were at one time "spoken against" or questioned before being accepted into the canon. Examples in the Old Testament include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ezekiel.

**Apocrypha/Deutero-canonical books:** Books of the Old Testament that are included in the Catholic and Orthodox biblical canon but are not accepted by most Protestants. These books were written in the intertestamental period between the Old and New Testaments.

**Canonization:** The process by which certain books were recognized as authoritative and included in the sacred scriptures. This included the criteria for acceptance into the Old Testament canon.

**Conflation:** A scribal error where variant readings from multiple manuscripts are combined into a single, longer reading in a later manuscript.

**Dittography:** A scribal error where a letter, word, or phrase is accidentally written or copied twice when it should only have been written once.

**Fission and Fusion:** A scribal error that occurs when scribes did not leave spaces between words in the Greek manuscripts. This could cause words to be combined or split incorrectly during copying.

**Haplography:** A scribal error where a letter, word, or phrase is accidentally written or copied once when it should have been written twice.

**Harmonizing Corruption:** A scribal error that occurs when a scribe alters a passage in order to make it consistent with another passage or to avoid writing something they find distasteful.

**Homeoteleuton:** A scribal error that occurs when a scribe's eye jumps to a similar-ending word later in the text, causing the omission of words in between.

**Manuscript families:** Groups of manuscripts that share a common ancestor, which often reflects a particular geographical region or tradition of copying.

**Metathesis:** A scribal error that occurs when the order of letters in a word is switched.

**Orality:** The process of transmitting texts orally, which was common in ancient times. This could cause variations in the text during copying.

**Pseudepigrapha:** Books written under a false name; these books are not accepted as part of the canonical scriptures in Christianity or Judaism.

**Scribal error:** Mistakes made by scribes during the copying of manuscripts. These can include accidental omissions, additions, or alterations of the text.

**Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which was created by Jewish scholars in Egypt around the 3rd to 1st centuries BC.

**Textual Criticism:** The academic study of biblical manuscripts with the aim of reconstructing the original text of the Bible by comparing various manuscripts.

**Variant/textual variant:** Different wordings or readings of a particular passage that are found in different manuscripts of the Bible. This can help in the process of textual criticism.

## 4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt:

### **Briefing Document: The Transmission of the Bible**

**Subject:** Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology; Lecture #3: The Transmission of the Bible from God to Us

**Overview:** This lecture by Dr. Hildebrandt focuses on how the Bible, specifically the Old Testament, was transmitted from its divine origin to its current form. The lecture is designed to address concerns about accuracy and reliability that might arise when considering the processes of canonization, copying, and translation. Dr. Hildebrandt emphasizes the historical and textual nature of these processes, while also encouraging students to grapple with ambiguities and complexities inherent in the text. He aims to foster a balanced approach to biblical study that both acknowledges human agency in transmission and recognizes the divine inspiration at its core.

### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

#### **1. Canonization:**

- **Definition:** Canonization refers to the process by which certain books were accepted into the sacred collection of Scripture.
- **Old Testament:** The Jewish people, as the people of God in the Old Testament, determined which books were canonical for the Old Testament. Christians inherit this canon from them.
- **New Testament:** The acceptance of the New Testament was a gradual process. The letters of Paul, for example, were not immediately available to all churches.
- **Criteria for Canonization:**
  - Claim of Divine Inspiration:** Does the book claim to speak for God ("Thus saith the Lord")?
- **Authorship by a Prophet of God:** Was it written by a recognized prophet or man/woman of God?
- **Agreement with Previous Revelation:** Does the book align with established teachings and principles?
- **Power of God:** Does the book possess the power to transform lives? This is presented as a more subjective criterion.

- **Acceptance by the People of God:** Was the book accepted by the Jewish people as sacred?
- **Antilegomena:** These are the five Old Testament books that were questioned by the Jewish people before being accepted into the canon: Proverbs, Esther, Ezekiel, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. These books help to show the care that the Jews took in establishing the canon.
- **Examples: Proverbs:** The apparent contradiction in Proverbs 26:4-5 (whether or not to answer a fool) illustrates that wisdom requires discernment and nuanced interpretation of such situations. Dr. Hildebrandt said, "Read the text of Scripture...Read the verses themselves. They do conflict. There's no way you get around that. They do conflict...If you can't see that, you need to see that."
- **Ezekiel:** The detailed measurements of the temple in Ezekiel seem too large for the existing Temple Mount, leading to questions about whether the descriptions are literal or eschatological. He said, "The solution to this is to ask: Ezekiel is talking about which temple? It is the future temple."
- **Esther:** The book's omission of God's name was problematic. He says, "God's all over the book but his name is never referenced in the book. So the Jew's questioned the book of Esther."
- **Ecclesiastes:** The book's seemingly pessimistic outlook and focus on the "meaninglessness" of life initially caused concern, but the final chapter, where it advocates "fear God," has been used by some to resolve their problem. Hildebrandt encourages them to embrace the first eleven chapters, stating "Are there going to be times in your life when you need to know that one of the wisest men that ever lived felt the meaninglessness of life? He felt that life was vapor."
- **Song of Songs:** Its explicit sexual imagery was questioned. Hildebrandt notes, "Is it really...is Song of Songs a very sexual book? And the answer is: yes...they are very, very, very explicit."
- **Apocrypha:** These are books (e.g., Maccabees) that are accepted by the Catholic Church but not by Protestants. These books originate from the intertestamental period (400 BC to the time of Jesus), providing historical and cultural context, but are not considered the word of God.
- **Pseudepigrapha:** These are books (e.g., The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Judas) that are not considered to be canonical or a part of the Apocrypha, and they are generally regarded as forgeries, often of Gnostic origin.

## 1. Scribal Copying and Textual Criticism

- **The Human Element:** Dr. Hildebrandt stresses that human beings were used by God in the process of transmission. He asks, "Did God use flawed processes to preserve his word? Did God use flawed people to preserve his word?"
- **Scribal Errors:** The lecture details common errors that scribes made when copying manuscripts over time:
- **Copyist Errors:** A major example is in 1 Samuel 13:1. The King James says, "Saul reigned one year and then he reigned two years over Israel," while older texts show Saul was forty years old when he began to reign.
- **Metathesis:** Switching the order of letters (e.g., "thier" for "their")
- **Fission and Fusion:** Problems arising from the lack of spaces between words in ancient texts
- **Homeoteleuton:** Skipping lines of text when two lines end with the same word or phrase.
- **Dittography and Haplography:** Copying a word or phrase twice when it should only appear once (dittography) or writing it only once when it should be written twice (haplography).
- **Harmonizing corruptions:** Changing the text to be more palatable; Job's wife, when telling Job to "curse God and die", was rewritten by some scribes as "bless God and die."
- **Conflation:** Combining different readings from multiple manuscripts. For example, "Church of God" and "Church of the Lord" was conflated to become "Church of the Lord God."
- **Oral Transmission:** While oral transmission allowed for multiple copies to be made quickly, it also led to errors due to similar-sounding words (e.g., "there," "their," "they're", or the Hebrew example of "lo' anaknu" which is also pronounced "l'o anaknu").
- **Textual Criticism: Definition:** The scholarly practice of comparing different manuscripts to determine the most accurate reading of the original text.
- **Principles: Older Manuscripts:** Older manuscripts are given more weight.
- **Shorter Readings:** Shorter readings are typically preferred.



- **Geographical Spread:** Readings from geographically diverse manuscripts are valued.
  - **Manuscript Families:** Identifying and evaluating manuscript families to trace textual lineages.
  - **Examples: Mark 16:** The ending of Mark (vv. 9-20) is a well-known scribal problem, with some of the oldest manuscripts ending at verse 8. The NIV notes this problem.
  - **1 John 5:7:** The famous "Comma Johanneum," which provides explicit support for the Trinity, is now recognized as a later addition. He states, "As a matter of fact, the first time that verse pops up is basically in the 16th century AD. Is that a little late?"
  - **Accuracy of the Text:** Dr. Hildebrandt states that despite these errors, the text of Scripture is incredibly well-preserved, more so than any other text from antiquity. He emphasizes, "Is the New Testament, better established than any book on the face of this planet? There is no close second."
  - He notes that there are 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament as compared to less than 120 copies for the philosopher Aristotle.
  - He also points out that they have an early manuscript of John called Papyrus 52 that dates back to about 30 years after the life of John, "We've got a piece of the book of John from within 30 years of when John lived."
1. **Divine Sovereignty and Imperfect Transmission:**
- **Why Imperfect?** Dr. Hildebrandt offers a suggestion that the imperfect transmission of the Bible was purposeful, as if God wanted people to worship God himself, instead of the perfect text, which they might turn into a relic. He notes, "So I think that he purposely had his Word lost. I want you worshipping me instead of some text."
  - **Emphasis on Discernment:** The presence of scribal errors and textual variants calls for careful study, critical thinking, and discernment to understand the Bible correctly. He said, "You need to allow yourself to be jarred a little bit. So that you can work on resolving it and come to a solution."

## 1. Importance of Archaeological Discoveries

- **Dead Sea Scrolls:** The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948 provided the best Hebrew manuscripts ever found. He says, "The Dead Sea Scrolls, in 1948 jumped us back 1000 years to before the time of Christ...Are the Hebrew texts accurate? The Hebrew texts are accurate. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm this generally."
- **Gabi Barkai Silver Amulet:** Gabi Barkai discovered an amulet dating back to 700 BC that included the priestly blessing from Numbers 6. The amulet read, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be gracious unto you and make his face shine upon you and give you shalom." He explains, "This is from the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah."

### Conclusion:

Dr. Hildebrandt's lecture provides a helpful and honest perspective on the transmission of the Bible. He acknowledges the human processes involved, which include the errors of scribes, but asserts that these errors do not negate the divine nature of the text. By studying the textual history of the Bible and the evidence that supports it, we can better understand the care that has been taken with it over the centuries. The lecture ultimately calls for a thoughtful, nuanced approach to the Bible that recognizes both its human and divine elements. He encourages students not to shy away from difficult passages or apparent contradictions, but to use these issues as opportunities for deeper engagement with the text.

## 5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 3, Scribal Copying of the Old Testament Text, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided lecture excerpts:

### FAQ

1. **What is "canonization" in the context of the Bible, and what are the primary criteria used to determine which books belong in the canon?** Canonization refers to the process by which certain books were recognized as sacred scripture and included in the Bible. The main criteria for canonization are: (1) whether the book claims to be inspired by God (e.g., "Thus saith the Lord"), (2) whether it was written by a recognized prophet or person of God, (3) whether it agrees with previous revelation, (4) whether it has the power of God, and (5) whether it was accepted by the people of God. It's important to note that these criteria were not always straightforward, and some books faced significant scrutiny.
2. **What are the "Antilegomena" and why were these books questioned?** The Antilegomena are a group of five Old Testament books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ezekiel) that were initially questioned by the Jewish people before being fully accepted into the canon. The reasons for questioning varied: Proverbs had seemingly contradictory verses, Ecclesiastes presented a view of life's meaninglessness, Esther did not explicitly mention God's name, Song of Songs was considered too sensual, and Ezekiel's temple description seemed impossibly large. Despite these questions, the books were ultimately accepted and are considered part of scripture.
3. **What is the "Apocrypha" and why are these books not considered part of the Protestant Old Testament canon?** The Apocrypha refers to a collection of books written during the 400-year intertestamental period (between the Old and New Testaments). These books are considered important historical and religious texts and are accepted as canonical by the Catholic Church. However, Protestants do not consider them part of the inspired Word of God, primarily because they were not included in the Jewish canon and because they contain teachings that contradict other scriptures. Despite not being canonical, these books can offer interesting historical context.

4. **What are the "Pseudepigrapha," and why are they considered less reliable than both canon and Apocrypha?** The Pseudepigrapha are a group of writings attributed to biblical figures but were actually written much later by other authors using pseudonyms. Examples include the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Judas. Unlike the canon or Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha are not considered part of scripture, even for the Catholic Church. They are considered to be of dubious authenticity, often filled with strange and gnostic teachings, and are generally disregarded by believers as the inspired Word of God. They may have some historical or cultural value but lack the consistency and prophetic nature found in canonical texts.
5. **What are some of the common types of scribal errors that occurred during the copying of biblical manuscripts?** Scribal errors are inevitable given the method of hand copying manuscripts. Common types of errors include: confusing visually similar letters (like "d" and "r" in Hebrew), errors due to oral transmission where similarly sounding words are mistaken, *metathesis* (switching the order of letters), *fission* and *fusion* (adding or removing spaces between words), *homeoteleuton* (skipping sections because lines end with the same words), *dittography* (writing something twice that should have been written once), *haplography* (writing something once that should have been written twice), harmonizing corruptions (changing a difficult statement to make it more palatable), and conflation (combining different readings into one). These errors are well-known and can be identified through comparative textual analysis.
6. **How are textual variants handled when producing a modern translation of the Bible?** Modern translations of the Bible often include footnotes explaining textual variants, making note of when there's a known scribal issue. In cases where there are variants, translators weigh the manuscript evidence, including the age of the manuscripts, geographical spread, and manuscript families, among other factors. Older and shorter readings are preferred since the text tends to grow through later scribal edits, and greater geographical spread of a given reading tends to mean that it came from a common older source instead of being a local trend.

7. **How do discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls impact our understanding of the accuracy of the Old Testament?** The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1948, provided Hebrew manuscripts that were about 1,000 years older than previously available texts. This discovery has been incredibly valuable because it allows scholars to verify the accuracy of the later Masoretic texts. Generally, they confirm the accuracy of the Hebrew Bible as it has been passed down over the centuries. Such discoveries add a level of confidence that the biblical text has been faithfully preserved.
8. **If God intended for the Bible to be accurately preserved, why did he allow these scribal errors to exist?** The professor suggests that if God had preserved his word perfectly like a relic, people would be tempted to worship the text itself instead of the God it points to. Thus, the existence of these errors and the reliance on a multitude of imperfect manuscripts might be seen as a way to direct worship towards God. It is also implied that the errors force believers to study and think critically about scripture rather than blindly accepting a singular interpretation. This implies the very act of wrestling with the text in its imperfect form may be part of God's design.