

## Manuscript Evidence – Week 2

### Moses and the Jew - The Development of the Hebrew Old Testament

- 1) The Jew and Scripture
  - a) Commitment of the Scripture
    - i) The Jew
      - (1) *1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God Romans 3:1-2*
      - (2) The Jew has a special place in relationship to the Bible.
      - (3) COMMITTED, participle passive Delivered in trust; given in charge; deposited; imprisoned; done; perpetrated; engaged; exposed; referred to a committee. – Webster's 1828.
      - (4) The Jew was delivered the trust to take care of the scriptures.
      - (5) They were given a charge to continue the scriptures throughout time.
      - (6) They were responsible for penning the Words of God and giving them to men.
      - (7) 64 of the 66 books of the Bible were written by Jews (The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, written by Luke, being the exception).
      - (8) Much like God talked to Moses and Moses to the Jew, God talked to the Jew and then to us through his Word.
    - ii) The Levite
      - (1) In particular, the Levite was the one entrusted with being the custodian of the scriptures
        - (a) For the **priest's** lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. Malachi 2:7
        - (b) That Moses commanded the **Levites**, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. Deuteronomy 31:25-26
        - (c) And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the **Levites**: Deuteronomy 17:18
      - (2) It is important to note that it was not all the tribes of Israel that were responsible for the custody and preservation of the scripture but rather the Levite.
    - iii) Inspiration and Original Language
      - (1) The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years by forty different authors.
      - (2) It was written in at least two languages (Hebrew-OT and Greek-NT).
      - (3) Yet every prophecy in the Bible lines up with these forty different authors.
      - (4) The process by which these forty authors were given the Bible is what we call inspiration.
      - (5) Inspiration - "The infusion of ideas into the mind by the Holy Spirit; the conveying into the minds of men, ideas, notices or monitions by extraordinary or supernatural influence; or the communication of the divine will to the understanding by suggestions or impressions on the mind, which leave no room to doubt the reality of their supernatural origin. – 1828 Dictionary.

b) Preservation of the Scripture

i) The Person of Preservation

- (1) In addition to inspiration, the Jew was also responsible for preserving the Word of God.
- (2) *The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. Psalms 12:6-7*
- (3) The Jew was responsible for ensuring that the scriptures were preserved or kept pure throughout their existence.
- (4) Just as much as inspiration is a supernatural act by God, so is preservation.
- (5) GOD WANTS A PURE WORD OF GOD. Not something that just contains, is a reliable translation, etc.

ii) The Circumstances of Preservation

- (1) *And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. Nehemiah 8:1*
- (2) We see that the scribes were the ones responsible for keeping the book of the law in the Old Testament.
- (3) If they had not been faithful at preserving the Word of God, even through the captivity in Babylon, Ezra would not been able to have them bring it to him.

iii) The Copy of Preservation

- (1) *And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a **copy** of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: Deuteronomy 17:18*
- (2) God commanded the Kings of Israel to make a copy of the law for their own personal use.
- (3) It was the scribe that was responsible for this task of making pure copies of the Bible.
- (4) Because the printing press did not exist, it was the job of the scribe to make copies using papyrus and ink to make scrolls or codexes (bound books).
- (5) By the time of Jesus, the scribe had usurped their authority and began to interject their opinion into the Word of God, much like our Supreme Court has started to rewrite the laws.
- (6) A true scribe will not interject his opinion into the preservation process but will make faithful copies of the original.

iv) The Place of Preservation

- (1) And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, <sup>25</sup> That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, <sup>26</sup> Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. Deuteronomy 31:24-26
- (2) We see here that after Moses made the original of the Pentateuch, he was commanded by God to store in the side of the ark.
- (3) The ark is kept in the temple.
- (4) In principle, if the location of the Bible was the temple, in modern day we can assume the local church is the place of responsibility.

- (5) The local church today is responsible for publishing and keeping the Word of God.
- (6) Though we have publishing houses that print Bibles today, it is best if you can get a Bible from a church ministry such as Bearing Precious Seed or Local Church Bible Publishers in Lansing, MI.

## 2) Masoretic Text

### a) History

- i) Reference – Wikipedia – Masoretic Text - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic\\_Text](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text)
- ii) The Masoretic Text is the authoritative and accepted text of the 39 books of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible.
- iii) The Hebrew Bible is referred to as the Tanakh in Rabbinic Judaism.
- iv) The Masoretic Text included the precise letter-text with vocalization and accentuation, known as the masora.
- v) The Masoretes were a group of Jews that copied, edited and distributed the Hebrew scriptures between 600-900 AD.
- vi) The Masoretic Text is the text that the AV1611 is based on.
- vii) The Masoretic text can trace its origins back as far as text from Masada from the second century BC.

### b) Origin and Transmission

- i) The oldest fragments of the Masoretic Text date from the 9<sup>th</sup> century.
- ii) The oldest known complete copy of the Masoretic Text is the Leningrad Codex from the 1000-1100 AD.
- iii) The Leningrad Codex is stored in a library in St. Petersburg, Russia today (it is also available online digitally as the Westminster Leningrad Codex).
- iv) The Aleppo Codex dates from the 10<sup>th</sup> century but has been missing since the 1947 Civil war in Palestine.
- v) The Talmud and Karaite manuscripts state that a standard copy of the Hebrew Bible was kept in the court of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- vi) This copy was used by copiers (i.e. scribes) to make copies of the Bible.

### c) Rabbinic Period

- i) The Pharisees of Jesus' time placed emphasis on keeping the text of the Bible pure, including emphasis on minute details of words and spellings.
- ii) Rabbi Akiva (died 135 AD) was among the most stringent of the Pharisees that tried to keep the text pure.
- iii) Very few manuscripts survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
  - (1) This indirectly helped to reduce the number of variants in circulation.
  - (2) This also gave urgency that the text must be preserved.
  - (3) Few texts survived from this time except for a short portion of Leviticus
- iv) Greek texts were also made during this time.
  - (1) Aquila of Sinope and Theodotion (130 AD) made a Greek text that deviated only slightly from the Masoretic Text.
    - (a) This was the first true Greek translation into Hebrew.
    - (b) This happened well after the time of Christ and during early church history.
  - (2) The Septuagint was another Greek text of this time.
    - (a) In reality, this is Vaticanus which arrived around 300 AD, much later than claimed.

- (b) More to follow on this later.
- d) The Age of the Masoretes
  - i) The Masoretes were schools of scribes and Torah scholars working between the 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.
  - ii) They were based in the cities of Tiberias, Jerusalem, and Babylonia
  - iii) “According to Menachem Cohen, these schools developed such prestige for the accuracy and error-control of their copying techniques that their texts established an authority beyond all others.” – Wikipedia
  - iv) Every locality had its own Codex from which it copied
  - v) **Codex** - a manuscript book especially of Scripture, classics, or ancient annals. – Meriam Webster
  - vi) In terms of manuscript evidence, a codex is typically a complete copy of the text, not just a fragment or a single book of the Bible.
  - vii) Because of a lack of printing technology, such as the printing press developed by Johannes Gutenberg in 1436, copying was a long, tedious process that was error prone.
  - viii) Because of this, the Masoretes developed copying processes and techniques to reduce or eliminate errors.
- e) Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali
  - i) These were the two leading Masoretes toward the end of the Masorite period (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Century)
  - ii) They brought to a close the final version of the Masoretic Text
  - iii) Their differences between the two Codex’s of Asher and Naphtali were reconciled and the final copy was made.
  - iv) The Aleppo Codex of Ben Asher was the one that was preserved and passed down through time.
  - v) The Leningrad Codex was likely a copy of the Aleppo Codex.
- f) The Text
  - i) The Masoretic Text had unique features and additional material in their copies.
  - ii) This was different than a ritual Sefer Torah scroll of the time of gospels which only contained the actual text.
  - iii) The masorah had pronunciation marks.
  - iv) The masorah also used what is known as cantillation, including notes in the margin about variants. This helped to protect the scribe from making errors.
  - v) What is referred to as the “Large Masorah” would have notes, similar to what we would have today in a Scofield or Oxford Bible, as well as a concordance.
  - vi) The Small Masorah would have just brief notes in the margins.
- g) Numerical Masorah
  - i) Scribes were paid by the number of stichs or lines of verse in classical antiquity.
  - ii) Because the Bible was not organized this way, the copyists needed to count the number of letters to estimate payment.
  - iii) As a result, a Numerical Masorah was developed that helped to estimate the cost of copying.
  - iv) This also helped to improve accuracy by how they placed notes in the margin.
  - v) Word usage, or the number of times a word was used, was tracked in the margins.

- vi) This set of statistics of tracking word count and usages was referred to as the Masorah parva and the Masorah magna
- h) Fixing of the Text
  - i) Scribal Emendations
    - (1) It is possible that Ezra and Nehemiah, or other combinations of the Men of the Great Synagogue made emendations (the process of making a revision or correction to a text) to the scripture.
    - (2) They potentially removed unseemly expressions used in reference to God (ex. “to bless” for “to curse”).
    - (3) Safeguarding of the Tetragrammaton (ex. - substitution of “Elohim” or “Adonai” for “YHWH”).
    - (4) Removal of application of the names of pagan gods (ex. - “Ishaal” to “Ish-bosheth”).
  - ii) Mikra and ittur (vowel changes, cancellation in a few passages of the “vav”,
  - iii) Suspended letters and dotted words (to help clarify names out of reverence for Moses – ex. Moses grandson turned from Mosheh to Menasheh (Manasseh)
  - iv) Inverted Letters (the letter nun is turned upside down in nine passages and is referred to as an inverted nun)
- i) Final History
  - i) Overall, the history of the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible, as we know it today, can be traced to three time periods
    - (1) The Creative Period
      - (a) The time of Moses until the Malachi, roughly a period of 1000 years.
      - (b) This spanned from 1400 BC until 400 BC
    - (2) The Reproductive Period
      - (a) This began shortly after the beginning of the creative period and continued up until after the time of the printing press.
      - (b) This spanned from 1400 BC until 1525 AD or roughly 2900 years.
      - (c) During this time, reproduction was accomplished by a class of scribes.
    - (3) The Critical Period
      - (a) With the development of the printing press, the skills of the scribe were transitioned to typesetting a printing press.
      - (b) Translations into multiple languages began around this time as well.
      - (c) In 1525, textual criticism of the Masoretic Text began.
      - (d) With the addition of other manuscripts being found, that did not line up with the Masoretic Text, criticism and questioning of this text began.
      - (e) This period was right before the King James Bible was developed so it had an influence.
    - (4) Jacob ben Hayyim ibn Adonijah
      - (a) He collected a vast number of manuscripts and systematized them.
      - (b) He created what became known as the second Bomberg edition of the Masorah, that was printed by Daniel Bomberg.
      - (c) This Bomberg edition was widely distributed and became the textus receptus (received text) of the Masorah
      - (d) This version of the Masorah was also used to translate the King James Version.

### 3) Dead Sea Scrolls

#### a) History

- i) Reference – Wikipedia – Dead Sea Scrolls - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead\\_Sea\\_Scrolls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls)
- ii) The Dead Sea Scrolls date back to the 3rd century BC to 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.
- iii) They were found in a cave near Qumran, near the West Bank in Israel.
- iv) Many of these scrolls differ significantly from the Masoretic Text.
- v) These are some of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the Old Testament.
- vi) Discovered in 1946/47.

#### b) Manuscripts

- i) Includes fragments and entire books of the Bible
- ii) Also includes non-canonical books of the Bible, such as books that are part of the Apocrypha.
- iii) Many of these non-canonical books discussed the diversity of religious thought in the late Second Temple period.
- iv) 40% of texts are Hebrew Scriptures
- v) 30% are texts from the Second Temple Period.
- vi) 30% are sectarian manuscripts that shed light on a particular sect within Judaism at the time.

#### c) Effect on Textual Criticism

- i) These texts are used today to correct the Masoretic Text and the KJV.
- ii) The Bible texts found here are also used by Catholics to support the Apocryphal books of the Bible.
- iii) We see that just because a text is old, it does not make a better.
- iv) Often text that were used by real Christians wore out and were copied and recopied from a master as was the case for the Masoretic Text.
- v) Here we have an early 1<sup>st</sup> Century cult, likely an off shoot of Jewish Christians that were stuck on the law.

### 4) Septuagint (The LXX)

#### a) Reference

- i) Reference – Manuscript Evidence – Dr. Peter S. Ruckman

#### b) The Myth of the Septuagint

- (1) There was a complete translation of the Old Testament into Greek that existed before the time of Christ.
- (2) Ptolmey II Philadelphus, a Pharaoh of Alexandria, Egypt ordered that a Greek translation of the Old Testament be made around 250 BC, right before his death in 246 BC.
- (3) This translation was lead by Aristeas of the court of Ptolmey II.
- (4) There were 6 elders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel for a total of 72.
- (5) This translation was referred to as the LXX (70 in Greek numerals) or Septuagint because of the 72 translators.
- (6) This translation contained the 6 Apocryphal books of the Catholic Bible.
- (7) The history of this translation is based on one writing called the “The Letter of Aristeas”.
- (8) Since this translation was around 250 years before Christ, Jesus used this translation.
- (9) Since this translation was used by Jesus and contained the Apocrypha, Jesus and the Apostles approved of the Apocrypha.

(10) Since this translation is used by Jesus, then it should be relied on for modern Bible translation.

c) The Truth of the Septuagint

- i) No Greek scholar has ever produced a Greek copy of the Old Testament, that claims lineage to the LXX, was written before 300 AD based on manuscript evidence.
- ii) The Greek Bible Vaticanus is the manuscript that claims to come from this translation.
- iii) Vaticanus, which we will study later, has its origins in the Roman Catholic Church and Pope Vaticanus.
- iv) The support for the Septuagint is based on these manuscripts that were written 500-600 years after the translation was said to occur.
- v) It was the Levite that was responsible for custody of the scripture, not the 12 tribes as the translators of the LXX claim.
- vi) There is no way that the 12 tribes of Israel, or their genealogy was known in 250 BC. This genealogy was lost during the times of splitting of the nation.
- vii) The manuscripts that claim to be from the Septuagint line up with the fourth to ninth century manuscripts of Origen and Eusebius.
- viii) The purpose of inventing the LXX is to try and support the Alexandrian/Catholic line of false Bibles and try and show it is older than it seems.
- ix) In reality, the writers of the LXX or its derivatives, had access to the New Testament and were attempting to make it match up with the corrupt Alexandrian Bibles.
- x) The reality is that Greek philosophy was creeping into the Bible over time with Origen, Philo and Eusebius and hence we end up with the Roman Catholic Church and a Bible to go along with it.
- xi) If the scholars that claim the manuscripts that represent the LXX are 500 years older and represent the original, shouldn't the same scholars accept that the Textus Receptus of Erasmus (1516) represent the original text of the Greek NT.

d) The Purpose of the Septuagint

- i) The purpose of the Septuagint is so that the modern scholar has a way to say something is older than the Masoretic text and hence has to be more reliable.
- ii) The Jew and the Levite took their job serious and preserved the Masoretic Text well.
- iii) The only option left to the textual critic was to create a whole new Bible, in a different language, and use that as their authority.
- iv) They had to come up with the story of the LXX being created before Christ and being endorsed by Jesus and the Apostles to give it credibility
- v) This is the only way to overcome the Masoretic Text in the mind of textual scholar.

5) Conclusions

- a) The Jew and the Levite are the ones given the responsibility of preservation of the Old Testament.
- b) The Jew and the Levite did a very good job of carefully maintaining these scriptures, despite folks trying to sabotage them.
- c) The Masoretic Text of the Bomberg edition is the accepted "Textus Receptus" and was used by the King James translators for the Old Testament
- d) Modern scholarship attacks the Masoretic Text indirectly by trying to create a Greek Old Testament (the LXX) that predates Christ and then claim it was used by Jesus.