

## **Bibliology: How we got the Bible**

*ATCO Wednesdays Teaching Series 8/27/25*

### **Lesson Three**

#### **COPYING THE OLD TESTAMENT**

- **Manuscripts** – The copies of the original Old Testament documents
  - There are many manuscripts to translate a Bible from
  - There are differences between the manuscripts
  - Some Bibles note the big differences
  - The earlier the better for a manuscript's reliability
- **Textual Criticism** – a discipline that seeks to recover the original wording of an ancient book by examining the remaining ancient copies of that book.
  - Helps confirm accuracy
  - Our “first-hand evidence” for the OT comes from the Hebrew manuscripts and ancient translations (Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic languages)
- **Witnesses** – Hebrew manuscripts and ancient translations of the OT
  - The material evidence we have for the original text of the Bible
  - Courtroom term – a witness gives a testimony about something
- **Hebrew Manuscripts – Three basic periods:**
  - 1. The Masoretic Period**
    - 9<sup>th</sup> century AD – Middle Ages
    - Masoretic Text

## 2. The “Silent” Silent Period

- 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
- Proto-MT

## 3. The Earliest Period

- 250 BC – 130 AD
- Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)

### • Ancient Versions

#### 1. Greek

- Earliest and most used – “Septuagint” or “LXX” (Abbreviated from “The Seventy”)

#### 2. Latin

- Jerome’s Latin Vulgate – translation of the Hebrew OT into Latin

#### 3. Syriac

- *Peshitta* – the “common” translation of the Hebrew Bible

#### 4. Aramaic – Targums

### • Three Kinds of Copying:

1. **Conservative** – The scribe copied the manuscript in front of him strictly, letter by letter
2. **Free** – The scribe updated the text’s spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, and even adapted it according to the community’s interpretations and needs
3. **Careless** – contains simple, accidental mistakes that all scribes make

## Summary of Witnesses to the Old Testament text

Witness	Date	Description and Significance
Masoretic Text	"9th c. AD—end of Middle Ages"	"Hebrew textual tradition that functions as base for English translations"
Dead Sea Scrolls	"250 BC—AD 130"	"Earliest, mostly fragmentary evidence to the Hebrew text; manuscripts represent different copying approaches and Hebrew texts"
Samaritan Pentateuch	2nd c. BC	"Samaritan version of the Pentateuch"
Septuagint	280-100 BC	"Greek translations of Hebrew; spectrum of literal and dynamic translation approaches; attests to the proto-MT and other Hebrew texts"
Theodotion	"40 BC—AD 40?"	"Jewish Greek reviser of Septuagint; mostly literal translation approach; almost exclusively attests to the proto-MT"
Aquila	AD 130	"Jewish Greek reviser of Septuagint; ultraliteral translation approach; almost exclusively attests to the proto-MT"
Symmachus	AD 200	"Jewish Greek reviser of Septuagint; dynamic translation approach; almost exclusively attests to the proto-MT"
Hexapla	After AD 235	"Origen's six-columned Old Testament that included Hebrew, the Hebrew in Greek letters, Aquila, Symmachus, Septuagint, and Theodotion. Fragmentary remains of the

		Hexapla are the main way to access “the Three” today”
Vulgate	AD 400	“Jerome’s fresh Latin translation of Hebrew; dynamic translation approach; almost exclusively attests to the proto-MT”
Peshitta	AD 150 – 200	“Jewish-Christian Syriac translation of Hebrew; dynamic translation approach; almost exclusively attests to the proto-MT”
Targums	Late 2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple (70 AD) through early Middle Ages	“Jewish Aramaic translations of Hebrew; translation approaches on spectrum from dynamic to literal; almost exclusively attests to the proto-MT”

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