

EXPLORING MY STRANGE BIBLE

WITH TIM MACKIE



The Bible in the Making

Part 1: The Hebrew Bible

The Originals

Two Facts

- We do not know who produced the final edition of the books in the Hebrew Bible. We also don't know when they were made, but we do have some clues:
 - Exodus 17:14
 - Deuteronomy 31:24-26, 34:10-12
 - Jeremiah 36:32
 - Proverbs 25:1
- No originals exist today, but we do have some hints about how they were passed down.

The \$10,000 Question

- Q. If we do not have the originals, what do we have?
- A. Three important sets of manuscripts.

The Manuscript Evidence

1. The Masoretes & Masoretic Text (MT)

- The Masoretes are Jewish scholars who preserved the Hebrew Bible from 500 to 1000 A.D.
- They are renowned for their meticulous care of the text, counting letters and paragraphs to make sure the copies were correct (see the word "belly" in Leviticus 11:42).
- The text passed down by these scribes is called the "masoretic text." Your English Bible is a translation of the MT.
 - » Technical details: More than 6,000 manuscripts come from this tradition, dating from 1000 to 1800. One of the older copies, highly esteemed in the Jewish community, is the Leningrad Codex (1009 A.D.).

2. The Septuagint

- A Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible made between 200 B.C. and 100 B.C.
- It was one of the Bibles of pre-Christian Judaism, and it was the Bible of early Christianity for hundreds of years.
- There are lots of differences between the LXX and MT. Most are insignificant, but some are profound.

Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

GENESIS 4:8 IN THE MT

Cain told Abel his brother "Let's go into the field." And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

GENESIS 4:8 IN THE LXX (AND OTHER ANCIENT HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS)

- » Technical Details: We have thousands of manuscripts of the LXX. Two of the oldest manuscripts (John Rylands 458 and Fouad 266) are from the end of the second and beginning of the first centuries B.C.

3. The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Between 1947 and 1956, eleven caves were found near the Dead Sea in Israel that contained thousands of pieces of text—the remains of more than 200 biblical scrolls.
- Manuscripts of every book of the Hebrew Bible (except Esther) were among the DSS, which dated from ca. 200 B.C. to 100 A.D.
- Some of these manuscripts looked like the MT (the words were virtually the same). Others looked like the LXX.
 - » Technical detail: The most popular books were Deuteronomy (30 copies), Isaiah (21 copies), and Psalms (36 copies).

How Do These Manuscripts Compare?

*For the customs of the peoples are false: a tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an ax by the hands of an artisan; people deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor is it in them to do good. **There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For that is your due; among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you. They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction given by idols is no better than wood! Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz. They are the work of the artisan and of the hands of the goldsmith; their clothing is blue and purple; they are all the product of skilled workers. But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. Thus you will say to them: The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from the heavens.***

JEREMIAH 10:3-11 (MT).

BOLD: ABSENT IN SEPTUAGINT (LXX) AND SOME DEAD SEA SCROLLS (E.G., 4QJERB)

Conclusions

- We have everything we need to recover the biblical text—nothing is missing.
- Protestantism (in particular) has a long tradition of scholars seeking to recover the originals. Their results are widely available in commentaries, scholarly publications, etc.
- Throughout history, both Judaism and Christianity have consistently recognized the Hebrew Bible as Scripture. Both religions embrace the idea that God can use human processes to give and preserve his revelation.

Part 2: The New Testament

The Making of the New Testament:

The Originals:

- Gospels/Acts (SEE LUKE 1:1-4)
- The Gospels are like quilts
 - The authors composed the books out of independent stories and teachings of Jesus that came directly from the eyewitnesses.
- The New Testament Letters (SEE ROMANS 16:21; 1 PETER 5:12)

The Spread of the New Testament (SEE COLOSSIANS 4:16)

The Story of the New Testament's Preservation

1. Copy Centers: Biblical manuscripts were copied in urban areas where the church was well established.

- Rome, Syria (esp. Antioch), Asia Minor (esp. Ephesus), Egypt (esp. Alexandria)
- Examples of differences between regional texts:
 - The "trinitarian addition" in medieval western manuscripts (in Latin) (1 JOHN 5:7-8).
 - Acts 6

*These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke, **because they were refuted by him with boldness. Therefore, when they were unable to confront the truth, Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God."***

ACTS 6:9-11 THE BOLD SECTION IS PRESENT ONLY IN LATER, "WESTERN" MANUSCRIPTS

2. Around 300 and 310 A.D. the persecution of Christians by emperor Diocletian led to the dominance of the Asia Minor manuscript family. This manuscript group became the New Testament text of the medieval period.

3. Erasmus: Renaissance Scholar

- 1516: He produced the first scholarly edition of the New Testament.
- It was based entirely on the "Majority Text."

4. William Tyndale: Protestant Reformer

- 1530: He produced the first complete English Translation of the Bible (illegally!).
- The NT translation was based on Erasmus' edition, the Majority Text.

5. The 1611 King James Translation: the "Authorized Version"

- Based on Erasmus' edition: the Majority Text
- Drew much from Tyndale's English translation

6. New Discoveries: 1800-1900

- Thousands of NT manuscripts discovered were older and from different regions than the Majority Text.

7. Modern Day Editions of the New Testament: 1900-1960

- Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland head an international team of scholars to establish the earliest possible text from all available manuscripts.
- All modern English translations are based on this edition of the Greek text.

Part 3: The Canon of Scripture

Clarifying our Terms

- Scripture
 - from scriptura (Latin) = “what is written”
 - “authoritative religious text”
- Canon
 - from kanon (Greek) = rule/standard
 - came to mean “list”
- Biblical Canon
 - Authoritative list of religious texts

What Does “Authoritative” Mean?

- The Bible’s authority is not rooted in itself, but in a person: Jesus of Nazereth.
- The nature of Scripture’s authority:

Events →	Scripture →	Canon
Patriarchs, Exodus, Promised Land, Exile, Jesus, Apostles	Texts that retell the foundation narrative and that guide the community in living out the story	Discerning which texts rightly retell the foundation narrative and which texts rightly guide the community to live out the story

The Canon of the Hebrew Bible

The order of the Hebrew canon: TaNaK

Torah TEACHING	Nevi'im PROPHETS			Ketuvim WRITINGS	
Genesis	Joshua	Hosea	Habakkuk	Psalms	Lamentations
Exodus	Judges	Joel	Zephaniah	Job	Esther
Leviticus	Samuel	Amos	Haggai	Proverbs	Daniel
Numbers	Kings	Obadiah	Zechariah	Ruth	Ezra-Nehemiah
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Jonah	Malachi	Song of Songs	Chronicles
	Jeremiah	Micah		Ecclesiastes	
	Ezekiel	Nahum			

The editing of TaNaK points forward to a coming prophet.

- Deuteronomy 34:9-12 and Malachi 4:4-6
- Joshua 1:1-9 and Psalm 1:1-3

Early Historical Witnesses to the TaNaK

- Yeshua ben Sirah
My Grandfather Yeshua had devoted himself especially to the study of the Torah, the Prophets, and the other books of our ancestors, and had acquired considerable proficiency in them.
YESHUA BEN SIRAH: 2ND CENT. B.C.
- Dead Sea Scrolls
We have written so that you may understand the book of Moses and the books of the prophets and of David.
DEAD SEA SCROLLS: 4QMMT 150 B.C.
- Jesus
Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.
JESUS: LUKE 24.44

The Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Writings in the Catholic Bible

- Jewish writings from 250 B.C. to 100 A.D. widely read in Jewish & Christian communities.
- Content: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, 1-2 Macabees.
- 1546: Council of Trent: Roman Catholic Church declared these writings as "Deutero-Canonical" i.e. secondary-level of Scripture.
 - Bottom Line:
 - » They were never included in TaNaK (i.e. never part of the Jewish Bible).
 - » Jesus and the apostles never quote or treat them as having the same authority as TaNaK.

The New Testament Canon

Usage and spread of Scripture in the early church

- The Hebrew Bible was the Bible of Jesus and the earliest church:
But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15
- A body of writings connected with the Apostles began to gain the same status as the Hebrew Bible.
Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.
2 PETER 3:15-16

The bottom line:

- There was never any one council that decided what was or was not in the Bible. The canon grew out of the church's worship gatherings. (REMEMBER COLOSSIANS 4:16)
- The NT writings established themselves; they were recognized by the church.
- The council of Carthage (397 A.D.) recognized what was already existing practice in the churches.

The councils of the church played little part in deciding what was in the canon of scripture. When councils did speak to the subject, their voice was a ratification of what had already become the common practice of the churches.

EVERETT FURGESON,

"FACTORS LEADING TO THE SELECTION AND CLOSURE OF THE NT CANON"

For further Interest:

Part 1: Old Testament

- JOHN SAILHAMER, HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE.
Explains in basic terms how the Bible was handed down, from the original manuscripts to the English Bible.
- WALTER C. KAISER, THE OLD TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS: ARE THEY RELIABLE AND RELEVANT?
Explores the question of the Bible's authority: "if the Bible was copied many times by fallible scribes, why should I trust it?"
- JULIO TREBOLLE BARRERA, THE JEWISH BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.
A wonderfully rich explanation of how the Bible was composed and passed down through time in the Jewish community and in the Christian community. (More advanced than Sailhamer)
- JAMES VANDERKAM, THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS TODAY.
A very readable introduction to the DSS: their discovery, their contents, and their importance for Biblical scholarship.
- KAREN JOBES & MOISES SILVA, INVITATION TO THE SEPTUAGINT.
A beginner's introduction to the Septuagint: its origins, transmission, and value for reconstructing the originals.

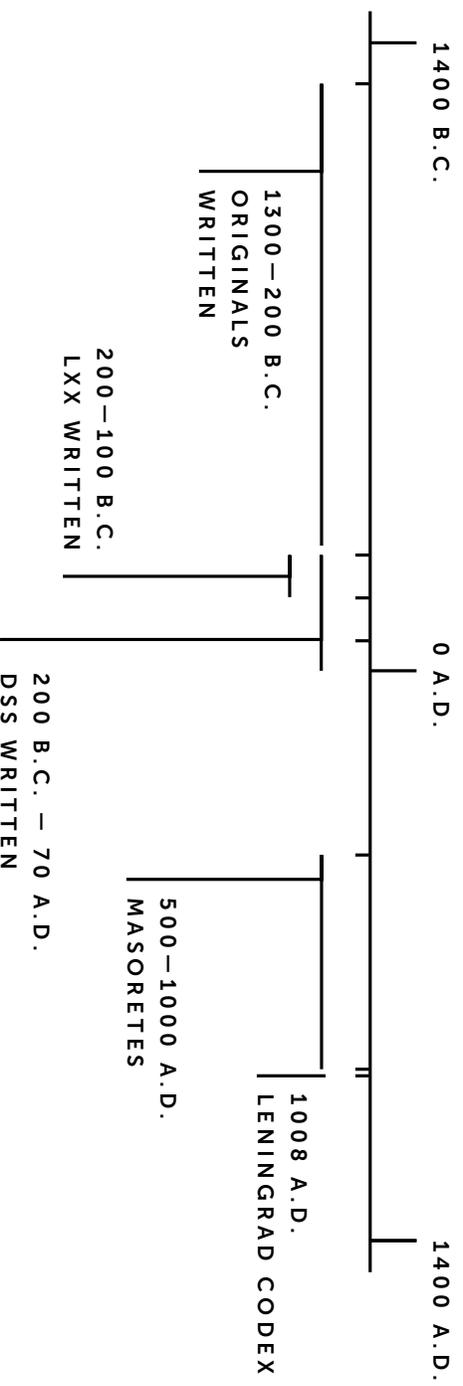
Part 2: New Testament

- PAUL WEGNER, THE JOURNEY FROM TEXT TO TRANSLATIONS: THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIBLE.
An excellent, detailed history of the making of the Bible.

Part 3: The Canon of Scripture

- F. F. BRUCE, THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE
- N.T. WRIGHT, JUDAS AND THE GOSPEL OF JESUS: HAVE WE MISSED THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIANITY?
Wright deals with the questions of the "other Gospels" and the writings of the non-orthodox groups that were never considered part of the Bible.

Hebrew Bible Timeline



MASORETES

Jewish scholars who preserved the biblical text with meticulous care from around 500-1000 A.D.

LENINGRAD CODEX

The oldest complete Hebrew Bible in one volume; the basis of all English translations today.

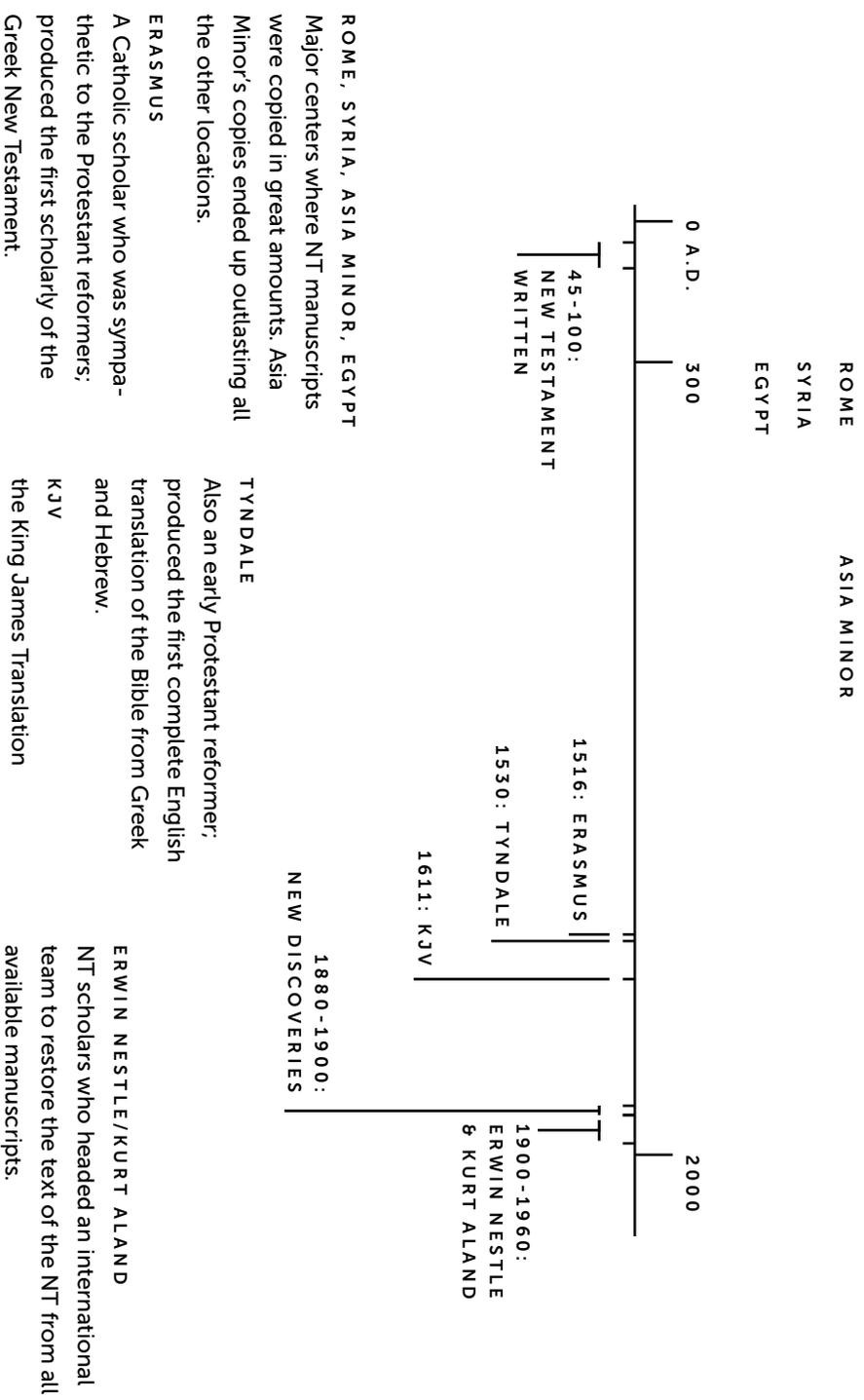
LXX

The Septuagint: A translation of the Hebrew Bible made into Greek around 200-100 B.C.

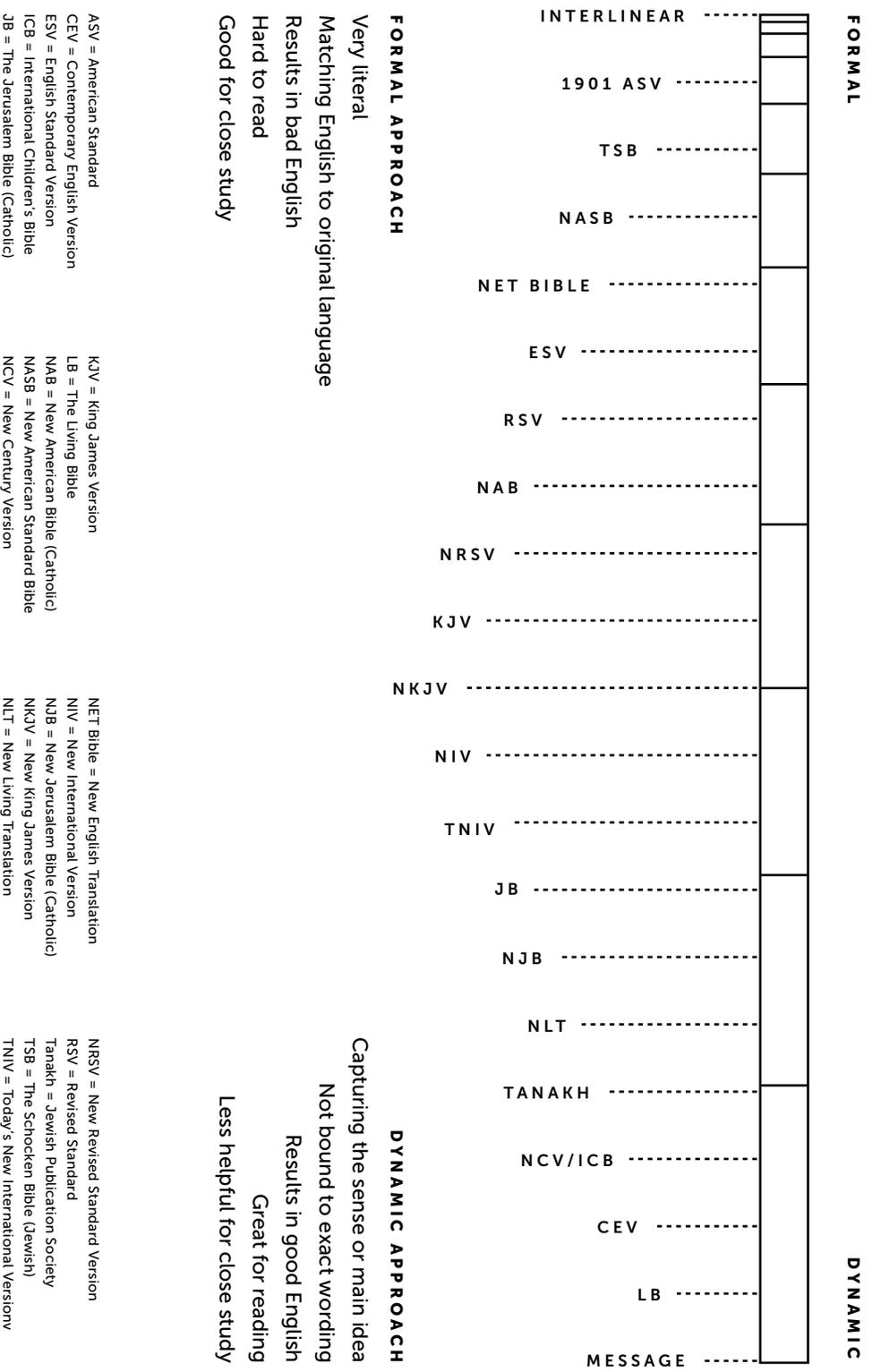
DSS

The Dead Sea Scrolls: biblical manuscripts from a Jewish sect in the desert of Judah from around mid-200 B.C. – 70 A.D.

New Testament Timeline



Comparing Translations



FORMAL

DYNAMIC

FORMAL APPROACH

Very literal
 Matching English to original language
 Results in bad English
 Hard to read
 Good for close study

DYNAMIC APPROACH

Capturing the sense or main idea
 Not bound to exact wording
 Results in good English
 Great for reading
 Less helpful for close study

ASV = American Standard
 CEV = Contemporary English Version
 ESV = English Standard Version
 ICB = International Children's Bible
 JB = The Jerusalem Bible (Catholic)

KJV = King James Version
 LB = The Living Bible
 NAB = New American Bible (Catholic)
 NASB = New American Standard Bible
 NCV = New Century Version

NET Bible = New English Translation
 NIV = New International Version
 NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (Catholic)
 NKJV = New King James Version
 NLT = New Living Translation

NRSV = New Revised Standard Version
 RSV = Revised Standard
 Tanakh = Jewish Publication Society
 TSB = The Schocken Bible (Jewish)
 TNIV = Today's New International Version