

# THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

## I. THE FORM OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

- A. *Torah*: The Law
- B. *Nevi'im*: The Prophets
- C. *Ketuvim*: The Writings

## II. FORMATION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE CANON: A Process

- A. In the OT Period; The Torah (Law)
  - 1. Pre-exilic: Josiah's "book of the law" (2 Ki 22:8-11): found in Temple about 621 BC
  - 2. Post-exilic: Ezra (about 458 BC)
    - a. Reads "The book of the law of Moses" (Neh 8:1-8)
    - b. The Reading was translated (Neh 8:7-8, 12)
- B. In the NT: Law, Prophets, & Psalms (Luke 24:44)
  - 1. Psalms = Largest Book of Writings
  - 2. Probably Refers to Writings as a Whole
- C. Josephus: 22 books (equal to number of Hebrew letters)
  - 1. 5 Books of Moses
  - 2. 13 of the Prophets: 8 + Job, Est, Dan, Chron, Ez-Neh
  - 3. 4 of Hymns and Principles of Life: Ps, Pr, Ecc, S of S
- D. **Council of Jamnia (AD 90)** Discussed Status of some Books
  - 1. Confirmed certain books after debate
    - a. Ezekiel
    - b. Esther
    - c. Ecclesiastes
    - d. Proverbs
    - e. Song of Solomon
  - 2. Debated and rejected others
    - a. Ecclesiasticus
    - b. *gilyonim* (Aramaic Gospel-writings)
    - c. Other "books of the *minim* (heretics)"
  - 3. Did not change current practice or "decide;" essentially confirmed majority practice

### III. TRANSMISSION OF THE HEBREW OT TEXT

- A. No **autograph** (= original manuscript) is extant
- B. Earliest Hebrew manuscripts
  - 1. Early fragments
    - a. Silver roll containing priestly benediction
      - 1) 6th c. BC; Jerusalem
      - 2) Earliest Inscription with *Tetragrammaton* יהוה (YHWH)
    - b. Nash Papyrus: 1st c. BC; contains Decalogue
  - 2. Pre-1948, earliest substantial manuscripts = 10th c. AD (all Masoretic; see below)
    - a. Reverence for the scriptures led to ritual disposal
    - b. **Genizah**: storage for worn-out manuscripts
    - c. Some important manuscripts
      - 1) Petersburg Codex of Prophets, AD 916
      - 2) Leningrad Codex (entire OT), early 11th c.
      - 3) Aleppo Codex, Early 10th c. AD
      - 4) British Museum Pentateuch, 9th c. AD
      - 5) Codex Cairensis of the Prophets, 895 AD
- C. **The Dead Sea Scrolls**
  - 1. Most Apparently Library of Essene Community at Qumran
    - a. Left in Caves surrounding Qumran in AD 68
    - b. Contents
      - 1) Fragments of every OT book except Esther
      - 2) Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical books
      - 3) Sectarian Literature
  - 2. Other Manuscripts from Dead Sea Area: AD 135
    - a. Wadi Murabbaat
    - b. Nahal Hever Caves
  - 3. Importance
    - a. Biblical Texts 1000 yrs. older than Masoretic Text
    - b. OT Appears in 3 Text Families and Combinations
      - 1) Septuagint-type (Egyptian)
      - 2) Local Palestinian (Samaritan)
      - 3) Proto Masoretic
    - c. Discoveries from AD 135: only proto-Masoretic family
- D. Role of the scribes in transmission of the OT text
  - 1. Emphasis on understanding of the text
  - 2. Ezra (ca. 458 BC): The Archetypical Scribe, preserving and teaching (Neh 8)
- E. Standardization of Text: Brought on by Crises
  - 1. Exile and Return: Initial Canonization; Work of Ezra
  - 2. 3 textual Families Used in 1st Cent. Palestine
  - 3. First Jewish Revolt Against Rome, AD 66-70
    - a. After AD 70, Proto-Masoretic Text Became “official”
    - b. Standard Text Produced by Rabbi Akiba & Colleagues

- F. The Work of the **Masoretes**: The Crisis of the Diaspora
1. The Masoretes (*masorah* = “tradition”)
    - a. Jewish scholars dedicated to purity of the Text
    - b. Several groups from the 2nd-10th centuries AD
    - c. Peak activity: 7th-10th centuries AD
  2. Primary Concerns:
    - a. Standardization and preservation of Hebrew text
    - b. Faithful transmission of the text
    - c. Vocalization of the text: added vowel pointing
  3. Scribal functions
    - a. **Sopherim**: wrote consonantal text; Special problems:
      - 1) word division
      - 2) spelling: *plene* (complete; i.e., כִּשְׁרִי) vs. defective (i.e., כִּשְׁרִי)
      - 3) *Ketiv-Qere*
      - 4) suspended, large, or small letters
      - 5) *puncta extraordinaria* (“special points”): mark doubtful readings
    - b. **Nakdanim**: added vowel points and accents
    - c. **Masoretes**: marginal and final *Masora* (Masoretic notes)
  4. Ben Asher family of Tiberias became dominant
  5. Resulted in the **Masoretic Text**
- G. Printed Editions of the Masoretic Text
1. Jacob ben Chayyim (1524/25): based on 14th Cent. Manuscripts
  2. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, 3d ed.: based on Leningrad Codex
  3. Bible Society edition by Norman H. Snaith in 1958, based on manuscripts in the British Museum written in 1482
  4. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1978)
  5. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is working on an edition based on the Aleppo Codex

#### IV. THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

- A. Torah Only
1. Written in modified Paleo-Hebrew script
  2. Abisha Scroll: Claimed to be from OT period
- B. Some changes in text to indicate primacy of Mt. Gerizim
- C. Early witness to books of Torah (some DSS—based on Palestinian text)

#### V. THE TARGUMS

- A. Aramaic paraphrases of OT books
1. For Aramaic speaking congregations
  2. Originally oral; some written by 1st cent. AD
  3. Official written versions after AD 100
    - a. Targum Onqelos of Torah
    - b. Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel of the Prophets
- B. Importance
1. Provide witnesses to OT older than most OT texts
  2. Enlighten some NT uses of the OT

**VI. THE SEPTUAGINT (LXX)**

**A. Greek Translation of Hebrew OT**

1. For Greek speaking (Hellenistic) Jews of Egypt (Alexandria)
2. Translated in 3rd thru 1st centuries BC

**B. Legends Concerning Origin of LXX**

1. Letter of Aristeas (late 2d c. BC; purports to be older)
  - a. Claims Work Done Under Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 BC)
  - b. Torah Translated by 72 scholars (6 from each tribe) in 72 Days (hence LXX)
2. Philo (*Life of Moses* 2.57): isolated translators produced identical texts of Torah
3. Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.3): Torah only
4. Later Christian traditions expanded legend to include whole Hebrew Bible

**C. Use of LXX**

1. **Became the Bible of Early Christians**
  - a. Source for most NT quotations of OT
  - b. Some wordings favor Christian interpretation
    - 1) Amos 9:11-12 in James' speech (Acts 15:16-18)
    - 2) Isa 7:14: "young woman" = "virgin"
  - c. Septugint order of books is basis for Christian order of OT books
2. **Ultimately Rejected by Jews**
  - a. Christian Usage
  - b. Did not Conform to Standard Text After AD 100

**D. Other Jewish Greek Versions**

- 1.. **Aquila** (α; early 2nd c.)
2. **Theodotion** (θ; late 2nd c.)
  - a. A proselyte to Judaism; produced another version
  - b. Theodotion's Daniel adopted by Christians, placed in LXX
3. **Symmachus** (σ; probably mid-3<sup>rd</sup> cent)

**E. Origen's Hexapla** (c. 230-245): OT text in 6 columns:

Hebrew Text	Greek Translit. of Hebrew	Aquila	Symmachus	Revision of LXX	Theodotion
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**F. Textual importance of LXX**

1. Witness to text family 1000 yrs older than Masoretic MSS
2. Provides better readings or missing material in some passages
  - a. Gen 4:8: Cain Said to Abel . . .
  - b. 1 Sam 14:41: Give Thummin
  - c. 1 Ki 8:12f

**G. Textual witnesses**

1. **Christian: all complete LXX MSS are Christian**
  - a. Codex Sinaiticus (S)
  - b. Codex Vaticanus (B)
  - c. Codex Alexandrinus (A)
2. **Jewish: A Few Fragmentary MSS**
  - a. P.Ryl 458: 2<sup>nd</sup> cent BC frag of Deuteronomy in John Rylands Library
  - b. P.Fouad 266: 2<sup>nd</sup> cent BC frag of Deuteronomy in Cairo
  - c. Some fragments from Qumran Cave 4: Exod, Lev, Num; plus 7QLXXEpJer
  - d. 8 HevXIIgr: fragmentary Minor Prophets scroll from Nahal Hever