

A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Story of the Greek NT

- *Complutensian Polyglot*
- Desiderius Erasmus
- Stephanus / Robert Estienne
- Theodore Beza
- Abraham and Bonaventure Elzevir
- John Mill
- Richard Bentley
- Westcott and Hort
- NA28 and UBS5

Transmission of the Old Testament

- The Aleppo Codex
 - Dating to the tenth century, the Aleppo Codex was found amidst the ashes of the Mustaribah Synagogue in the aftermath of the Arab riots against the Jews in 1947.
 - About a quarter of the codex is missing—almost all the Pentateuch along with a few other books.
- The Leningrad Codex
 - Now the oldest, complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, the Leningrad Codex dates to the very beginning of the 11th century (about 1010) and is housed in the National Library of St. Petersburg.
 - The Leningrad Codex is the Hebrew text that mainly underlies most editions of the modern Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.
- The Cairo Codex
 - Written by Moses ben Asher in 895, this codex contains the Former and Latter prophets.

Transmission of the Old Testament

- The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets
 - Written in the tenth century (about 916), this codex includes the Major and Minor Prophets
- British Library Codex of the Pentateuch
 - Dating to about the 10th century, this codex contains most, but not all, of the Pentateuch.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls
 - In 1948, an astonishing stockpile of ancient manuscripts belonging to what was once the Qumran community was found in a few caves in the vicinity of the Dead Sea. Hundreds of scrolls and thousands of fragments, many containing the OT text, were found, dating up to 1000 years earlier than any of the above codices.
 - 1QIs^a – With exception of a few small breaks, the Great Isaiah Scroll, dating to about 100 B.C., is a complete copy of Isaiah. It is substantially identical to the text preserved in the Masoretic tradition represented by the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.

Why the Lack of Manuscript Evidence?

- In Jewish tradition, no copy of God's word could be destroyed, and manuscripts with even the slightest degree of transmissional error could not be used. This resulted in *myriads* of manuscripts being stored in a *genizah* (from Aramaic *genaz*, to hide) *prior to being buried*. This explains the lack of extant manuscripts.
 - Unlike early Christianity and the NT, the Old Testament scribal tradition was meticulous and rich, resulting in an astoundingly small degree of transmissional variance over thousands of years. This was only confirmed with the findings at Qumran. (quote from Lightfoot 113)
- For these reasons, discussions of “how we got the Old Testament” and its transmissional history are much more succinct than their counterpart NT discussions.

Text Traditions (Types?)

- The Masoretic Text (MT)
 - Drawing its name from the Hebrew *masorah* (“tradition”) and derivatively the Masoretes, the “Masoretic text” is the dominant text type for the Hebrew Bible.
 - The Masoretes were the first scribes/copyists to insert vowel pointings into the Hebrews text as the language became increasingly unspoken.
 - The Aleppo and Leningrad codices both represent the particularly excellent Ben Asher family of scribal transmission.

Text Traditions (Types?)

- The Samaritan Pentateuch
 - The Samaritan Pentateuch dates to about 400 BC when the Samaritans separated themselves from the Jews and built their own sanctuary on Mt. Gezirim.
 - While there are many differences in the Samaritan and Masoretic pentateuchs, with the vast majority being spelling and grammar discrepancies. Nevertheless, many scholars believe those differences are enough to establish a separate, ancient text type from which it was copied.
- Others
 - The Septuagint (i.e., the Greek “translation” of the OT to be discussed in the next module) seems to have been translated from a different textual tradition (e.g., the Septuagint version of Jeremiah is 1/8 shorter and the oracles against the nations are placed after 25:13).
 - 4QSam^a and 4QSam^b
 - Fragmentary manuscripts of 1 and 2 Samuel found at Qumran and dating as early as 300 BC, 4QSam^a and 4QSam^b seem to preserve (in agreement with the Septuagint) different, and in some cases better readings than the Masoretic text.

The Hebrew Text Today

- Almost all modern versions of the Hebrew Testament are based primarily on the Masoretic Text, particularly as it is represented in the Leningrad codex. In the few cases where there are meaningful textual discrepancies within the manuscript tradition, textual critics carefully weight both the internal and external evidence for variant readings.
 - Roberts: “...the authenticity of the Masoretic text stands higher than at any time in the history of modern textual criticism, a standpoint which is based on a better assessment of the history of the Jewish transmission.”
 - The Hebrew Bible used for most scholarly work is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), currently in its fourth edition.