

# 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.,  $\aleph\omega\iota^*$ ) vs. defective (i.e.,  $\aleph\omega$ )
    - 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