

**Reason 7: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Silver Scrolls**



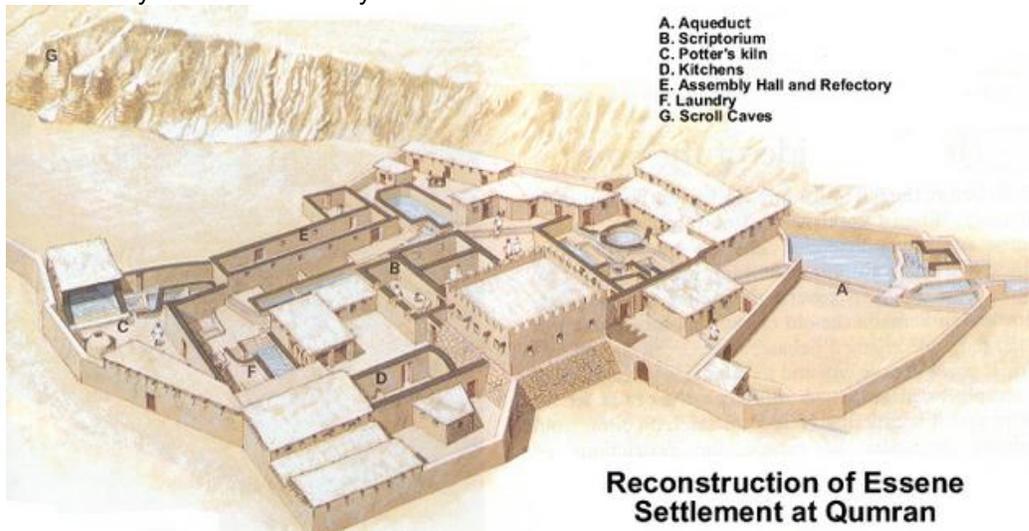
In 1947, near the Dead Sea in an area known as Qumran ancient Hebrew manuscripts were discovered that had been hidden for thousands of years. Prior to the discovery of these manuscripts, the oldest existing complete copies of the Old Testament were only dated to 1008 A.D., causing many to question the reliability scripture. At the site of Qumran, the community known as the *Essenes*<sup>1</sup> were actively involved in the copy and transmission of scripture, before their destruction by the Romans in the first and second century. The Essenes hid their treasured manuscripts in caves to prevent their destruction by the Romans. Hidden away they would be discovered two-thousand years later.



Qumran cave 4, where ninety percent of the scrolls were found

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, demonstrated to a skeptical world, the books of the Bible were reliable and unchanged. Today many people have failed understand how amazing this discovery was? Before we can understand why the Dead Sea Scrolls was such a powerful piece of evidence, we need to understand the dilemma a lot of non-Christians and some Christians have. Many people just do not understand what the Bible is, so its important to answer a few questions.

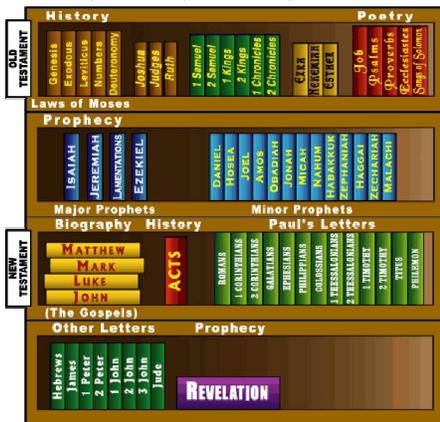
- What is the Bible?
- How did we get the Bible?
- Why is the Bible written in so many different languages?
- Why are there so many versions?



Confusion about these questions prevents many from understanding the amazing discovery of

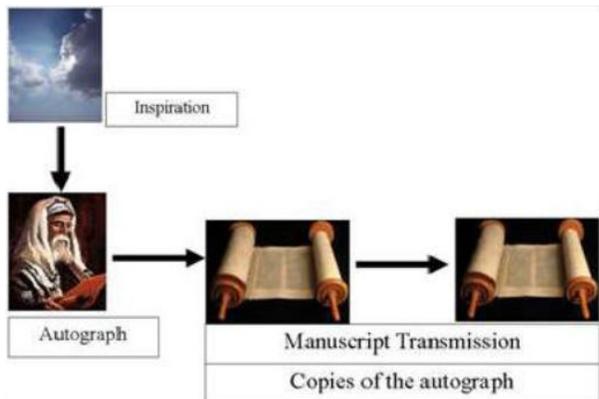
<sup>1</sup> Essenes were a monastic group who according to Roman Historian Pliny the Elder, lived west of the Dead Sea and north of Ein Gedi. Josephus fixed the total population at about 4000 individuals in A.D. 70.

the Dead Sea scrolls. The Dead Scrolls validates the reliability of the Old Testament in its original languages. First before we can understand about the reliability of the Old Testament (*Tanach*), these questions need to be answered.



### 1. What is the Bible?

The word Bible comes from *Byblos* in the Greek actually and means “Book”. The Bible is a collection of books written over a 1500-year period of time, from 1450 BC until A.D. 96; These books were inspired by God, meaning God was the source of the original Words revealed through the authors. In this collection of books (the Bible), God answers the questions of life. 1. Who is God? 2. Who are we? 3. Why the world is the way it is? 4. What is God’s plan for restoration and redemption? 5. What is in the future is?



### 2. How did we get the Bible?

The Bible is composed of individual books, written by 39 to 40 different authors over a 1500-year period. The words they wrote were revealed by God and affirmed by the historical events in their day. The inspired writers works were collected into a body of “Holy” scripture latter to be become known as the Bible. The original written document was known as the *Autograph*, this was the original *Manuscript* (Meaning: hand written). Copies of this manuscript were made and sent to other areas in the world. As the

document started to age, copies of the copies were made to preserve the original words of the manuscript.

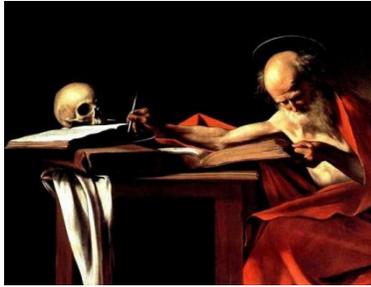
Making new copies of old manuscripts to preserve the original words is known as *manuscript transmission*. This allowed later generations to have accurate copies of the original. As events happened, new writers inspired by God were sent to warn and inform the nation of Israel. They were collected into what is known as the *Canon*, (meaning rule, the “standard” of inspired books accepted as authoritative. The writings of new prophets were added to this collection over to become incorporated into the Bible.

The Bible was originally revealed was in 3-languages. The Old Testament was mainly revealed in Hebrew with some portions in Aramaic<sup>2</sup>. The New Testament was in written *Koine* (Common) Greek.

### Why is the Bible written in so many different languages?

Unless someone is fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek you would not be able to understand the Bible in the original language. Translators make translations from the original languages into a language which is understood by the reader. Jerome (A.D. 347-420) translated the Old Testament from Hebrew and the New Testament from Greek into the Latin language, allowing people in the Roman Empire to read the Bible in their own tongue. The Bible (Old Testament)

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Chapter 2 to 7 were mainly written in Aramaic, along a portion of Esther and one verse in Jeremiah. Aramaic is a Semitic language spoken in Babylon in the days of Daniel and Esther around 605 to 465 B.C.

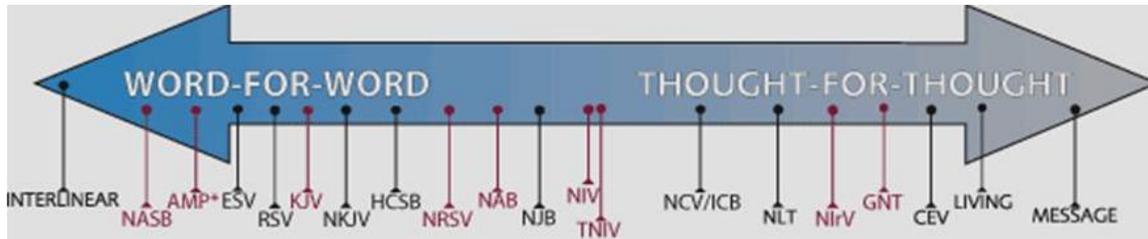


was translated into Greek and Aramaic before it was translated into Latin. The Greek translation is known as the *Septuagint* (named after the 70-translators), while the *Aramaic* translation is known as the *Targum* (Meaning translation).

*Why are there different versions of the Bible translations?*

The main goal of a translation is to put the Bible into a language the reader can understand. There are some variables in translation, for example the word for chair could be translated “resting place”, “throne” etc. A translator might have a purpose based on his or her method of translation. Some translations are translated word for word or *literal*. When a translation is based on the idea of the text it is known as idiomatic. A *paraphrase* translation is looser rendering of the text from the original language.

All these different purposes lead to different versions of a language translation. For example the NIV is idiomatic or *thought for thought*, the Good News Translation (GNT) is a paraphrase and the New American Standard Version (NASB) is more literal. See Chart below:



The Bible in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek is the WORD of God, the translations are a translation of the Word of God.



*How reliable is*

Many people Bible, also reliability of the manuscripts the Bible, they the Bible has This question the discovery of Scrolls.

In November shepherd Muhammed Edh-Dhib, along cousins were throwing rocks in a cave when they heard a shattering sound like When they investigated the cave they Jewish manuscripts, not knowing their sold for a few dollars. However experts manuscripts were thousands of years old. At first the boys removed seven scrolls including the famous *Isaiah scroll (1QIs<sup>a3</sup>)* which has been dated by some to over 202 to 93 B.C, almost 2200-years old.



Page from Aleppo Codex, Deuteronomy

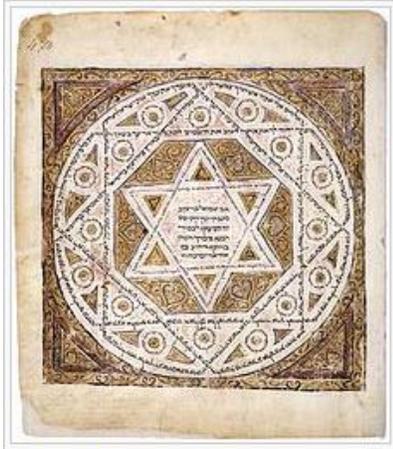
*the Bible?*

who question the question the original used to translate say over the years been changed. was answered with the Dead Sea

1947 a young Arab with his two near the Dead Sea, pottery breaking. found ancient value, they were soon realized these

<sup>3</sup> Manuscripts from the Dead Sea are given specific codes to identify them with the letter Q. For Example the Great Isaiah Scroll was found in Cave 1, and is noted with a number (1), (Q) for Qumran,(Is) for Isaiah and (a) for the first of the two scrolls of Isaiah found in Cave 1. 1QIs<sub>a</sub>

Additional expeditions at the site have revealed over 900 documents and fragments from between 335 B.C. to A.D. 100. What made this discovery so amazing regarding the Bible is that a portion of every book of Jewish Bible (Old Testament) was found at the site except for the book of Esther.



Leningrad Codex (cover page E, folio 474a)

It is important to understand the Jewish scribes had a tradition of burying manuscripts when they became old and unreadable due to age. They would replace these manuscripts with newer ones; this was known as manuscript transmission. Therefore the oldest existing Hebrew Manuscripts prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was the *Leningrad Codex*. The Leningrad Codex was dated to A.D. 1008, and was the most complete Hebrew Text in existence. The other manuscript was *Aleppo Codex* dated a few decades older than the Leningrad Codex, but portions were missing from this text. These two manuscripts were used as the original source material to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew to English and other languages.

Now with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, they could compare the Hebrew and see how much of the Bible had changed since the Dead Sea scrolls were over 1100-years older than then the Leningrad and Aleppo Codex.

#### *How were the Dead Sea Scrolls Dated?*

Someone might ask the question, how do you know these manuscripts were 1100-years older than the earlier copies? The dating of the scrolls has been confirmed using several methods. The first method was *Radiocarbon dating*<sup>4</sup>, (carbon-14), this method clearly showed they were 2000-years old. *The Paleographical Method* dated the texts between 125 and 100 B.C., this method “compares the shapes and characters of particular text with that of the structures and shapes of external sources that already have been dated, such as coins and inscriptions”<sup>5</sup>. The third and most recent method used was the *Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)*. From two separate tests on the Isaiah Scroll in 1991 and 1998, the Isaiah Scroll was dated to 202 and 93 BC, this was done by combining the tests of two separate laboratories in Zurich and Tucson.<sup>6</sup>



#### *What is the conclusion?*

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls had many bible critics excited, they were sure the documents would prove how the Bible (Old Testament) had changed over the years. They were disappointed in the results, the manuscripts proved otherwise. The manuscripts along with their dating proved how reliable the Bible really was. Gleason Archer is an Old Testament scholar and professor, after examining the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts and comparing them to the

other Hebrew manuscripts he concluded,

<sup>4</sup> Carbon-14 dating compares the amount of Carbon-14 in an item, since we know the half life of Carbon-14, we can determine the age based on the amount of Carbon-14 in the system.

<sup>5</sup> The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible, Joseph M. Holden, Norman Geisler, Harvest House Publishers, 2013, pg. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Pg. 40

“They proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling”<sup>7</sup>

Another scholar F.F. Bruce concluded,

“It may now be more confidently asserted than ever before that the Dead Sea discoveries have enabled us to answer this question [of the reliability of Bible manuscripts] in the affirmative with much greater assurance than was possible before 1948.”<sup>8</sup>

### The Silver Scroll

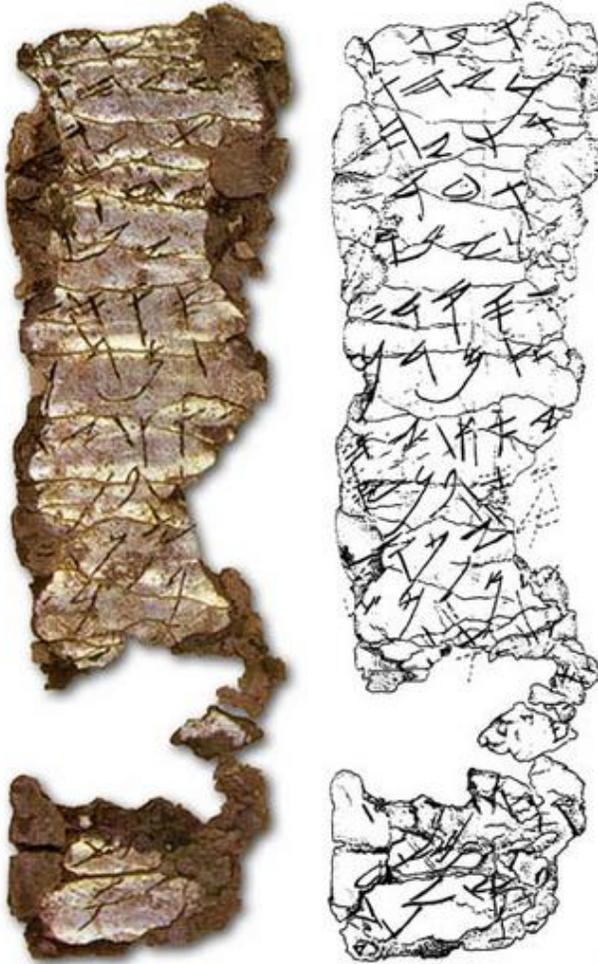
In 1979 Archeologists led by Gabriel Barkay of Bar-Ilan University were excavating in tombs dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC in southern Jerusalem. In an area known as Ketef Hinnom (Valley of Hinnom) when they unearthed two tiny objects now known as the *Ketef Hinnom Silver Scrolls*.

These were Hebrew manuscripts recorded on silver sheets, on these scrolls were dated to before the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.) were portions of the priestly benediction from Numbers 6:24-26 and phrases from other books of the Bible, Exodus 20:6, Deuteronomy 5:10 and 20:6.

The Translation of the 18 lines of the first scroll reads:

“YHW....the grea..the covenant and...raciousness towards those who love...and those who keep...the eternal?...blessing more than any...re and more than Evil. For redemption is in him. For YHWH is our restorer...rock. May YHWH bles..you and ...keep you YHWH make....shine...”

-- הברו (כ)  
 -ניהו-  
 -ר יה (ו)  
 --ךעה-  
 -שיברכ  
 יהוה ו  
 (י)שמרכ  
 יאר יה  
 (יה) פניו  
 (אל) יכ וי  
 שמ לך ש  
 -- לו (מ) --  
 -----  
 -- --  
 -- כמ --  
 -----  
 -- נ-נ --  
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The second scroll contains 12 lines in ancient paleo-Hebrew and reads,

“May be blessed...by YHW...the warrior 9or helper) and the rebuke of ...vil: May bless you, YHWH, keep you. Make shine, YH-H, His face...you and g-rant you p-ce...”

<sup>7</sup> Gleason Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Moody Publishing, Chicago, pg. 19, 1964

<sup>8</sup> F.F. Bruce, Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Eerdmans Publishing, 1956, Pgs. 61-62



### The Importance of the Silver Scrolls

These scrolls were even older than the Dead Sea Scrolls by almost 400-years, since they were dated to before the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., These scrolls are the oldest existing copies a biblical passage in the world.

They like the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the accuracy and care of manuscript transmission by the Hebrew scribes. In addition, these Silver Scrolls answered critics

who claim the Hebrew Scriptures were written in the Hellenistic age (4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC). Also the Silver Scrolls contain the oldest existing use of the name of God, (YHWH) showing that the name was not a later development as critics of the Bible have tried to insist.

Since they were used as amulets, it showed the reverence of scripture as the WORD of God by the Israelite community. They also showed the priestly benediction had not developed after the Babylonian captivity.