

## Old Testament Canon – Notes from PowerPoint Slides

### SLIDE 2 Manuscripts

Only 271 out of 23,000 verses written in Aramaic

Aramaic closely related to Hebrew and uses the same writing system

Aramaic language of the common man in Palestine after the Babylonian exile in 500 BC

Numbers shown as letters similar to Roman Numerals I, II, VI or XX

Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, “Please speak to your servants in **Aramaic**, since we understand it. Don’t speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.” (Isaiah 36:11)

And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language. (Ezra 4 as noted in the slide)

Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in **Aramaic**, Latin and Greek. (John 19:20)

Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in **Aramaic**, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). (John 20:16)

Three times in John, the apostle describes a place, then says “which in Aramaic is ...”

### SLIDE 3 Manuscripts

Do you read Hebrew left-to-right or right-to-left? How can you tell when one word ends and another word begins? Hebrew written from right to left as strings of letters without large spaces between words. Original writing was without vowels, while the spoken language uses vowels to give context to the consonants. Words could have different meanings depending on the context and pronunciation, which is called a HOMOGRAPH. Here are a few examples from the English language - minute (time) vs minute (small) or lead (metal) vs lead (leadership).

### SLIDE 4 Manuscripts

Notice anything different? Pronunciation and Vocalization added in Middle Ages to help Jews maintain the Hebrew language

### SLIDE 5 Manuscripts

Scroll was a long piece of material, usually leather and was the principal form of manuscripts before the time of Christ

Codex was a long piece of either leather or papyrus, folded up in a format like a modern book with a binding. Most common form of manuscripts after AD 200

Papyrus was a 12-15 foot reedy plant found in Nile delta with thick, hollow stalks. They were split open, rolled out and glued together. Limited to 30 feet in length and least likely to survive for long periods without disintegrating.

Vellum or parchment was specially prepared leather using calf/antelope skins (vellum) or sheep/goat skins (parchment). Vellum became the chief material for creating manuscripts

### SLIDE 6 Manuscripts

Cairo Codex = AD 895

Leningrad Prophets Codex = AD 916

British Museum Codex of the Pentateuch = AD 950

Masoretes Jews – active in Tiberias, a town on the Sea of Galilee

They compiled and analyzed various different strands of Hebrew text, then destroyed all the variant readings.

Jewish Law required old or damaged copies to be destroyed

Methods of copying were meticulous *to an extreme*:

- Counted all the letters of the Old Testament
- Middle letter, middle word and middle verse of each book
- Number of times each Hebrew letter appeared in each book
- Number of verses that contained all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet

### SLIDE 8 Manuscripts

Considering you are examining an old copy in order to make a new copy.

With dirt and age of the material, would you be able to distinguish between these Hebrew letters?

### SLIDE 9 Manuscripts

Compared the text to the Samaritan Pentateuch

Compared the text to the Vulgate by Jerome, a Hebrew scholar

Pair small silver scrolls

Scripture Numbers 6:24-26 was identical to the Leningrad Codex!

Mishnah – Contains many quotations of the OT that are very similar.

Talmud – These also quote the OT and contribute to its reliability.

### SLIDE 11 Dead Sea Scrolls

Essenes, an ascetic Jewish splinter group that moved to remote desert hills east of Jerusalem

Over 40,000 inscribed fragments and at least portions or whole of 500 books, many of which were Old Testament books

Found portions or whole of every Old Testament book except Esther

Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) has almost 500,000 letters. Only 169 letters were questioned! (99.97% the same)

### SLIDE 14 Dead Sea Scrolls

Major intact text from caves 1-11 were published in late 1950s and are housed in the Shrine of the Book (part of the Israel museum in Jerusalem). In 1991, the remaining 40% (mainly fragments from cave 4) were pressured to be published. A few years ago, Oxford University Press published *Discovery in the Judean Desert 33* lists 3000 fragments that have not been identified.

### SLIDE 15 Dead Sea Scrolls

Two complete copies of Isaiah -It shows only spelling differences

Chapter 53 – had only 17 letters that were different than the manuscripts in the middle ages.

Spelling - 10 letters, minor – 4 letters, 3 letters

Hebrew word for light (verse 11). Out of the 166 words, only 1 word is in question!

In 1952, English RSV had only 13 very minor changes.

### SLIDE 17 OT Canon and Apocrypha

Hebrew word QANEH, which means reed or cane (i.e. measuring stick, standard or ruler)

Chosen by church as a whole ~AD 150 with fixed lists already circulating

AD 140s—earliest NT canon; differences between lists worked out by AD 200

AD 367—earliest canon with identical books and order as modern NTs

Athanasius AD 367 – 1<sup>st</sup> to list 27 NT books after the council of Nicea in AD 325

Some earliest lists include non-apostolic writings such as Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermes (AD 100). Muratorian Fragment mentions that the Shepherd of Hermes could be read in public, but that it was not to be considered as part of the apostolic writings

Muratorian Fragment (AD 180) early list showed Luke, John, Acts, all letters except Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1 John. 3<sup>rd</sup> century Christian leader Origen recorded the accepted list of books, which is identical to ours. First major church council at Nicea in AD 325 showed NT canon had been unchanged for over 100 years

Criteria – ancient, apostolic, used widely in church, seen as orthodox

Efficient Roman postal system (60 miles/day), but not all churches had the same documents

Most churches did not have all 27 books until 2<sup>nd</sup> century, some not until 4<sup>th</sup> century

### SLIDE 18 OT Canon and Apocrypha

Different order of Old Testament books

Greek translation called Septuagint or LXX completed in 300-200 BC

Septuagint was the Old Testament in use at the time of Jesus Christ

Last book in Hebrew Bible – 2 Chronicles (remember this for later)

### SLIDE 19 OT Canon and Apocrypha

Teachings not in OT (purgatory, almsgiving for forgiveness, prayers to or for the dead) and contained legend and fiction as well as historical, geographical, chronological errors.

The *apocrypha* wasn't included at first in the Septuagint, but was later appended by the Alexandrian Jews. Not accepted by most Jews as Scripture.

Jerome's Vulgate used the Septuagint in his translation, but the Septuagint was never considered canonical by the Jews. Jerome openly disparaged the worth of the *apocrypha* even as he translated it. Could not find Hebrew versions. He coined the word *apocrypha*. Eastern Orthodox Church never embraced it.

### SLIDE 20 OT Canon and Apocrypha

Abel's death (Genesis – first book in Hebrew Bible)

Zechariah's death (2 Chronicles – last book in Hebrew Bible)

### SLIDE 21 OT Canon and Apocrypha

NT writers eluded to it, but never quoted from it.

Early church "fathers" Melito (AD 170) and Origen (AD 230) rejected it.

Jewish historian Josephus rejected it.

Tobit – using the smoke from the liver and heart of a fish to drive off a demon)

Judith – Nebuchadnezzar listed as a king of the Assyrians

Ecclesiasticus 25:19 Any iniquity is insignificant compared to a wife's iniquity

2 Maccabees 12:39-46 It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins

2 Maccabees 15:37,38 I will bring my own story to an end here too. If it is well written, and to the point, that is what I wanted; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that is the best I could do

Sirach 19:7 Tell nothing to a friend or foe; If you have a fault, reveal it not

Sirach 3:29 Water quenches a flaming fire and alms atone for sins

Sirach 25:18 There is scarce any evil like that in a woman; may she fall to the lot of the sinner

46 books in several categories. Other Apocryphal writings include Book of Enoch, Apocalypse of Moses, Testament of Job, Book of Jesus and others