

# The Ancient Texts of the Old Testament

## Topics


## Charts, Maps and Doctrines

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**Preface:** God's Word is for all people; therefore, we should expect to find it in many languages. According to the United Bible Society, the Bible or books of the Bible had been translated into 2355 languages, which *represent the primary vehicle of communication for well over 90% of the world's population.*<sup>1</sup> However, this is not a new phenomena; the Bible can be found in a number of ancient languages as well. That will be the focus of our study.

We will focus on the Old Testament in this study; however, some of the Bibles mentioned will contain both the Old and New Testaments.

## Hebrew

1. The *Autographs*
  - a. The original manuscripts for the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, for the most part (the exceptions being, Esther, parts of Daniel).
  - b. Scripture actually records the writing of one of the earliest autographs in Deut. 31:9, 24.
  - c. From the very beginning, copies were made of extant Scripture, although we do not know all of the specifics. However, we do know some specific instances (which will be mentioned under *earliest copies* below).
  - d. An *autograph* is any manuscript which is identical to the original. So, theoretically, it is possible to have an autograph produced in the year 2000. However, in reality, there are no extant autographs today.
2. Earliest copies of Scripture:
  - a. Although Scripture had no doubt been written and copied previously (for the books of Genesis and Job), Moses is the first person recorded writing Scripture: **So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah, and to all the elders of Israel (Deut. 31:9). And it came to pass, when Moses had completely finished writing the words of this Law in a book, he commanded the Levites who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah, saying, "Take this book of the Law and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah your God, that it will stand as a witness against you (Deut. 31:24–26).**
  - b. Joshua also recorded the words of Scripture, which would have been the very end of the book of Deuteronomy, as well as most of the book of Joshua. **And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the Law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak by the sanctuary of Jehovah (Joshua 24:26).**

<sup>1</sup> Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; ©1999 by Josh McDowell; p. 8. The figures given are up to the end of the year 2003. One can find the latest figures by navigating from [www.biblesociety.org](http://www.biblesociety.org) and as of this writing, the specific address is <http://www.biblesociety.org/latestnews/latest273-sl2003stats.html>.

- c. All the kings of Israel were to make copies of the Law themselves to study. Deut. 17:18–20: *And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write a copy of this Law in a book from before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this Law, and these statutes, to do them, so that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he does not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he may make his days longer in his kingdom, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel.*
  - d. One of the earliest Bibles, so to speak, were some very large rocks, upon which, the Law of Moses was inscribed (Deut. 27:2–3 Joshua 8:30–32).
  - e. King Josiah, upon hearing the Law read to him (at a time when the book of the Law had been missing) tore his own clothes (2Kings 22:8–11). The end result was, there had been no king like Josiah for that time period, and none followed him with the same kind of dedication (2Kings 23:21–25).
  - f. That kings and others had access to the Law is mentioned in 1Kings 2:3 2Kings 10:31 2Chron. 30 31:3 Ezra 7:6, 12.
  - g. Others had access to copies of the Law as well (Ezra 3:2 7:14 Neh. 8:8–9, 18 9:3 10:34–36 Daniel 6:5 9:11–13).
  - h. There was apparently a division of priests who were also scribes—that is, it was their life’s work to copy and preserve Scripture (Ezra 7:6, 12, 21).
3. The Talmudic Period (300 B.C.–500 A.D.):
- a. According to Geisler and Nix, we have a *great flood of copies of the Scriptures dating from the Talmudic period*, which manuscripts were used in the synagogues and for private study.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. We have the synagogue rolls, which were regarded as *sacred copies* and were used for the reading of Scripture in the synagogues.
  - c. We have personal copies of various books of the Old Testament, which sometimes also included notes in the margin as well as commentary. These were copied with great care and the type of parchment used as well as other specifics were often the choice of the owner of the scroll.
  - d. The materials used were skins, papyrus rolls, vellum, parchment, recycled parchment, and possibly even paper.<sup>3</sup>
  - e. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the only pre-Christian era manuscripts are the Nash Papyrus, which contains only the Ten Commandments and Deut. 6:4–9. They date to roughly 150 B.C.–100 A.D.
  - f. The oldest extant manuscript (a fragment) is 4QSam<sup>b</sup>, from Cave IV in Qumran, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Speaking of the Dead Sea Scrolls, they are apparently in Hebrew and Greek, as well as other ancient languages.
4. Masoretic Period (500–1000 A.D.):
- a. During this time period, there was a *complete review of established rules, a deep reverence for the Scriptures, and a systematic renovation of transmission techniques*.<sup>4</sup> There were groups of Masorites in at least two different cities: Tiberias, Palestine and
  - b. Manuscripts from this time period:
    - i. The Cairo Codex (895 A.D.): is the oldest known Masoretic manuscript of the prophets.
    - ii. The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (916 A.D.): contains only the latter prophets.
    - iii. The Aleppo Codex (930 A.D.): once contain the entire Old Testament but was damaged in a fire in a synagogue in Aleppo in 1948.
    - iv. The Leningrad Codex (1008 A.D.): is the only complete manuscript from the Masoretic of the Old Testament extant today.
    - v. There are several other manuscripts, including the Cairo Geniza fragments (6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.), which are incomplete and scattered about in several collections.
  - c. There are several reasons why our Hebrew manuscripts do not date back further than this:
    - i. The medium of these ancient manuscripts was quite corruptible.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> See Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, pp. 242–243 for more details.

<sup>4</sup> Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 247.

- ii. At the time of the Babylonian captivity, the Jews lost the Land of Promise and many of them lived in other countries. This made preservation of Scripture particularly difficult, as the scribes and priests, at one time, would be gathered around the Temple of God. They went for centuries where those who ruled over them were not particularly well-disposed toward Scripture.
  - iii. For the most part, many of these manuscripts were intentionally destroyed. Manuscripts were replaced when they fell into disrepair; once a new manuscript was hand-produced, the older manuscript was destroyed. Flawed manuscripts were also destroyed.
  - iv. It is suggested that the Masorites standardized the text and the vowel pointing around the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, and manuscripts which deviated from this were destroyed.
- d. Interestingly enough, even since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there has been very little by way of substantial changes made to the text of English translations. There is simply little or no justification for making many changes, even though we now have thousands of manuscript fragments which pre-date the MT. In other words, the accuracy of the Masoretic text is excellent, despite the fact that it is barely a millennium old.
- i. The scribes almost had a superstitious reverence for Scripture, so that everything was done in order to preserve the integrity of the copies. This attitude even pre-dates the Masorite scribes.
  - ii. Manuscripts produced in different areas have been compared and few significant differences have ever been discovered (variants are often in spelling, but rarely do we find more serious deviations).
  - iii. If you have examined any chapter of Scripture with me, when the variety of Old Testament manuscripts and early translations are compared, rarely do we come across any significant differences; and the few times that we do, these differences do not affect doctrine.
  - iv. There are some duplicate (or near duplicate) passages in Scripture—where they clearly came from the same source or one was the source for the other (e.g., Psalm 14 and 53; Isa. 36–39 and 2Kings 18–20; Isa. 2:2–4; Micah 4:1–3; Jer. 52 and 2Kings 25; and much of the material in Chronicles appears to be taken from Samuel or Kings). These passages often agree almost word-for-word, and tense for tense (compare my exegesis of 1Sam. 31 with 1Chron. 10—every difference between these accounts is fundamentally tied to the difference between the history of Samuel as versus the history of Chronicles).<sup>5</sup>

## Greek

5. Sometime in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C., the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek; this was done because (1) Jews spoke and understood Greek more than they did traditional Hebrew; and (2) the Bible is the Word of God; of course it is going to be translated into other languages. This translation is called the Septuagint, which is often abbreviated LXX, standing for 70, the number of translators who worked on this translation (we do not know for certain that there were exactly 70 translators nor do we know the exact time frame of the translation). However, this was taken from Hebrew manuscripts much older than the ones which we have access to today. Therefore, differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts can be significant. As we have found out in many years of study: there are few important differences.
6. The early church was composed of many who spoke Greek, but did not speak Hebrew; so the Septuagint was used as the Old Testament for the church during the first 3 centuries.
7. The Dead Sea Scrolls were manuscripts from this era (roughly), and what they do for us, more than anything else, is confirm the accuracy of the MT.
8. When we find discrepancies in the text, determining which text is correct is what *textual criticism* is all about.
9. Although the translation of the Old Testament into Greek varies greatly (the Torah is almost a word for word translation; whereas, the book of Samuel is a lot looser); the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown us that there are several important areas where the text of the Greek is probably more accurate than we have given it

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel and Kings is the history of Israel and then the divided kingdom from the view of man; Chronicles, written much later in time, is God's take on the matter.

credit for, and that it trumps the MT in several passages.<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that the LXX is a better source than the MT; however, there are several passages where it is likely the better text.

10. There is not just one Septuagint manuscript; just like the MT, there are several manuscripts (some of these will be both Old and New Testaments):
- The oldest witnesses to the LXX include 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. fragments of Leviticus and Deuteronomy and 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. fragments of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and the Minor Prophets. Relatively complete manuscripts of the LXX include the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and the Codex Alexandrinus of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. These are the oldest surviving nearly-complete manuscripts of the Old Testament in any language.<sup>7</sup>
  - The Codex Vaticanus is one of the oldest extant manuscripts of the Bible. It is slightly older than Codex Sinaiticus (see below), both of which were probably transcribed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It is written in Greek, on vellum, with uncial letters. Codex Vaticanus originally contained a complete copy of the Septuagint and the New Testament, but pages 1519-1536 containing Hebrews 9:14 through Revelation were lost and replaced by a 15<sup>th</sup> century minuscule supplement.<sup>8</sup>
  - Codex Sinaiticus is a complete, 4<sup>th</sup> century uncial manuscript of the New Testament, which also contains a great deal of the Septuagint. It was copied between 330-350, and is one of the most valuable manuscripts for Textual criticism of the Greek New Testament, as well as the Septuagint.<sup>9</sup>
  - Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus is an early 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek manuscript of the Bible. It receives its name, as a codex in which the treatises of Ephraem the Syrian, in Greek translations, were written over ("rescriptus") a former text that had been washed off its vellum pages, thus forming a palimpsest. The later text was produced in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The effacement of the original text was incomplete, fortunately, for beneath the text of Ephraem are the remains of what was once a complete Bible, containing both the Old Testament and the New. It forms one of the codices for textual criticism on which the Higher criticism is based.<sup>10</sup>
  - The Codex Alexandrinus is a 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript of the Greek Bible, containing most of the Septuagint and the New Testament. It is one of the earliest and most complete manuscripts of the Bible. It derives its name from the Alexandria where it is believed to have been made.<sup>11</sup>

## Aramaic/Syriac

11. *Aramaic is really a group of related languages, rather than a single monolithic language. The long history of Aramaic, its extensive literature and its use by different religious communities are all factors in the diversification of the language. Some Aramaic dialects are mutually intelligible, whereas others are not. Some Aramaic languages are known under different names; for example, **Syriac is particularly used to describe the Eastern Aramaic of Christian communities**. Most dialects can be described as either "Eastern" or "Western," the dividing line being roughly the Euphrates, or slightly west of it. It is also helpful to draw a distinction between those Aramaic languages that are modern living languages (often called Neo-Aramaic), those that are still in use as literary languages, and those that are extinct and are only of interest to scholars. Although there are some exceptions to this rule, this classification gives "Modern," "Middle" and "Old" periods, alongside "Eastern" and "Western" areas, to distinguish between the various languages and dialects that are Aramaic.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Geisler gives 6 examples on p. 262, of Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968; including a Psalm 151 which had somehow dropped out of the Masoretic text at some point in time.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint>.

<sup>8</sup> Take from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Vaticanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus).

<sup>9</sup> Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Sinaiticus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Sinaiticus).

<sup>10</sup> Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Ephraemi\\_Rescriptus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Ephraemi_Rescriptus).

<sup>11</sup> Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Alexandrinus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Alexandrinus).

<sup>12</sup> Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_language). This page is particularly excellent, by the way.

12. *Hebrew is the main language of the Hebrew Bible. Aramaic only accounts for a very small proportion of the whole. Biblical Aramaic is closely related to Hebrew (perhaps a bit like Spanish and Italian), and they are written with the same alphabet.*<sup>13</sup>
13. *During the eighth century B.C.E., Aramaic became the lingua franca of the Near East. Before that period, it had been the native language of the Aramaean city-states to the east. In 701 B.C.E., King Hezekiah of Judah negotiated with King Sennacherib of Assyria, as his army besieged Jerusalem. The account in 2 Kings 18:26 sets the meeting of the ambassadors of both camps just outside the city walls. Hezekiah's envoys pleaded that the Assyrians make terms in Aramaic so that the people listening could not understand. Thus, Aramaic had become the language of international dialogue, but not of the common people. In 586 B.C.E., King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and exiled many of the people of Judah to the east. Aramaic became the language of necessity for the exiles, and after the Persian Empire's capture of Babylon, it became the language of culture and learning. King Darius I declared that Aramaic was to be the official language of the western half of his empire in 500 B.C.E., and it is this Imperial Aramaic language that forms the basis of Biblical Aramaic.*<sup>14</sup>
14. Aramaic in Scripture:<sup>15</sup>
- Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26 - documents from the 4th century B.C.E. concerning the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem.
  - Daniel 2:4b-7:28 - five subversive tales and an apocalyptic vision.
  - Jeremiah 10:11 - a single sentence in the middle of a Hebrew text denouncing idolatry.
  - Genesis 31:47 - translation of a Hebrew place-name.
15. The history of Aramaic can be broken down into three broad periods:<sup>16</sup>
- Old Aramaic (1100 B.C.E.-200 CE): Old Aramaic covers over thirteen centuries of the language. This vast time span is chosen as it includes all Aramaic that is now effectively extinct. The main turning point for Old Aramaic is around 500 B.C.E., when the Ancient Aramaic (the language of Aramaeans) moves into Imperial Aramaic (the language of powerful empires). The various spoken dialects of Old Aramaic come to prominence when Greek replaces Aramaic as the language of power in the region. Old Aramaic includes:
    - The Biblical Aramaic of the Hebrew Bible.
    - The Aramaic of Jesus.
    - The Aramaic of the Targums. A targum (plural: targumim) is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) written or compiled in the Land of Israel or in Babylonia from the Second Temple period until the early Middle Ages (late first millennium). Two important liturgical targums are:
      - Targum Onkelos on the Torah (The Law). Targum Onkelos was read alternately with the Torah, verse by verse.
      - Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Nevi'im (The Prophets). Targum Jonathan was read alternately with the selection from Nevi'im (i.e. the Haftarah).
  - Middle Aramaic (200-1200), Middle Aramaic includes:
    - Literary Syriac.
    - The Aramaic of the Talmuds and Midrashim.
  - Modern Aramaic (1200-present), including:
    - Various modern vernaculars
16. *After the time of Nehemiah, during the fifth century B.C., the language of choice for the Jews was Aramaic. The Old Testament was translated into Aramaic around this time period, and then copied into the *square Aramaic script* around 200 B.C.*<sup>17</sup>
17. *The Peshitta is the traditional Bible of Syriac-speaking Christians (those who speak a dialect of Eastern Aramaic). Its 'Old Testament' has been shown to be based on rabbinic targumim.*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 244.

18. History of the Syriac Versions:<sup>18</sup>

- a. The various Syriac translations of the Bible are rooted in the Jewish translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic (Targums). They were brought by Jewish and Christian preachers into the Syriac heartland (Osrhoene and Adiabene) during the first two centuries of the Christian era. The Aramaic Targums clearly exerted an influence on later translation of both the Old and New Testaments.
- b. The earliest New Testament translation into Syriac was Tatian's Diatessaron ('one through four'). The Diatessaron, written about 165 AD, was a continuous harmony of the four gospels into a single narrative. It, rather than the four separate gospels, became the official Syriac Gospel for a time, and received a beautiful prose commentary by Ephrem the Syrian. However, the Syriac-speaking church was urged to follow the practice of other churches and use the four separate gospels. Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus on the Euphrates in upper Syria in 423, sought out and found more than two hundred copies of the Diatessaron, which he 'collected and put away, and introduced instead of them the Gospels of the four evangelists'.
- c. The early Syriac versions of both Old and New Testament with the four gospels, excluding the Diatessaron, is called the Old Syriac (Vetus Syra) version. The Old Syriac Old Testament was probably based extensively on the Aramaic Targums, but little evidence survives today. There are two manuscripts of the Old Syriac separate gospels (Syra Sinaiticus and Syra Curetonianus). These are clearly based on the Greek text, and the so-called 'Western' recension of it. The Syriac of these manuscripts shows some influence of West Aramaic, a related language. It is thought that the separate gospels circulated in a Christian Palestinian dialect of Aramaic during the period that the Diatessaron circulated in the Syriac community. These source gospels, if they existed at all, were translations from Greek. There is also evidence that translations of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles also existed in the Old Syriac version.
- d. The Peshitta is a reworking of Old Syriac material to form a unified version of the scriptures for the Syriac-speaking churches. The name of Rabbula, bishop of Edessa (d. 435) is popularly connected with the production of the Peshitta. However, it is unclear how involved he was, if at all. By the early fifth century, the Peshitta was the standard Bible of the Syriac-speaking churches. Even with centuries of schism and division, the Peshitta remains a single, uniting tradition. The English translation of this Bible is often called the *Lamsa Bible*, as George Lamsa was the editor (and translator?) of this Bible.

## Latin

19. *Latin is the language originally spoken in the region around Rome called Latium. It gained great importance as the formal language of the Roman Empire. All Romance languages are descended from Latin, and many words based on Latin are found in other modern languages such as English. It is said that 80 percent of scholarly English words are derived from Latin (in a large number of cases by way of French).*<sup>19</sup>

20. The Old Latin version:

- a. Vetus Latina is a collective name given to the Biblical texts in Latin that were translated before St Jerome's Vulgate bible became the standard Bible for Latin-speaking Western Christians. The phrase Vetus Latina is Latin for Old Latin, and the Vetus Latina is sometimes known as the Old Latin Bible. There is no single "Vetus Latina" Bible; there are, instead, a collection of Biblical manuscript texts that bear witness to Latin translations of Biblical passages that preceded Jerome's. The various Old Latin translations reflect the various versions of the Septuagint circulating, with the African manuscripts (such as the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae) preserving readings of the Western text-type, while readings in the European manuscripts are closer to the Byzantine text-type. Many grammatical idiosyncrasies come from the use of Vulgar Latin grammatical forms in the text.<sup>20</sup>

21. The Latin Vulgate:

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<sup>18</sup> Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshitta>.

<sup>19</sup> Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin>.

<sup>20</sup> Take from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vetus\\_Latina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vetus_Latina). A list of notable fragments can be found on this page.

- a. The Vulgate Bible is an early 5<sup>th</sup> century translation of the Bible into Latin made by St. Jerome on the orders of Pope Damasus I. It takes its name from the phrase *versio vulgata*, "the common (i.e., popular) version" (cf. *Vulgar Latin*), and was written in an everyday Latin used in conscious distinction to the elegant Ciceronian Latin of which Jerome was a master. The Vulgate was designed to be both more accurate and easier to understand than its predecessors. It was the first, and for many centuries the only, Christian Bible translation that translated the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew original rather than indirectly from the Greek Septuagint.<sup>21</sup>
- b. Manuscripts:
  - i. The Codex Amiatinus is the most celebrated manuscript of the Latin Vulgate Bible, remarkable as the best witness to the true text of St. Jerome and as a fine specimen of medieval calligraphy, now kept at Florence in the Bibliotheca Laurentiana. The symbol for it is written *am* or *A* (Wordsworth). It is preserved in an immense tome, measuring in height and breadth 19 1/4 inches by 13 3/8 inches, and in thickness 7 inches -- so impressive, as Hort says, as to fill the beholder with a feeling akin to awe. Some consider it, with White, as perhaps "the finest book in the world"; still there are several manuscripts which are as beautifully written and have besides, like the Book of Kells or Lindisfarne Gospels, those exquisite ornaments of which Amiatinus is devoid. It contains 1029 leaves of strong, smooth vellum, fresh-looking today, despite their great antiquity, arranged in quires of four sheets, or quaternions. It is written in uncial characters, large, clear, regular, and beautiful, two columns to a page, and 43 or 44 lines to a column. A little space is often left between words, but the writing is in general continuous. The text is divided into sections, which in the Gospels correspond closely to the Ammonian Sections. There are no marks of punctuation, but the skilled reader was guided into the sense by stichometric, or verse-like, arrangement into *coda* and *commata*, which correspond roughly to the principal and dependent clauses of a sentence. This manner of writing the scribe is believed to have modeled upon the great Bible of Cassiodorus, but it goes back perhaps even to St. Jerome.<sup>22</sup> This is believed to have been commissioned in 692 A.D.
  - ii. Like every other ancient version, there are a number of manuscripts out there; and the Latin Vulgate has been apparently standardized on several occasions, resulting in Clementine Vulgate, the Nova Vulgate and the Stuttgart Vulgate. It appears that the intention was to standardize the text, since a number of variants had crept into copies of St. Jerome's Bible. St. Jerome himself actually put out three versions of the Latin Vulgate himself: the Romana Vulgate, the Gallicana Vulgate (with some minor improvements, especially in the Old Testament), and the Hispana Vulgate (where Jerome translated the psalms directly from the Hebrew rather than the Greek).

## Other Scriptural Versions

22. The Samaritan Pentateuch:
  - a. The Samaritans are those who lived north of the Jews, and were probably a mix of Jewish and other ancestry brought into the northern kingdom by the Assyrians (including Assyrians).<sup>23</sup>
  - b. Although there are a handful of Samaritans today (less than a 1000 who reside in the land), they were a significant group during the time of Jesus' incarnation.
  - c. They apparently spoke Aramaic during the time of Christ; and today, they speak modern Hebrew or Palestinian Arabic.

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<sup>21</sup> Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate>.

<sup>22</sup> Taken directly from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Amiatinus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Amiatinus). I left in more details because of the incredible condition of this manuscript.

<sup>23</sup> Apparently there have even been recent DNA studies which show that the Samaritans are not pure Jews from those northern tribes who remained in the land after the northern dispersion. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan> (much of this information comes from this web page).

- d. They perverted the truth and accepted only the Pentateuch as inspired Scripture (which is that Islam does) and
  - e. To be frank with you, I do not know the language that the Samaritan Pentateuch is written in. It looks more like Aramaic to me than it does Hebrew.<sup>24</sup>
  - f. There are important differences between the Hebrew and the Samaritan copies of the Pentateuch in the readings of many sentences. In about two thousand instances in which the Samaritan and the Jewish texts differ, the Septuagint (LXX) agrees with the former. For example, Exodus 12:40 in the Samaritan and the LXX reads, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel and of their fathers which they had dwelt in the land of Canaan and in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years". In the Masoretic text, however, the same passage reads, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." The New Testament, when quoting from the Old Testament, agrees as a rule with the Samaritan text, where that differs from the Jewish.<sup>25</sup>
23. The Codex Argenteus is a 6th century manuscript, originally containing bishop Ulfilas's 4<sup>th</sup> century translation of the Bible into the Gothic language (ancient German).

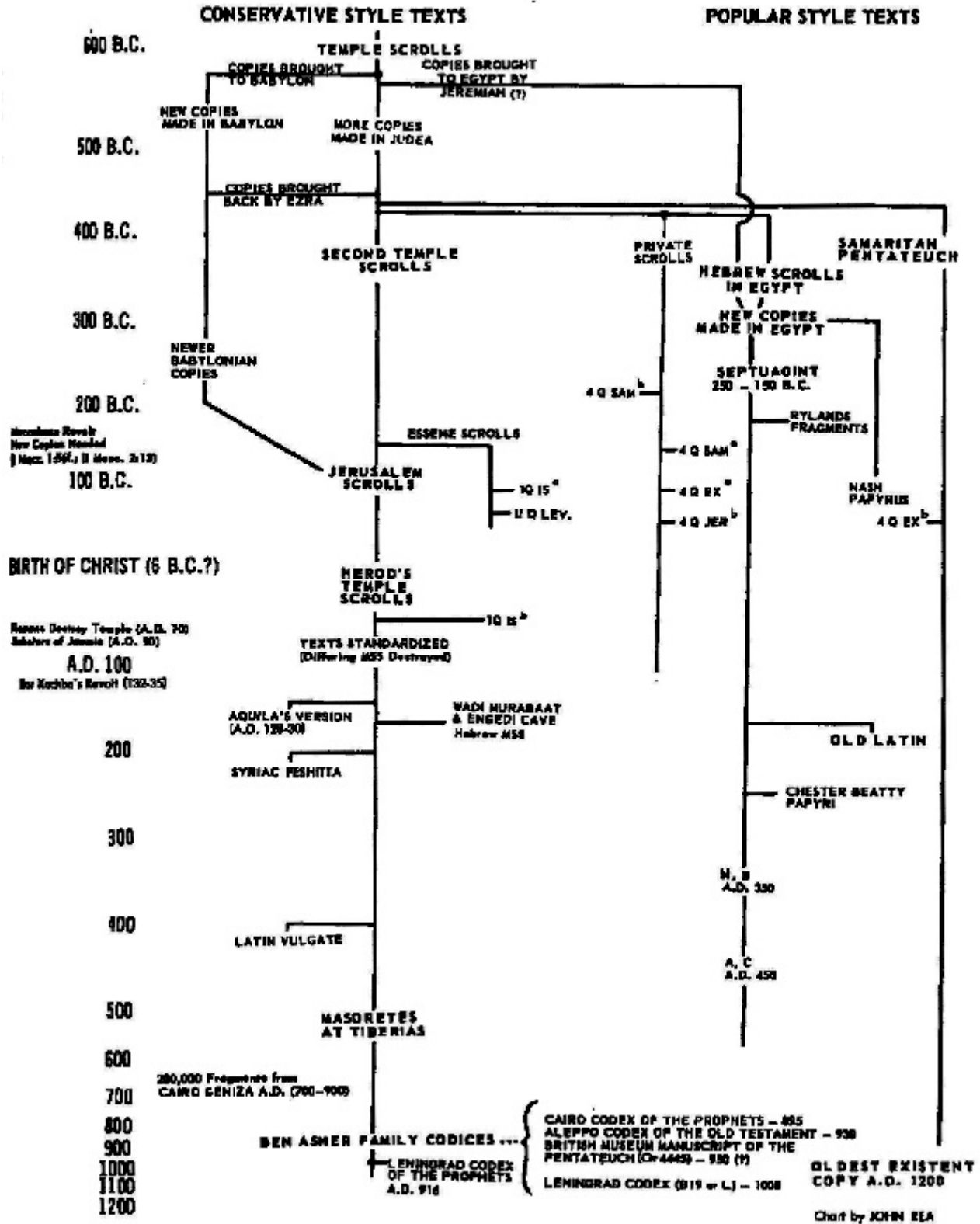
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<sup>24</sup> An image of some of the text can be found here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Samaritan\\_pentateuch1.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Samaritan_pentateuch1.jpg).

<sup>25</sup> Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan\\_Pentateuch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan_Pentateuch).



# History Of The Old Testament Text <sup>26</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Taken from Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 265. Chart is by John Rea.

One of the most important observations which we can make concerning this chart is that the MT, the Latin Vulgate and the Peshitta all come from one family of manuscripts, while the Septuagint comes from another family. Therefore, we should expect that the first three will often be in agreement with one another and occasionally at odds with the Septuagint. Determining the correct text is not a matter of majority rules; that is, we cannot look at an agreement of the first three ancient texts and determine that this is the correct reading over a variant reading to the LXX because the vote is 3 against 1.

### Bibliography

Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968. I drew heavily from this source and recommend it highly. I first became acquainted with this book when I took an *Introduction to the Bible* course. I was quite surprised as to how good the text was (back in those days, I barely knew a handful of Christian authors and teachers).

Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith, Volume I*; Thomas Nelson Publishers (Nashville). ©1972, 1979 by Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc.

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### Websites

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language)