

## RULES JEWISH SCRIBES USED ON OT

*“We have preserved the Book, and the Book has preserved us.”*

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

*Excerpt from Apples of Gold*

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

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An old rabbinical treatise called *Sopherim* ("Scribes") is a detailed how-to-book that lists the many rules the Jewish scribes (Bible copyists) had to painstakingly follow.

For example, they had to use a special mixture of black ink. The transcription had to be done on the parchment made from a clean animal. The exact number of words and letters on each line had to match the original.

Every word and letter was counted. Each column had to have no fewer than 48 and no more than 60 lines. Scribes were not allowed to copy from memory nor could they copy sentence for sentence or even word for word. Scripture had to be copied letter for letter.

The work was inspected by at least three senior specialist scribes. If there was one omission or if two letters touched, the entire script was rejected.

Other involved width and height; exact spaces between letters, words, and pages and between numbers of columns and lines to the column; and much more. The process was scrupulously strict. Such was the standard to maintain the integrity of the copied work.

The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), observed, “We have preserved the Book, and the Book has preserved us.”<sup>i</sup>

The New Testament was also meticulously copied following rigid rules. Thank God for Jewish scribes who preserved the Bible.

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<sup>i</sup> Joseph Baron ed., *A Treasury of Jewish Quotations* (New York, NY: Crown Pub., 1956), p. 29