

# Lecture 3: Text of the Old Testament

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/kiwl4elfgkufm6b5eqbld/Video-Lecture-3-Text-of-the-Old-Testament.mp4?rlkey=rmic5co5rwp5o82i19zjkkv2f&dl=0>

## Text of the Old Testament

### Language of the Old Testament

- Biblical Hebrew Language
  - The Hebrew Bible is the result of a multiple-century process of editing, collecting, copying, translating texts
  - Old Testament books are mostly in Hebrew (some small parts in Aramaic)
  - Hebrew and Aramaic are in the NW group of Semitic languages
  - Exodus 15 (Moses' song) is considered one of the oldest passages, going back to the time of Moses
  - Older texts of OT (e.g. Exodus 15) are written and copied in Paleo-Hebrew script which is later replaced by Aramaic [Square] Script
  - For centuries, Hebrew Scripture was transmitted only consonantically
    - DBR could be DABAR (word) or DEBER (plague)
  - Vowels were inserted by Masoretes (Jewish Scholars ca. 6th Century AD)

There are no autographs (original texts). Only later copies.

### Hebrew Text

- Pre-Masoretic Texts (Dead Sea Scrolls)
  - 2nd Century BC - 70 AD
  - Complete Scroll of Isaiah (1QIsa) - supports the Masoretic Text with some variations; dates back to 100 BC
  - The Habakkuk Commentary (1QpHab) - commentary on Habakkuk 1-2; dates back to 40 BC
- Masoretic Text (MT)
  - One of the most important textual witnesses
  - Codex Aleppo (10th Century AD) is the oldest Masoretic manuscript; only has 60% of the Old Testament
  - Codex Leningradiensis (1008 AD); oldest complete Masoretic Text

- Second Rabbinic Bible of Jacob ben Chayyim (1525 AD): first printed edition of the MT
- Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) (1967-1977): critical edition of the Masoretic Text, based on Codex Leningradiensis

## The Greek Text

- Septuagint (LXX)
  - Oldest large-scale translation of a Semitic corpus of sacred texts into an Indo-European language
  - First written translation of the Jewish Bible
  - The appropriation of the Septuagint was done gradually, along with the proclamation of the gospel outside of Palestine and the outnumbering of Jews by Gentiles in the apostolic Church. It was not the Scripture that Jesus and His immediate disciples were using in their daily life
  - Septuagint comes from Latin Septuaginta meaning "seventy" - "translation by the seventy men"
  - Letter of Aristeas
    - Oldest source of information on the making of the Septuagint (Late 2nd Century BC); Preserved by Josephus
    - Demetrius Phalereus, director of the Library at Alexandria, informed King Ptolemy II Philadelphus that the Jewish Law (Torah/Pentateuch) was worthy of a place in the library. A delegation (including Aristeas) was sent to the high priest Eleazer in Jerusalem with the request that he provide learned people for the translation of the Torah. Eleazer sends 72 people to Alexandria, and they were brought to the island of Pharos where they translated the Law to Greek in 72 days. The complete translation was read to the Jewish people in Alexandria and they loved it. The King ordered production of the translation and the translators were sent back to Jerusalem with gifts
    - Philo of Alexandria added some embellishments to the letter (e.g. that the Jewish translators, working separately, managed to come up with exactly the same literal rendition by divine dictation)
    - Babylonian Talmud compares the 70 translators with the 70 elders who accompany Moses to Mt Sinai who shared with Moses the same "spirit of prophecy"
  - Purpose
    - Practical Purpose: most Jews in Alexandria no longer spoke Hebrew
      - Similar reason the Aramaic translations (targumim) were done in Palestine
    - Academic Purpose: for use by Jewish students and scholars
  - "The" Septuagint is a misnomer. LXX as a Greek translation of the entire OT was done by many translators over 200 years. Only the Torah was rendered by the seventy.
  - The idea that the Septuagint itself was inspired has its origins in Christian sources. Gentile Christians had to rely only on the Greek Version of the Scripture

- In the Church Fathers view, the Septuagint was a "praeparatio evangelica" - an act by God to prepare Gentiles to receive Jesus as the Lord.
  - Justin Martyr was the first one to call "Septuagint" the Greek translation of the entire Jewish Bible
  - Justin Martyr claims he saw the cells where the translators worked separately
  - Augustine writes that the same Spirit who was present in the prophets "was also in the 70 men."
  - Irenaeus says the Septuagint preserved the messianic prophecies much better than other versions
- Use of LXX in the New Testament
  - Closest quotations in John, Luke & Acts, and the Catholic Epistles
  - Commonly accepted that Matthew and Paul quoted extensively from the proto-Theodotion (1st Century. BC) and other revisions of LXX
- Manuscripts
  - Codex Vaticanus (4th Century AD)
  - Codex Sinaiticus (4th Century AD)
  - Codex Alexandrinus (5th Century AD)
- Printed Editions:
  - A. Rahlph's (1935)
  - Gottingen Septuagint (Septuaginta)
- Later Greek Translations
  - The extensive use of Septuagint by Christians to support messianic claims, determined for the Jews to discard it and produce new translations for the synagogue
  - Aquila (ca. 130 AD): a literal rendition
  - Symmachus (ca. 170 AD): literal translation while showing a good control of Greek idioms
  - Theodotion (ca. end of 2nd Century AD): revision of an older Greek Translation (i.e. proto-Theodotion which is LXX) in parallel with Hebrew Text
    - Theodotion version of the Book of Daniel is important because it supplanted that of the LXX in almost all manuscripts

## Other Textual Witnesses

See book *"The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition"*

- Peshitta (Syriac)
- Vulgate (Latin)
- Targumim (Aramaic)

## Origen's Hexapla

See book *"The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition"*

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