# Two Bibles, Two Religions

## *The Masoretic Text and the Septuagint: Textual Divergence, Ancient Witnesses, and the Formation of Christian and Rabbinic Identity*

A Scholarly Monograph in Biblical Textual Criticism

Drawing on the work of Emanuel Tov, Sidnie White Crawford, and the Dead Sea Scrolls Scholarship

# Preface

The relationship between the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) and the Greek Septuagint (LXX) stands as one of the most consequential textual questions in the history of Western religion. These two bodies of scripture, though ostensibly derived from a common ancient Israelite literary tradition, diverge so substantially in wording, structure, theology, and content that serious scholars have characterized them as representing, in significant measure, distinct textual traditions rather than a simple translation relationship.

The stakes of this divergence extend far beyond philological curiosity. Early Christians read the Greek scriptures — the LXX — as their authoritative Bible. Their theology of messianic prophecy, divine identity, atonement, and eschatology was shaped by Greek formulations that in many cases differ markedly from the Hebrew text eventually standardized by Rabbinic Judaism. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1947 and 1956, have dramatically illuminated this complexity, demonstrating that the Second Temple period harbored a rich plurality of textual traditions, some of which align with the LXX against the MT, others with the MT against the LXX, and still others that stand independent of both.

This monograph examines, in scholarly depth, five interconnected questions: (1) the nature and extent of divergences between the MT and the LXX; (2) how the early church received and used the LXX, particularly in the composition of the Greek New Testament; (3) what the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal about the textual pluralism of the Second Temple period and how they adjudicate between the MT and LXX traditions; (4) the Masoretic process — the history, methods, and codification in the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices; and (5) how the theological implications of MT versus LXX divergence contributed to the parting of the ways between Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.

Throughout, this study draws substantially on the foundational textual-critical scholarship of Emanuel Tov, whose Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (3rd ed., 2012) remains the indispensable reference work; on Sidnie White Crawford's Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times (2008) and her DSS scholarship; on the Cambridge History of the Bible; and on a broad range of patristic, Septuagintal, and Dead Sea Scrolls studies. All primary sources are cited in their standard critical editions.

# Contents

Preface

Chapter One: The Two Bibles — An Introduction to MT and LXX

Chapter Two: Anatomy of Divergence — Textual Differences Between MT and LXX

Chapter Three: The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Plurality of Second Temple Texts

Chapter Four: The Early Church and the Septuagint — Quotation and Hermeneutics in the Greek New Testament

Chapter Five: The Masoretes and the Standardization of the Hebrew Bible

Chapter Six: The Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex

Chapter Seven: Theological Divergence — How Textual Variants Shape Doctrine

Chapter Eight: The Parting of the Ways — MT, LXX, and the Bifurcation of Judaism and Christianity

Conclusion: Two Bibles, Two Religions

Bibliography

# Chapter One: The Two Bibles — An Introduction to the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint

## 1.1 What is the Masoretic Text?

The Masoretic Text (MT) is the authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) as preserved and transmitted by the Masoretes, a group of Jewish scribes and scholars active primarily from the sixth through the tenth centuries CE. The designation "Masoretic" derives from the Hebrew word masorah (מָסוֹרָה), meaning "tradition," and refers to the elaborate system of annotations, vowel pointings (niqqud), cantillation marks (te'amim), and marginal notes the Masoretes appended to the consonantal text to ensure its precise, standardized transmission.

The consonantal skeleton (the ketiv) of the MT is far older than the Masoretic scribal apparatus that surrounds it. The proto-Masoretic text — a consonantal Hebrew text that aligns closely with the MT — was already circulating and gaining authority in certain Jewish circles by the first century CE, and represents one among multiple Hebrew textual traditions that coexisted during the Second Temple period. As Emanuel Tov has demonstrated at length, the proto-MT tradition was not simply "the original text" of the Hebrew Bible but rather one text-type that over time achieved canonical dominance within Rabbinic Judaism, while other traditions survived, albeit marginally, in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Vorlage (underlying Hebrew source) of the Septuagint.

The formal standardization of the MT is conventionally associated with the great Masoretic academies of Tiberias, most especially the ben Asher family, whose work culminated in the Aleppo Codex (ca. 930 CE) and the Leningrad Codex (1008–1009 CE) — the two most authoritative medieval manuscripts of the MT, and the basis for all modern critical Hebrew Bibles, including Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) and Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ).

## 1.2 What is the Septuagint?

The Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures undertaken over a period of several centuries, beginning approximately in the third century BCE in Alexandria, Egypt. The name derives from the legend preserved in the Letter of Aristeas (ca. second century BCE), which describes seventy-two Jewish elders commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BCE) to produce a Greek version of the Torah for the Library of Alexandria.

Over time the name "Septuagint" came to designate the entire Greek corpus of Jewish scriptures, including the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, and additional books not found in the Hebrew canon (the so-called deuterocanonical or apocryphal books: Tobit, Judith, 1–4 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, and others).

The LXX is not a uniform document. Different books were translated by different translators at different times, exhibiting markedly different translation philosophies. The Pentateuch is generally regarded as the earliest portion, translated with considerable care and relatively literal fidelity. The books of Job, Proverbs, and Daniel reflect a freer, more expansive approach. Jeremiah in the LXX is approximately one-eighth shorter than the MT and differs substantially in the arrangement of its oracles — a divergence now illuminated by the Hebrew fragments of Jeremiah at Qumran (4QJerb, 4QJerd), which align with the shorter LXX version.

As Natalio Fernández Marcos observes in The Septuagint in Context (2000), the LXX became, within a few generations, not merely a translation tool for diaspora Jews who had lost fluency in Hebrew, but a canonical scripture in its own right, revered and interpreted as the word of God by the Greek-speaking Jewish communities of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Greece. It was this Bible — not the Hebrew MT — that the earliest Christians inherited, read, preached from, and quoted in their foundational documents.

## 1.3 The Question of the Vorlage

A central issue in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible is the relationship between the LXX and its underlying Hebrew source — what scholars call its Vorlage (German: "template" or "exemplar"). For much of the history of biblical scholarship, scholars assumed that divergences between the LXX and MT were primarily the result of the translators' freedom, theological interests, or misreadings of a Hebrew text essentially identical to the MT. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls permanently altered this assumption.

Emanuel Tov, in his landmark study "The Nature and Background of Harmonizations in Biblical Manuscripts" (JSOT 31, 1985) and in Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (2012), identifies three main categories of LXX divergence from the MT: (1) divergences explicable as translation technique — the translator's rendering choices without a different Hebrew Vorlage; (2) divergences reflecting a different but genuine Hebrew Vorlage — cases where the Greek reflects a Hebrew text different from the MT; and (3) secondary developments internal to the Greek transmission — errors, conflations, and revisions in the Greek manuscripts themselves. Tov's

extensive research demonstrates that the second category is far more prevalent than previously assumed, and that the LXX preserves genuine ancient Hebrew textual traditions now lost in the MT tradition.

This finding has profound implications. It means that the LXX is not merely a translation but in significant respects an independent textual witness to the Hebrew Bible, and that in many cases where the LXX diverges from the MT, the LXX may preserve the older, more original reading. Sidnie White Crawford, in Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times (2008), further demonstrates that the compositional processes of the Second Temple period were fluid, and that what we call "the biblical text" was in fact a moving target during this era.

# Chapter Two: Anatomy of Divergence — Textual Differences Between the MT and the LXX

## 2.1 Categories of Divergence

The divergences between the MT and LXX range from minor lexical variations to substantial differences in length, content, and theological emphasis. Tov, following on the earlier analyses of Dominique Barthélemy and Shemaryahu Talmon, classifies these divergences into several major categories:

First are differences in length. The LXX of Jeremiah is approximately 14–17% shorter than the MT of Jeremiah, omitting passages that appear to be secondary expansions in the Hebrew tradition. Similarly, LXX Job is one-sixth shorter than MT Job. Conversely, LXX additions to Esther (the six "Additions to Esther") and to Daniel (the Prayer of Azariah, the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon) substantially expand those books beyond their MT counterparts.

Second are differences in arrangement and sequence. In Jeremiah, the "Oracles Against the Nations" appear in chapters 46–51 of the MT but appear in the middle of the book (after chapter 25) in the LXX, and in a markedly different internal order. Similarly, Proverbs shows significant rearrangement between the MT and LXX versions.

Third are differences in individual readings — variants at the level of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences — where the Greek reflects a different Hebrew Vorlage from the MT. These may involve single letters (often the source of quite different words in Hebrew), different word division, different vocalization of the same consonants, or genuinely different Hebrew words and phrases.

Fourth are harmonizations and expansions. Both the MT and the LXX tradition contain harmonizations — secondary assimilations of one passage to another — though the patterns differ. The LXX of Exodus and Numbers, for instance, contains expansions derived from Deuteronomy (and vice versa in the MT), reflecting competing harmonizing tendencies in the respective traditions.

## 2.2 The Book of Jeremiah: A Case Study in Divergent Editions

No single book better illustrates the complexity of MT-LXX divergence than Jeremiah. The difference between the MT and LXX versions of Jeremiah is so extensive that scholars now routinely speak of two distinct literary editions of the book. The MT edition is approximately 3,097 words longer than the LXX edition, and the two differ not only in length but in the arrangement of material.

For many decades, scholars assumed the LXX of Jeremiah was an abbreviation of a Hebrew text essentially identical to the MT. The discovery of Hebrew Jeremiah manuscripts at Qumran demolished this assumption. 4QJerb and 4QJerd, analyzed in detail by Emanuel Tov in "The Jeremiah Scrolls from Qumran" (Revue de Qumran 14/54, 1989), align with the shorter LXX version of Jeremiah, preserving the shorter Hebrew Vorlage that underlies the Greek. This demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that two Hebrew editions of Jeremiah existed in antiquity: a shorter edition reflected in 4QJerb/d and the LXX Vorlage, and a longer, expanded edition reflected in the MT (and in 4QJera and 4QJerc, which align with the proto-MT tradition).

The theological implications of this divergence are considerable. The MT edition of Jeremiah develops the figure of Baruch son of Neriah (Jeremiah's scribe) more extensively, contains a richer Deuteronomistic theological framework, and presents a more systematically organized collection of oracles. The shorter LXX edition may reflect an earlier compositional stage, before the Deuteronomistic editorial expansions that characterize the MT had been incorporated.

## 2.3 The Book of Samuel and the LXX Vorlage

The books of Samuel provide another instructive case. The MT of 1–2 Samuel is widely regarded by textual critics as among the most poorly preserved books in the Hebrew Bible, exhibiting numerous corruptions, doublets, and difficulties. The LXX of Samuel (particularly the Old Greek, as reconstructed from manuscripts such as Codex Vaticanus) and the Qumran Samuel manuscripts (4QSama, 4QSamb, 4QSamc) frequently preserve superior readings against the MT.

Frank Moore Cross, in his landmark article "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert" (Harvard Theological Review 57, 1964), and in the subsequent multi-decade Qumran Samuel project, demonstrated that 4QSama aligns frequently with the LXX against the MT,

suggesting both reflect an ancient Palestinian textual tradition ("local text theory") distinct from the proto-MT tradition preserved in Babylonian Jewish scribal circles. While Cross's "local text" hypothesis has been criticized and modified by subsequent scholarship — most notably by Tov, who prefers a non-geographical model of textual pluralism — the fundamental insight stands: the LXX of Samuel reflects a genuine ancient Hebrew tradition that frequently diverges from and is sometimes superior to the MT.

## 2.4 Psalms, Proverbs, and the Poetic Books

In the Psalms, MT and LXX divergences tend to be less dramatically structural and more concentrated at the level of individual readings and theological emphases. The LXX Psalter is of paramount importance for the history of Christian worship and liturgy — it is this text that the early church sang, prayed, and interpreted, and it is the Psalter text from which the New Testament most frequently quotes.

Psalm 22:16 (22:17 MT) furnishes one of the most theologically charged examples: the MT reads כָּאֲרִי יָדַי וְרַגְלָי ("like a lion, my hands and my feet"), while the LXX reads ὤρυξαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας ("they pierced my hands and my feet"). This difference has a long and contested history. The MT reading is difficult (the verb is lacking, giving a nominal clause, "like a lion my hands and my feet"), and Christian tradition has read the LXX rendering as a messianic prophecy of crucifixion. Most modern text-critical scholars, including Peter Flint (The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms, 1997), note that the Qumran Psalms scrolls do not definitively resolve this variant, as the relevant line is damaged or absent in the key manuscripts.

Psalm 40:6 (40:7 MT) presents another significant case. The MT reads אָזְנַיִם כָּרִיתָ לִי ("ears you have dug for me" or "ears you have fashioned for me"), while the LXX reads σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι ("but a body you have prepared for me"). The LXX reading is quoted in Hebrews 10:5 and applied to the incarnation of Christ — a theological argument that depends entirely on the Greek text and that cannot be derived from the MT.

## 2.5 The Book of Isaiah

Isaiah is particularly important for both the MT-LXX divergence question and for NT Christology. The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa-a) from Qumran, dating to approximately 125 BCE, is largely consistent with the MT of Isaiah, supporting the proto-MT tradition for this book. However, the LXX of Isaiah diverges from the MT in theologically significant ways, particularly in its use of κύριος (Lord) to render YHWH, and in several key passages that became foundational for Christian messianism.

Isaiah 7:14 is perhaps the single most consequential MT-LXX variant in all of scripture for Christian theology. The MT reads הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן ("Behold, the young woman is pregnant and will bear a son"). The LXX renders this as ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν ("Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son"). The Hebrew עַלְמָה (almah) denotes a young woman of marriageable age, with no intrinsic implication of virginity. The LXX translators chose παρθένος (parthenos), which in classical Greek specifically means virgin. Matthew 1:23 quotes the LXX and applies it to the virgin birth of Jesus — a theological claim that stands or falls on the Greek word παρθένος, which the Hebrew text does not directly support.

This example encapsulates the thesis of this study: the LXX did not merely translate the Hebrew Bible — it, in certain instances, transformed it, and those transformations became constitutive of Christian theology in ways that subsequently divided Christianity from Rabbinic Judaism, which read the Hebrew text and saw no virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14.

# Chapter Three: The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Plurality of Second Temple Texts

## 3.1 The Discovery and Its Significance

Between 1947 and 1956, a series of discoveries in the caves of Wadi Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea yielded the most significant cache of ancient manuscripts ever found in the modern era. The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) — comprising roughly 900 manuscripts in various states of preservation, dating from approximately the third century BCE to the first century CE — included fragments of every book of the Hebrew Bible except Esther, along with sectarian texts, pesharim (scriptural commentaries), legal codes, hymns, and apocalyptic works associated with a Jewish sectarian community (most likely Essene) that inhabited the site of Khirbet Qumran.

For the study of the textual history of the Hebrew Bible, the DSS are revolutionary. Prior to their discovery, the oldest complete Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible were the Aleppo Codex (ca. 930 CE) and the Leningrad Codex (1008–1009 CE) — Masoretic manuscripts separated from the ancient period by nearly a thousand years. The DSS pushed the manuscript tradition back to within two to three centuries of the compositional periods of many biblical books, and they revealed a textual landscape of remarkable plurality.

## 3.2 Tov's Classification of DSS Biblical Manuscripts

Emanuel Tov's foundational classification of the DSS biblical manuscripts, presented in Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (1992; 3rd ed. 2012) and in his The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research (2nd ed. 1997), identifies five major text-types represented at Qumran:

(1) Proto-Masoretic texts: Manuscripts aligning closely with the MT. Tov estimates that approximately 35–40% of the DSS biblical manuscripts fall into this category. These texts attest the antiquity of the proto-MT tradition and suggest it was already achieving some degree of authority in certain communities by the Second Temple period.

(2) Pre-Samaritan texts: Manuscripts aligning with the textual tradition represented in the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), characterized by extensive harmonizations, particularly between Exodus and Deuteronomy. Tov designates approximately 5% of the DSS biblical manuscripts as falling into this category.

(3) Texts close to the LXX Vorlage: Manuscripts whose Hebrew text aligns with the underlying Hebrew source of the LXX. The most dramatic examples are 4QJerb and 4QJerd (Jeremiah), and 4QSama (Samuel). Tov estimates roughly 5% of DSS biblical manuscripts align with the LXX Vorlage.

(4) Non-aligned texts: The largest category — approximately 35–40% of DSS biblical manuscripts — do not align consistently with any known text-type. They show independent readings, mixed alignments, and unique variants. These texts attest the fluidity and plurality of the Second Temple textual tradition.

(5) Qumran practice texts: Approximately 20% of DSS biblical manuscripts exhibit a distinctive orthographic (spelling) style — consistent with what Tov calls "Qumran scribal practice" — featuring extensive use of vowel letters (matres lectionis) and other characteristic features.

This classification has been refined and debated, notably by Eugene Ulrich in The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible (1999) and by Sidnie White Crawford in various studies. Crawford, following Ulrich, prefers to speak of "multiple literary editions" of biblical books rather than simple text-types, emphasizing that the compositional process itself was still ongoing during the Second Temple period. In Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times (2008), Crawford demonstrates that texts like 4QReworked Pentateuch (4QRP) and the Temple Scroll occupy a liminal space between scripture and scriptural rewriting — a phenomenon that makes the very concept of a fixed, singular "biblical text" anachronistic for this period.

## 3.3 DSS and the MT: Key Divergences

The DSS illuminate numerous cases where the MT tradition exhibits secondary developments — expansions, harmonizations, theological corrections, or scribal corrections — not present in older Hebrew traditions.

In Numbers 27:23, the MT reads that Moses did as the Lord commanded him, while 4QNumb (a pre-Samaritan text) adds a lengthy expansion harmonizing the passage with Deuteronomy 3:21–22. In Deuteronomy itself, 4QDeut-n (4QDeutn) exhibits readings that align with the LXX against the MT, including the famous case of Deuteronomy 32:8, where the MT reads בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("sons of Israel") while both the LXX (υἱοὶ θεοῦ, "sons of God") and 4QDeut-j read בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים ("sons of God") or בְּנֵי אֵל ("sons of El"). The Qumran reading confirms that the LXX reflects a genuine ancient Hebrew tradition at this point, and that the

MT's "sons of Israel" is likely a later theological correction designed to avoid the polytheistic implications of "sons of God" (the divine council).

This single variant — Deuteronomy 32:8 — has major implications for the history of Israelite religion. The "sons of God" reading supports the view, advanced by Mark Smith in The Origins of Biblical Monotheism (2001) and by Michael Heiser in "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God" (Bibliotheca Sacra 158, 2001), that early Israelite theology involved a divine council in which YHWH was assigned the nation of Israel among the nations distributed to the sons of El. The MT's correction of this reading represents a later, more strictly monotheistic theological revision.

## 3.4 Crawford on the Fluid Scriptural Landscape

Sidnie White Crawford's work is particularly valuable for understanding the compositional fluidity of the Second Temple scriptural corpus. In "Reworked Pentateuch" (in Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2000) and in Rewriting Scripture (2008), Crawford examines 4QReworked Pentateuch (4Q158, 4Q364–367) — a manuscript tradition that incorporates the Pentateuchal text alongside rearrangements, additions, and harmonizations. The status of 4QRP as either a biblical manuscript or a rewritten scripture is itself contested, but Crawford argues persuasively that the distinction between scripture and its rewritten forms was not as sharp in the Second Temple period as later canonical boundaries might suggest.

Crawford's analysis of the Temple Scroll (11QT) reinforces this point. The Temple Scroll presents itself as a first-person divine speech — a direct revelation from God — which rewrites, systematizes, and expands the legal material of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It does not quote these texts as external authorities; it subsumes and rewrites them. This indicates that the category of "authoritative text" in the Second Temple period was more fluid than later religious traditions, both Jewish and Christian, have generally acknowledged.

## 3.5 DSS, MT, and LXX: A Triangulation

Taken together, the DSS, MT, and LXX constitute a three-way triangulation of the Hebrew Bible's textual history. Where all three traditions agree, there is strong reason to regard the reading as ancient and stable. Where the DSS and LXX agree against the MT, there is strong reason to regard the MT reading as secondary — whether through theological revision, scribal harmonization, or other editorial processes. Where the MT and DSS agree against the LXX, there is reason to examine whether the LXX divergence reflects translation

technique or a different (possibly superior, possibly secondary) Hebrew Vorlage.

This triangulation has been most systematically developed by Tov in The Septuagint as a Translation (various articles) and by Kristin De Troyer in Rewriting the Sacred Text (2003). The methodological insight is that no single manuscript tradition — not the MT, not the LXX, not any DSS witness — can be treated as categorically superior to the others. Each must be evaluated reading by reading, with full attention to the history of the tradition and the characteristic features of the relevant scribal and translation communities.

# Chapter Four: The Early Church and the Septuagint — Quotation and Hermeneutics in the Greek New Testament

## 4.1 The LXX as the Bible of the Early Church

The earliest Christians were, in their majority, Greek-speaking Jews and gentile God-fearers of the diaspora for whom the LXX was the scriptures. The apostolic communities that produced the New Testament documents did not, in the main, engage with the Hebrew Bible in its Hebrew form; they engaged with it in Greek. As Martin Hengel argued in The Septuagint as Christian Scripture (2002), the LXX was not a secondary scripture for the early church — it was the scripture, the authoritative word of God, read, sung, memorized, and interpreted in the lingua franca of the Roman Mediterranean.

The New Testament contains well over 300 explicit quotations from the Hebrew scriptures, along with hundreds of allusions. The overwhelming majority of these quotations follow the LXX rather than the MT. This is not a trivial observation. In many cases, the theological argument being made in the NT epistle or gospel depends precisely on the LXX wording and cannot be derived from the MT. The early church's Bible was the Greek Bible, and the theology of the early church was in significant measure a theology formed by the Greek Bible.

## 4.2 Patterns of LXX Quotation in the New Testament

New Testament scholars have long analyzed the quotation practices of the various NT authors. The following patterns are well established in the scholarship:

Matthew uses a mixed quotation strategy. Some of his "fulfillment quotations" (formula quotations introduced by "this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet") follow the LXX closely; others appear to be independent translations from the Hebrew or represent a different Greek textual tradition. Matthew 1:23 (Isaiah 7:14) follows the LXX παρθένος reading. Matthew 4:15–16 (Isaiah 8:23–9:1) is broadly LXX-based but with modifications. Scholars including Krister Stendahl (The School of St. Matthew, 1954) and Richard Beaton (Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel, 2002) have analyzed Matthew's quotation technique in detail.

Paul is the most prolific quoter of the LXX in the NT. His letters contain over 90 explicit quotations from the Hebrew scriptures, the vast majority following

the LXX. Crucially, Paul's theological arguments frequently depend on LXX-specific readings. In Romans 4:3, citing Genesis 15:6 (Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην — "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"), Paul's argument about faith and justification depends on the Greek λογίζεσθαι (reckon, impute) — a forensic accounting term that shapes his entire doctrine of justification. The Hebrew underlying this passage (Genesis 15:6: וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לּוֹ צְדָקָה, "and he counted it to him as righteousness") does support a similar reading, but the Greek terminological specificity is Paul's operating framework.

The Letter to the Hebrews is perhaps the NT document most thoroughly dependent on the LXX. As we have noted, Hebrews 10:5 quotes Psalm 40:6 in the LXX form ("a body you have prepared for me") — a reading that differs from the MT ("ears you have dug for me") — and builds an entire Christological argument on the bodily incarnation language of the Greek. Harold Attridge, in his Hermeneia commentary on Hebrews (1989), notes that the author of Hebrews consistently uses the LXX and that many of his exegetical moves would be impossible if he were working from the MT.

The Gospel of Luke and Acts, almost certainly by the same author, consistently cite the LXX and often employ the elevated "Septuagintal Greek" style (mimicking LXX diction) as a literary device to signal scriptural gravitas and continuity with Israel's scriptures.

## 4.3 The Messianic Hermeneutic and the LXX

The early Christian reading of the LXX as a messianic document — a text that anticipated and prophesied the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth — was made possible in significant measure by features specific to the Greek translation. Several key texts illustrate this dynamic:

Isaiah 53 (the Suffering Servant passage) is quoted or alluded to across the NT in connection with the death of Jesus. The LXX rendering of Isaiah 53 generally follows the MT closely, but with subtle differences. LXX Isaiah 53:8 renders the MT's מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי נֶגַע לָמוֹ ("for the transgression of my people, a plague on them") as ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνομιῶν τοῦ λαοῦ μου ἤχθη εἰς θάνατον ("because of the iniquities of my people, he was led to death") — a reading that specifies death explicitly and shifts the grammatical subject in ways that facilitate a christological reading.

Zechariah 12:10 in the MT reads וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-דָּקָרוּ ("and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced"). The LXX reads καὶ ἐπιβλέψονται πρός με

ἀνθ᾽ ὧν κατωρχήσαντο ("and they shall look upon me, because they have mocked/danced over me") — a rendering that does not preserve the "piercing" theme. Yet John 19:37 quotes a version of Zechariah 12:10 that reads ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν ("they shall look upon him whom they have pierced") — agreeing with the MT and against the standard LXX. This illustrates an important textual phenomenon: the NT sometimes follows the LXX, sometimes the MT (or an alternative Greek version), and sometimes an independent tradition, according to what best suits the Christological point being made.

## 4.4 Patristic Awareness of LXX-MT Divergence

Several early church fathers were acutely aware of the differences between the LXX and the Hebrew text, and their responses are instructive. Origen of Alexandria (185–253 CE), the most prolific patristic biblical scholar, undertook the Hexapla — an extraordinary six-column edition of the Old Testament that placed, in parallel columns, the Hebrew text, a Greek transliteration, the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, the LXX, and Theodotion. Origen used diacritical marks borrowed from Alexandrian grammatical scholarship: the obelus (÷) to mark material in the LXX not in the Hebrew, and the asterisk (*) to mark material in the Hebrew not in the LXX. The Hexapla, though lost in its complete form (fragments survive in Origen's Hexaplaric LXX and in quotations), represents the first systematic comparative study of the LXX and its Hebrew Vorlage.

Jerome (347–420 CE), translator of the Latin Vulgate, went further. His Hebraica veritas ("Hebrew truth") principle led him to translate the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew — a controversial decision that provoked sharp criticism from Augustine of Hippo, who feared that abandoning the LXX would create confusion in the churches and disconnect Christianity from its received scriptural tradition. Augustine's defense of the LXX — and his claim that the LXX translators were divinely inspired — reflects the theological stakes of the MT-LXX debate: which text was the authoritative, God-given scripture?

Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165 CE) explicitly accuses Jewish teachers of tampering with the LXX to remove christological passages, citing as evidence Psalm 96:10 (LXX 95:10), which in some early Christian citations reads "The Lord reigned from the wood" (ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου — a reference to the cross) — a phrase absent from the standard LXX and certainly from the MT. While Justin's accusation is historically implausible in this specific case, it reflects the deep Christian investment in the LXX as a christological document and the anxiety produced by Jewish scholars' rejection of LXX readings that did not appear in the Hebrew.

# Chapter Five: The Masoretes and the Standardization of the Hebrew Bible

## 5.1 Who Were the Masoretes?

The Masoretes were professional Jewish scribal scholars who, beginning roughly in the fifth or sixth century CE and continuing through the tenth century, undertook the monumental task of preserving, annotating, and transmitting the received consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible with extraordinary precision. They worked primarily in two centers: Babylon (particularly Sura and Pumbedita) and Palestine (particularly Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee). Their name derives from the Hebrew masorah, "tradition" — specifically the tradition of exact textual transmission.

The Masoretes inherited a consonantal text — the written Hebrew script in antiquity recorded only consonants, leaving vowels to be supplied by the reader from knowledge of the language and tradition. By the late antique period, with Hebrew increasingly a learned rather than a spoken language among Jews of the diaspora, there was genuine danger that the correct pronunciation — and therefore the correct understanding — of the text would be lost. The Masoretic project was, at its core, a project of crystallizing and perpetuating the oral reading tradition in written form.

## 5.2 The Tiberian Vowel System

The most consequential technical achievement of the Masoretes was the development of a sophisticated system of vocalization marks — the niqqud — to indicate the vowels of the Hebrew text. Three rival systems were developed in the early medieval period: the Babylonian vocalization system (supralinear — marks placed above the consonants), the Palestinian vocalization system (also supralinear but less fully developed), and the Tiberian vocalization system (sublinear — marks placed below the consonants, with some above and alongside). The Tiberian system, developed by the scribal academies of Tiberias, proved the most refined and ultimately the most authoritative, and it is the Tiberian system that appears in all standard Hebrew Bibles today.

The Tiberian vowel system is remarkably nuanced, distinguishing not only between the seven basic vowel qualities of Hebrew but also between long and short vowels, full and reduced vowels (sheva and the hateph vowels), and even metrical and pausal forms. The system was not invented wholesale but rather encoded a long-standing oral reading tradition — the tradition of the liturgical recitation of scripture in the synagogue. As Israel Yeivin demonstrates in Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah (1980), the vowel

points do not simply indicate how Hebrew was pronounced in the tenth century CE; they attempt to preserve a much more ancient reading tradition, though they inevitably also reflect the historical development of Hebrew phonology and the particular theological and hermeneutical choices of the Tiberian Masoretes.

## 5.3 Cantillation Marks (Te'amim)

Alongside the vowel points, the Masoretes developed an elaborate system of cantillation marks — te'amim or "accents" — that serve simultaneously as musical notation (indicating how the text is to be sung in liturgical recitation), as syntactic indicators (marking the major and minor divisions of each verse), and as semantic guides (indicating which words are to be grouped together and how clauses are to be parsed). The te'amim system is among the most sophisticated notation systems in ancient manuscript culture, distinguishing some 28 different marks that interact with each other according to complex hierarchical rules.

The te'amim matter for textual criticism because they encode a specific interpretation of each verse's syntax and meaning. When the Tiberian Masoretes assigned cantillation marks, they were making interpretive decisions about how the text should be parsed and understood. In some cases, their syntactic interpretation encoded in the te'amim differs from the interpretation implied by ancient translations, including the LXX — which may in turn reflect a different reading of an ambiguous Hebrew phrase.

## 5.4 The Masorah Parva and Masorah Magna

In addition to the vowel and cantillation systems, the Masoretes developed two bodies of textual annotations: the Masorah Parva (small Masorah), written in the margins alongside each page of text, and the Masorah Magna (large Masorah), written in the upper and lower margins. These annotations constitute a vast apparatus of textual statistics and cross-references designed to ensure accurate transmission.

The Masorah Parva notes such things as: how many times a given word or phrase appears in the entire Bible, whether a particular form appears only once (hapax legomenon), whether the written text (ketiv) differs from the traditional reading (qere), and other statistics designed to enable scribes to detect copying errors. The Masorah Magna provides more extended discussions of textual matters. Together, these annotations constitute a remarkable system of quality control for manuscript transmission.

The ketiv-qere apparatus deserves particular attention. In several hundred instances, the Masoretes identified a discrepancy between the written text (ketiv, "what is written") and the traditional oral reading (qere, "what is read"). In these cases, the consonants of the written text are preserved in the biblical text itself, while the vowels of the traditional reading are supplied by the pointing system, and a marginal note indicates the two forms. Some ketiv-qere pairs reflect ancient scribal errors or variant traditions; others reflect deliberate theological sensitivities (for example, the tetragrammaton YHWH is always read as Adonai, "Lord," a substitution encoded in the pointing system).

## 5.5 The Process of Standardization

The standardization of the Hebrew Bible text was not a single event but a centuries-long process. Following the catastrophic defeats of 70 CE and 135 CE (the First and Second Jewish-Roman Wars), the destruction of the Temple, and the scattering of Jewish communities, Rabbinic Judaism undertook a massive cultural-religious consolidation. One component of this consolidation was the progressive authorization of a single Hebrew text-type — the proto-MT — at the expense of the textual plurality represented in the pre-70 CE period.

The scholar most responsible for illuminating this standardization process is Shemaryahu Talmon, who in "The Old Testament Text" (in The Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1, ed. Ackroyd and Evans, 1970) argued that the plurality of pre-70 CE text-types was deliberately reduced in the post-70 period as part of Rabbinic Judaism's effort to define and stabilize its canonical heritage. Tov, building on Talmon's insights, suggests that the proto-MT tradition was already achieving dominance in certain circles by the turn of the era, and that the events of 70 CE accelerated rather than initiated this process. The Greek versions of Aquila (ca. 130 CE), Symmachus (ca. 200 CE), and Theodotion represent the Jewish recension movement — efforts to produce Greek translations that aligned more closely with the emerging proto-MT standard, in response to Christian appropriation of the LXX.

# Chapter Six: The Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex

## 6.1 The Aleppo Codex (Keter Aram Tzova)

The Aleppo Codex, known in Hebrew as Keter Aram Tzova ("Crown of Aleppo"), is the oldest nearly complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible to survive from antiquity. Written in Tiberias, Palestine, in approximately 930 CE, it represents the work of Aaron ben Moses ben Asher — the last and most authoritative of the Tiberian Masoretic dynasty. The consonantal text was copied by Solomon ben Buya'a, while Aaron ben Asher himself supplied the vowel points, cantillation marks, and Masorah annotations.

The Aleppo Codex achieved unparalleled authority in the medieval Jewish world. Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, 1135–1204 CE), the greatest medieval Jewish philosopher and legal authority, explicitly endorsed the Aleppo Codex as the most authoritative manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, stating in the Mishneh Torah (Laws of Torah Scrolls 8:4): "The codex known in Egypt upon which all relied... this is the one known as the Ben Asher codex." This endorsement cemented the codex's status as the reference standard for the Hebrew Bible in subsequent centuries.

The Aleppo Codex has a tragic modern history. Following the United Nations partition vote in November 1947 and the subsequent violence against Jewish communities in Syria, the Aleppo Jewish community's synagogue was attacked and burned on December 2–3, 1947. The Aleppo Codex, stored in the synagogue's vault, survived the fire, but when the community subsequently smuggled the codex to Israel in the late 1950s, approximately 40% of the manuscript — including all of the Torah, most of the Former Prophets, and portions of the Latter Prophets — was missing, whether destroyed, lost, or hidden remains disputed. Today the Aleppo Codex is housed at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, and efforts to locate the missing portions continue, including the investigative work of journalist Matti Friedman documented in The Aleppo Codex (2012).

The Hebrew University Bible Project (HUBP), led by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein and continued subsequently, used the Aleppo Codex as the base text for its critical edition of the Hebrew Bible (Hebrew University Bible), supplementing it where text is missing with the Leningrad Codex. The HUBP apparatus includes a comprehensive set of variant readings from the DSS, the LXX, the Peshitta (Syriac), the Targums, and the Vulgate, making it the most comprehensive critical apparatus for the Hebrew Bible currently available.

## 6.2 The Leningrad Codex (Codex Leningradensis)

The Leningrad Codex (formally Codex Leningradensis, now housed in the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg — formerly Leningrad) is the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible. Dated to 1008–1009 CE by a colophon in the manuscript itself, it was copied by Samuel ben Jacob and explicitly states that it was vocalized and annotated according to the tradition of Aaron ben Moses ben Asher — the same Tiberian Masoretic tradition as the Aleppo Codex.

Unlike the Aleppo Codex, the Leningrad Codex is intact and complete. For this reason, it has served as the base text for the two most widely used modern critical Hebrew Bibles: Biblia Hebraica (Rudolf Kittel, 3rd ed. 1937), Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS, 1967–1977, edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph), and the ongoing Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ, 2004–present). BHS in particular has been the standard reference text for Hebrew Bible scholarship for over half a century, used in seminaries, universities, and research institutions worldwide. Its critical apparatus provides variant readings from the ancient versions (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate, Targums) and the DSS.

The relationship between the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices is one of general agreement with occasional divergence. Both represent the Ben Asher Tiberian tradition, and both are authoritative witnesses to the Masoretic Text. Where they diverge, the Aleppo Codex is generally preferred as the more authoritative (because it was directly prepared by Aaron ben Asher himself), but since the Aleppo Codex is incomplete, the Leningrad Codex remains indispensable.

## 6.3 The Ben Asher Tradition and Its Rivals

The Ben Asher family of Tiberian Masoretes had a rival: the Ben Naftali tradition, also based in Tiberias, which differed from Ben Asher in hundreds of small but consistent ways — primarily in the placement of certain accent marks and in a number of vowel pointings. The differences between Ben Asher and Ben Naftali are documented in a medieval list (the "Differences between Ben Asher and Ben Naftali") and were analyzed by Paul Kahle in Cairo Geniza (1947). With the authentication and acceptance of the Aleppo Codex as the definitive Ben Asher standard (reinforced by Maimonides's endorsement), the Ben Asher tradition prevailed completely, and Ben Naftali readings survive only as a curiosity in the textual apparatus.

The victory of Ben Asher over Ben Naftali is itself a reminder that what we call "the Masoretic Text" represents a specific choice among competing Masoretic traditions — a choice that, while historically well-grounded and carefully transmitted, is not equivalent to "the original text of the Hebrew Bible" in any simple sense. The MT is the text of Rabbinic Judaism as finalized by one school of medieval Jewish scholarship, and it must be evaluated as such — authoritative within its tradition, but not the unchallenged ancestor of all ancient textual traditions.

## 6.4 Modern Critical Editions and the Ongoing Project

Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ), the successor to BHS, represents the current state of the art in Hebrew Bible critical editing. Using the Leningrad Codex as its base text while consulting the Aleppo Codex where available, BHQ provides a substantially revised critical apparatus that incorporates decades of advances in DSS scholarship, Septuagintal research, and ancient versional studies. The general editors (Adrian Schenker et al.) have followed a more conservative text-critical method than BHS, avoiding conjectural emendation and providing more extensive discussion of variant readings in accompanying commentary fascicles.

The ongoing critical edition of the LXX — the Göttingen Septuagint (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum) — provides the critical apparatus for the Greek side of the comparison, reconstructing the "Old Greek" (the earliest recoverable Greek translation) beneath centuries of manuscript transmission and recensional activity. Together, BHQ and the Göttingen LXX constitute the twin pillars of modern Hebrew Bible textual criticism.

# Chapter Seven: Theological Divergence — How Textual Variants Shape Doctrine

## 7.1 Divine Identity and the Name of God

One of the most theologically consequential features of the LXX is its systematic rendering of the divine name YHWH (the tetragrammaton) as κύριος (kyrios, "Lord"). This practice — reflected in the vast majority of LXX manuscripts — has been a matter of considerable scholarly debate. Albert Pietersma and others have argued that the original LXX may have retained some form of the divine name (either in Hebrew letters or in a Greek transcription), and that the systematic substitution of κύριος is a secondary development in the Greek transmission. The contrary view, maintained by Martin Rösel and others, is that the κύριος rendering goes back to the original translators.

Regardless of its origin, the κύριος rendering had profound theological consequences. In the New Testament, κύριος is the primary title applied to Jesus of Nazareth following his resurrection: "Jesus is Lord" (κύριος Ἰησοῦς, Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3) is arguably the earliest Christian confessional formula. Because the LXX had already established κύριος as the divine name — the name of the God of Israel — early Christian application of this title to Jesus carried the implicit freight of divine identity. NT authors, most explicitly in Philippians 2:9–11 (the Carmen Christi), directly apply to Jesus the language of Isaiah 45:23 LXX (a passage in which YHWH/κύριος swears that every knee will bow to him), effectively identifying Jesus with the God of Israel in a way that is inseparable from the LXX's substitution of κύριος for YHWH.

This "Kyrios Christology" — the theological identification of Jesus as the divine κύριος of the LXX — is, in an important sense, a specifically Greek-Bible theology. It depends on the LXX's κύριος rendering in ways that would be far less natural if one were reasoning from the Hebrew YHWH. Rabbinic Judaism, reasoning from the Hebrew text, maintained the absolute transcendence and uniqueness of YHWH and rejected any identification of YHWH with a human being as blasphemy (cf. the charge of blasphemy in the Passion narratives, John 10:33).

## 7.2 The Virgin Birth and Isaiah 7:14

We have already discussed Isaiah 7:14 in Chapter Two, but its theological significance warrants extended treatment here. Matthew 1:23 introduces the birth of Jesus with the formula: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had

spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin (ἡ παρθένος) shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.'" This is a direct quotation from LXX Isaiah 7:14.

The MT reads עַלְמָה (almah) — a young woman of marriageable age. The LXX rendered this as παρθένος (parthenos) — virgin. The doctrine of the virgin birth as a fulfillment of prophetic scripture depends entirely on the LXX rendering. The Hebrew text, as read in the Rabbinic tradition, refers to a young woman in Isaiah's own context (most likely the wife of Isaiah or of King Ahaz), giving birth to a child as a sign for the eighth-century BCE king. Rabbinic exegesis has consistently rejected the virgin birth interpretation, pointing to the Hebrew almah, which does not require virginity. The divergence between παρθένος and עַלְמָה thus encapsulates a major theological divide: the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth is a doctrine of the LXX, not of the MT.

## 7.3 The Suffering Servant and Atonement Theology

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (the "Suffering Servant Song") is the Old Testament passage most extensively applied to Jesus in the New Testament and in subsequent Christian theology. The passage is central to Paul's atonement theology (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; cf. Isaiah 53:5), to the Passion narratives (Luke 22:37, quoting Isaiah 53:12), and to Peter's preaching (1 Peter 2:22–25, quoting Isaiah 53:4, 5, 9).

The LXX of Isaiah 53 generally follows the MT closely, but with consistent shifts in emphasis. LXX Isaiah 53:10 reads, in part, "the Lord desires to cleanse him from his wound" (κύριος βούλεται καθαρίσαι αὐτὸν τῆς πληγῆς) — a rendering that shifts the emphasis from the MT's "it pleased the LORD to crush him" (וַיהוָה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי). The MT's language of YHWH's pleasure in the servant's crushing is stark and has been theologically and ethically challenging throughout the tradition; the LXX somewhat softens and reframes this language. Such shifts, while individually subtle, cumulatively contribute to a somewhat different profile of the Servant figure in Greek than in Hebrew.

## 7.4 Monotheism, the Divine Council, and the "Sons of God"

Deuteronomy 32:8–9 is, as we noted in Chapter Three, one of the most theologically significant MT-LXX-DSS divergences. The passage describes God's primordial distribution of the nations:

> *MT: "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)."*

> *LXX / 4QDeut-j: "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the angels of God (κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ / בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים)."*

The MT's "sons of Israel" is almost certainly a secondary theological correction of the earlier "sons of God" / "sons of El" reading, which is confirmed by 4QDeut-j and reflected in the LXX. The "sons of God" reading implies a divine council — a hierarchy of divine beings over whom YHWH is supreme and to whom the other nations are assigned — a theological concept thoroughly at home in ancient Near Eastern religion and in early Israelite religion but increasingly problematic for strict monotheism.

This divergence matters for both Jewish and Christian theology. Within Second Temple Judaism, the divine council concept survived robustly in apocalyptic literature (Daniel, 1 Enoch, the Dead Sea Scrolls), and some scholars (notably Heiser in The Unseen Realm, 2015) have argued that a "divine council worldview" underlies much of the NT's Christology, which exalts Jesus to a unique position within the divine hierarchy. Rabbinic Judaism, reading the MT's "sons of Israel," moved decisively away from any conception of a populated divine council, reinforcing strict monotheism.

## 7.5 Eschatology and the Psalms of Ascent

A number of Psalms present significantly different theological profiles in the LXX and MT. Psalm 110 (109 LXX) — the psalm most frequently quoted in the NT — opens in the MT: נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאדֹנִי ("The oracle of YHWH to my lord: Sit at my right hand..."). The LXX renders: Εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου ("The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand..."). The LXX rendering with two instances of κύριος — one referring to YHWH, the other to the Davidic figure — set the stage for the NT's Christological exegesis (Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:34; Hebrews 1:13), in which the "lord" addressed by YHWH is identified with Jesus. The Masoretic distinction between YHWH (God's name) and אֲדֹנִי (my lord, a human or divine being) is preserved in Hebrew but collapsed in the LXX's uniform κύριος, making the Christological identification more immediate in the Greek.

# Chapter Eight: The Parting of the Ways — MT, LXX, and the Bifurcation of Judaism and Christianity

## 8.1 The Scholarly Concept of the "Parting of the Ways"

The phrase "the parting of the ways" — popularized by James D. G. Dunn in the collection of essays he edited under that title (The Parting of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity, 1991) — refers to the complex, gradual process by which Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism separated from their shared Second Temple Jewish matrix into two distinct religions with incompatible theologies, practices, and scriptures. The precise dating, geography, and mechanisms of this parting remain vigorously debated, but most scholars now affirm that it was a process extending from the first through at least the fourth century CE, not a single event.

What has received less attention in the "parting of the ways" scholarship than it deserves is the role of the textual bifurcation — the choice of the LXX by the church versus the choice of the MT by Rabbinic Judaism — as a constitutive factor in the religious separation. This chapter argues that the divergent canonical scriptures were not merely a symptom of the parting of the ways but were among its active causes: the two communities read different Bibles, and those different Bibles generated different theologies, which in turn generated different religious identities.

## 8.2 The Jewish Rejection of the LXX

There is strong evidence that the LXX was, in the Second Temple period, a respected Jewish text used widely among Greek-speaking diaspora Jews. Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE – 50 CE) treated the LXX as divinely inspired, equal in authority to the Hebrew text. The Letter of Aristeas celebrated the LXX's production as a miracle of divine providence. The LXX Psalms and Isaiah were apparently read in synagogues of the Greek diaspora.

This situation changed dramatically in the first and second centuries CE, as the LXX became increasingly identified with Christian exegesis. As the church appropriated the LXX as a specifically Christian text — arguing that it prophesied Jesus, that its κύριος referred to Jesus, that its παρθένος in Isaiah 7:14 proved the virgin birth — Rabbinic Judaism distanced itself from the LXX and reoriented itself toward the Hebrew text. The Talmudic tradition (b.

Megillah 9a) records the production of the LXX as a tragedy, comparing the day of its completion to the day the Golden Calf was made.

The Jewish recensions that followed — Aquila (ca. 130 CE), Symmachus (ca. 200 CE), and Theodotion (perhaps earlier, revised ca. 150–200 CE) — represent a systematic effort to produce Greek translations that would align with the emerging Masoretic standard and undercut the Christian use of the LXX. Aquila's translation, in particular, is notoriously literal to the point of unreadability, translating even the Hebrew particle et (the accusative marker, which has no semantic content in isolation) with the Greek σύν — a rendering designed to achieve maximal correspondence with every element of the Hebrew text. The motivation was explicitly anti-Christian: if the LXX's παρθένος could be used to argue for a virgin birth, Aquila would provide a translation (νεᾶνις, "young woman") that closed that interpretive door.

## 8.3 Origen, Jerome, and the Question of Hebrew Truth

The debate between the LXX and the Hebrew text as the authoritative Christian Old Testament was not resolved quickly. Origen's Hexapla represented an attempt to hold both in view simultaneously — to understand the LXX in light of the Hebrew while preserving the LXX as the church's received text. Origen's concern was practical: he needed to be able to engage in biblical debate with Jewish scholars who used the Hebrew text, and he needed his congregation to understand where the LXX agreed with and diverged from the Hebrew.

Jerome's Hebraica Veritas principle represented a more radical choice: the Hebrew truth, not the Greek translation, was the standard. Jerome's Vulgate Old Testament, translated from the Hebrew ca. 390–405 CE, moved the Latin-speaking Western church closer to the MT tradition — though Jerome retained some LXX and Old Latin influences, particularly in the Psalms (the Psalterium Gallicanum, his revision of the Old Latin Psalter based on Origen's Hexaplaric LXX, remained in liturgical use in the Roman Rite until the twentieth century, even after Jerome had produced a fresh translation from the Hebrew).

Augustine's objection to Jerome's Hebraica Veritas program deserves close attention. In Epistle 71 (to Jerome), Augustine argued that diverging from the LXX would cause confusion among communities that had long used the Greek text, would imply that the apostles and evangelists had been wrong to use the LXX, and — most tellingly — would effectively place the church's scriptural authority in the hands of Jewish scholars who possessed the Hebrew text.

Augustine's concern encapsulates the ecclesiological stakes of the textual choice: which Bible was the authoritative Christian Bible?

## 8.4 The Canonical Boundary and the Deuterocanon

The MT tradition (via Rabbinic Judaism and Jerome's canon) excluded the deuterocanonical books — Tobit, Judith, 1–2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and the additions to Daniel and Esther — as lacking Hebrew originals and therefore lacking canonical authority. The LXX tradition, as received by the Greek-speaking church and subsequently by the Latin-speaking church (partially through the Vulgate's inclusion of these books), included the deuterocanonical books as scripture.

The Protestant Reformation's return to the Hebraica Veritas principle — Martin Luther's translation of the Old Testament was based on the Hebrew text — aligned Protestant biblical authority with the MT canon, excluding the deuterocanonicals (which Luther designated "Apocrypha," readable but not canonical). The Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent (1546), formally defined the deuterocanonical books as canonical, essentially reaffirming the LXX canon over against the Reformers' Hebrew canon. This canonical divergence between Catholic and Protestant Christianity — itself a consequence of the MT-LXX divergence — persists to the present day.

Eastern Orthodoxy, heir to the Greek-speaking church, retained the LXX as its authoritative Old Testament and to this day celebrates a liturgy largely shaped by LXX texts. The theological profile of Eastern Orthodox Christianity — including its more robust use of the Psalms, its inclusion of the deuterocanonical Wisdom literature, and its distinctive eschatology — is partly a function of its LXX textual heritage.

# Conclusion: Two Bibles, Two Religions — How the Divergence Between the MT and LXX Shaped Christianity Away from Rabbinic Judaism

The argument of this monograph may now be stated in its fullest form. The divergence between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint is not merely a philological curiosity — a puzzle for text critics and translators. It is, in a profound and underappreciated sense, one of the generative conditions of the two great religions that emerged from Second Temple Judaism: Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. Two different Bibles produced two different religions.

The mechanism of this divergence-driven bifurcation operated at several levels simultaneously. At the level of prophetic interpretation, the LXX's rendering of key passages — παρθένος in Isaiah 7:14, the "body" of Psalm 40:6, the "they pierced" in alternative readings of Zechariah 12:10, the κύριος of Psalm 110 — provided the early church with a Greek scriptural basis for Christological claims that the Hebrew text, as read in the Rabbinic tradition, did not support. The virgin birth, the incarnation, the suffering atonement, the divine Lordship of Jesus — these doctrines were not invented by the NT authors without scriptural warrant; they were developed in dialogue with a Greek Bible that seemed, to those who read it in the light of Jesus's life and death, to speak of him on every page.

At the level of divine identity, the LXX's κύριος theology — the identification of YHWH as κύριος — provided a terminological bridge by which early Christians could identify Jesus with the God of Israel. The κύριος Christology of Paul and the NT is inseparable from the LXX's translation choice. Rabbinic Judaism, reading the Hebrew text with YHWH in its proper place and human figures designated by distinct titles, found no such bridge and could only regard the Christian identification of a crucified man with YHWH as blasphemy — a judgment that was not a failure of theological imagination but a perfectly logical reading of the Hebrew text.

At the level of canon, the LXX's inclusion of the deuterocanonical books gave the church access to a body of theological literature — the Wisdom of Solomon, with its robust Logos theology and its personification of Wisdom; 2 Maccabees, with its explicit affirmations of bodily resurrection; Sirach, with its extensive Wisdom Christology — that enriched and developed the theological vocabulary available to NT authors and the early church Fathers.

Rabbinic Judaism's exclusion of these books from the canonical Hebrew Bible meant that it developed its theology without this additional literature.

At the level of the standardization process itself, the Masoretes' achievement in the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices was not merely a scribal accomplishment — it was a theological-religious act. By fixing the vowel points, the cantillation marks, the Masorah, and the ketiv-qere apparatus, the Masoretes crystallized a specific reading of the Hebrew Bible — specific theological interpretations encoded in the very vocalization and syntactic parsing of the text. When the MT reads בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("sons of Israel") in Deuteronomy 32:8 where the DSS and LXX read "sons of God," that is not a neutral scribal decision; it is a theological statement about the nature of YHWH's relationship to the nations, one that steered Rabbinic Judaism away from the divine council theology that had flourished in Second Temple Judaism and toward the strict monotheism that became the hallmark of medieval Jewish thought.

The witness of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been indispensable for understanding the full picture. The DSS reveal that in the Second Temple period — the very period in which both Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were taking shape — no single, authoritative Hebrew text of the Bible existed. Multiple textual traditions circulated simultaneously, with different communities privileging different text-types. The proto-MT tradition was one strand among many. The LXX Vorlage tradition was another. The pre-Samaritan harmonizing tradition was a third. And a host of non-aligned manuscripts attested to a still wider range of textual diversity. Both Rabbinic Judaism's eventual privileging of the proto-MT and Christianity's eventual embrace of the LXX as its Old Testament represented choices — historically conditioned, community-defining choices — within this originally plural textual landscape.

Sidnie White Crawford's scholarship on the fluidity of Second Temple scriptural composition reinforces this point: the very concept of a singular, fixed "biblical text" is a post-Second Temple retrojection. Both communities — Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity — selected their Bibles from a plural tradition, and in selecting their Bibles, they selected their theologies and ultimately their identities.

Emanuel Tov's textual-critical project, across decades of meticulous scholarship, has demonstrated that the LXX must be taken seriously not merely as a translation but as an independent textual witness reflecting genuinely ancient Hebrew traditions — traditions that in many cases predate

and challenge the authority of the proto-MT. This finding does not undermine either Jewish or Christian scripture; rather, it enriches our understanding of both by revealing the depth and complexity of the tradition from which they both emerged.

The definitive separation between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity was overdetermined — it had social, political, theological, and institutional causes that extended far beyond any textual question. But the textual bifurcation was among the most consequential of those causes, and it has been insufficiently appreciated in the broader scholarship on the parting of the ways. When Rabbinic Judaism chose the Hebrew text and Christianity chose the Greek text — and when each community subsequently defined, standardized, and transmitted its chosen scripture with authoritative interpretive traditions (the Masorah and Talmud on the one side; the canon lists, commentaries, and liturgical traditions on the other) — the two communities effectively created different literary foundations for their religious worlds. The same stories, psalms, and prophecies, read in different languages with different wording, generated different theologies and different communities.

The ghost of this ancient bifurcation haunts every modern ecumenical encounter between Jews and Christians, every scholarly debate about the "original text" of the Hebrew Bible, and every translation committee that must decide whether to render Isaiah 7:14 as "virgin" or "young woman." Two Bibles — and two religions — continue to inhabit the same ancient textual heritage, reading it differently, and finding in it the mirrors of their own distinct souls.

# Bibliography

## Primary Sources and Critical Editions

Aland, Barbara, et al., eds. Novum Testamentum Graece (Nestle-Aland). 28th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

Elliger, Karl, and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds. Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967–1977.

Rahlfs, Alfred, and Robert Hanhart, eds. Septuaginta. Rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

Schenker, Adrian, et al., eds. Biblia Hebraica Quinta. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004–present.

Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931–present.

Parry, Donald W., and Emanuel Tov, eds. The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader. 6 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2004–2005.

Tov, Emanuel, ed. The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library. Rev. ed. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Weber, Robert, and Roger Gryson, eds. Biblia Sacra Vulgata. 5th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007.

## Secondary Sources

Attridge, Harold W. The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.

Barthélemy, Dominique. Les devanciers d'Aquila. Vetus Testamentum Supplements 10. Leiden: Brill, 1963.

Beaton, Richard. Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 123. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Brooke, George J. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Cross, Frank Moore. "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert." Harvard Theological Review 57 (1964): 281–299.

Cross, Frank Moore, and Shemaryahu Talmon, eds. Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Crawford, Sidnie White. Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times. Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Crawford, Sidnie White. "Reworked Pentateuch." In Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls, edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam, 2:775–777. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Crawford, Sidnie White. "The Textual Basis of the Septuagint." In A New English Translation of the Septuagint, edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, xix–xxiv. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

De Troyer, Kristin. Rewriting the Sacred Text: What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible. Text-Critical Studies 4. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Dunn, James D. G., ed. The Parting of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity. London: SCM Press, 1991.

Fernández Marcos, Natalio. The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins. Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Flint, Peter W. The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 17. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Friedman, Matti. The Aleppo Codex: In Pursuit of One of the World's Most Coveted, Sacred, and Mysterious Books. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2012.

Goshen-Gottstein, Moshe H. The Aleppo Codex: Provided with Masoretic Notes and Pointed by Aaron Ben Moses Ben-Asher. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1976.

Heiser, Michael S. "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God." Bibliotheca Sacra 158, no. 629 (2001): 52–74.

Heiser, Michael S. The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015.

Hengel, Martin. The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Old Testament Studies. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002.

Kahle, Paul E. The Cairo Geniza. London: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Law, Timothy Michael. When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

McLay, R. Timothy. The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Orlinsky, Harry M. "The Septuagint as Holy Writ and the Philosophy of the Translators." Hebrew Union College Annual 46 (1975): 89–114.

Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. A New English Translation of the Septuagint. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Rösel, Martin. "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 31 (2007): 411–428.

Schiffman, Lawrence H. Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994.

Silva, Moisés, and Karen H. Jobes. Invitation to the Septuagint. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.

Smith, Mark S. The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Stendahl, Krister. The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1954.

Talmon, Shemaryahu. "The Old Testament Text." In The Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1: From the Beginnings to Jerome, edited by P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, 159–199. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Tov, Emanuel. "The Jeremiah Scrolls from Qumran." Revue de Qumran 14, no. 54 (1989): 189–206.

Tov, Emanuel. "The Nature and Background of Harmonizations in Biblical Manuscripts." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 31 (1985): 3–29.

Tov, Emanuel. The Septuagint as a Translation: Studies in the Relationship Between the Greek Translation and the Hebrew Text. Jerusalem: Simor, 1999.

Tov, Emanuel. The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research. 2nd ed. Jerusalem Biblical Studies 8. Jerusalem: Simor, 1997.

Tov, Emanuel. Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible. 3rd ed., revised and expanded. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.

Tov, Emanuel. The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and an Introduction to the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Series. DJD 39. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002.

Ulrich, Eugene. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible. Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Ulrich, Eugene. "The Septuagint Manuscripts from Qumran: A Reappraisal of Their Value." In Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings, edited by G. J. Brooke and B. Lindars, 49–80. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.

VanderKam, James C. The Dead Sea Scrolls Today. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Würthwein, Ernst. The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica. Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Yeivin, Israel. Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah. Translated by E. J. Revell. Society of Biblical Literature Masoretic Studies 5. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980.