

~VERSIONS (445)

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· Translations of the Bible from **Hebrew**, **Aramaic**, and **Greek** into other tongues. Translation work has made the Word of God available to thousands of millions of persons unable to understand the original Biblical languages.

· The early versions of the Scriptures were handwritten and were therefore in the form of manuscripts. However, since the advent of the printing press, many additional versions, or translations, have appeared, and these have generally been published in great quantities. Some versions have been prepared directly from **Hebrew** and **Greek** Bible texts, whereas others are based on earlier translations.

· The Scriptures have been published, the whole or in part, in more than 1,800 languages. From the standpoint of language coverage, this means that some 97 percent of the earth's population can have access to at least some part of the Bible.

· An account of versions, or translations, of the Scriptures will engender gratitude to Yehowah God for the wonderful way in which he has preserved his Word for the benefit of mankind's millions.

·· Ancient Versions Of The Hebrew Scriptures

· Extant today are possibly 6,000 ancient **manuscripts** of all or portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, written in Hebrew, with the exception of a few Aramaic sections.

· Known to be still in existence are also many **manuscripts** of old **versions**, or **translations**, of the Hebrew Scriptures in various

languages. Some **versions** were in themselves **translations** of earlier translations from the **Hebrew**.

- For instance, the Hebrew Scripture portion of the Old Latin version was rendered from the **Septuagint**, a **Greek** translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- On the other hand, some ancient versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, the **Greek Septuagint**, Aramaic Targums, the **Syriac Peshitta**, and the **Latin Vulgate**, were made directly from the **Hebrew** and not through the medium of a version in **Greek** or some other language.

•• **Samaritan Pentateuch**

- After the deportation of most of the inhabitants of Samaria and the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel by Assyria in **740 B.C.E**, pagans from other territories of the Assyrian Empire were settled there by Assyria.
- And the sons of Israel went walking in all the sins of Jeroboam that he had done. They did not depart from them. (**2 Kings 17:22**)
- Until Yehowah removed Israel from his sight, just as he had spoken by means of all his servants the prophets. So Israel went off its own soil into exile in Assyria down to this day. (**2 Kings 17:23**)
- Subsequently the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon and Cuthah and Avva and Hamath and Sepharvaim and had them dwell in the cities of Samaria instead of the sons of Israel, and they began to take possession of Samaria and to dwell in its cities. (**2 Kings 17:24**)
- And it came about at the start of their dwelling there that they did not fear Yehowah. Therefore Yehowah sent lions among them, and they came to be killers among them. (**2 Kings 17:25**)
- So they sent word to the king of Assyria, saying; The nations that you have taken into exile and then settled in the cities of Samaria have not known the religion of the God of the land, so that he keeps sending lions among them, and, look! They are putting them to death, inasmuch as there are none knowing the religion of the God of the land. (**2 Kings 17:26**)

- At that the king of Assyria commanded, saying; Have one of the priests go there whom you led into exile from there, that he may go and dwell there and teach them the religion of the God of the land. (**2 Kings 17:27**)
- Accordingly one of the priests whom they had led into exile from Samaria came and began dwelling in Bethel, and he came to be a teacher of them as to how they ought to fear Yehowah. (**2 Kings 17:28**)
- However, each different nation came to be a maker of its own god, which they then deposited in the house of the high places that the Samaritans had made, each different nation, in their cities where they were dwelling. (**2 Kings 17:29**)
- And the men of Babylon, for their part, made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth, for their part, made Nergal, and the men of Hamath, for their part, made Ashima. (**2 Kings 17:30**)
- As for the Avvites, they made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites were burning their sons in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim. (**2 Kings 17:31**)
- And they came to be fearers of Yehowah and went making for themselves from the people in general priests of high places, and they came to be functionaries for them in the house of the high places. (**2 Kings 17:32**)
- It was of Yehowah that they became fearers, but it was of their own gods that they proved to be worshipers, according to the religion of the nations from among whom they had led them into exile. (**2 Kings 17:33**)
- In time the descendants of those left in Samaria and those brought in by Assyria came to be called Samaritans. They accepted the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in about the **Fourth Century B.C.E.**
- They produced the **Samaritan Pentateuch**, not really a translation of the original Hebrew Pentateuch, but a transliteration of its text into Samaritan characters, mixed with Samaritan idioms.
- Few of the extant manuscripts of the **Samaritan Pentateuch** are older than the **13th Century C.E.** Of about 6,000 differences between the

Samaritan and the **Hebrew** texts, by far the majority are unimportant. One variation of interest appears at;

- And the dwelling of the sons of Israel, who had dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. (**Exodus 12:40**)
- Where the **Samaritan Pentateuch** corresponds to the **Septuagint**.

· Targums

- The Targums were free **translations** or **paraphrases** of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. They likely assumed their present final form no earlier than about the **Fifth Century C.E.**
- One of the principal Targums, the **Targum of Onkelos** on the Pentateuch, is rather literal. Another, the so-called **Targum of Jonathan**, or **Jerusalem Targum**, for the Prophets, is less literal. Extant today are Targums on the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and, of later date, the Hagiographa.

· The Greek Septuagint

- The **Greek Septuagint**, often designated **LXX**, was used by Greek-speaking Jews and Christians in Egypt and elsewhere. Reportedly, work on it commenced in Egypt in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus, **285-246 B.C.E.**, when, according to tradition, the Pentateuch thereof was **translated** into **Greek** by 72 Jewish scholars.
- Later, the number **70** somehow came to be used, and the version of the Pentateuch was referred to as the **Septuagint**, meaning **Seventy**.
- The other books of the Hebrew Scriptures, by various translators whose style varied from quite literal to rather free rendition, were gradually added until **translation** of the entire Hebrew Scriptures had finally been completed during the **Second Century B.C.E.** and perhaps by **150 B.C.E.**
- Thereafter the entire work came to be known as the **Septuagint**. This version is often quoted by writers of the **Christian Greek Scriptures**. Apocryphal writings were evidently inserted in the **Greek Septuagint** sometime after it was first completed.

See Also APOCRYPHA

- **One of the oldest extant manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint is Papyrus 957, the Rylands Papyrus iii. 458, preserved in the John Ryland's Library, Manchester, England.**
- **It is of the Second Century B.C.E. and consists of fragments of (Deuteronomy 23:24)–(Deuteronomy 24:3).**
- **In case a dispute arises between men, and they have presented themselves for the judgment, they must also judge them and pronounce the righteous one righteous and pronounce the wicked one wicked.**
- **In case a dispute arises between men, and they have presented themselves for the judgment, they must also judge them and pronounce the righteous one righteous and pronounce the wicked one wicked. (Deuteronomy 25:1)**
- **And it must occur that if the wicked one deserves to be beaten, the judge must also have him laid prostrate and given strokes before him by number to correspond with his wicked deed. (Deuteronomy 25:2)**
- **With forty strokes he may beat him. He should add none, for fear he should continue to beat him with many strokes in addition to these and your brother is actually disgraced in your eyes. (Deuteronomy 25:3)**
- **When you finish with tithing the entire tenth of your produce in the third year, the year of the tenth, you must also give it to the Levite, the alien resident, the fatherless boy and the widow, and they must eat it within your gates and satisfy themselves. (Deuteronomy 26:12)**
- **Yehowah you have induced to say today that he will become your God while you walk in his ways and observe his regulations and his commandments and his judicial decisions and listen to his voice. (Deuteronomy 26:17)**
- **As for Yehowah, he has induced you to say today that you will become his people, a special property, just as he has promised you, and that you will observe all his commandments. (Deuteronomy 26:18)**
- **And that he will put you high above all the other nations that he**

- has made, resulting in praise and reputation and beauty, while you prove yourself a people holy to Yehowah your God, just as he has promised. (**Deuteronomy 26:19**)
- Your bull slaughtered there before your eyes, but you will not eat any of it. Your ass taken in robbery from before your face, but it will not return to you. Your sheep given to your enemies, but you will have no savior. (**Deuteronomy 28:31**)
 - Your sons and your daughters given to another people and your eyes looking on and yearning for them always, but your hands will be without power. (**Deuteronomy 28:32**)
 - The fruitage of your ground and all your production a people will eat whom you have not known, and you must become one who is only defrauded and crushed always. (**Deuteronomy 28:33**)
 - Another manuscript, of the **First Century B.C.E**, is **Papyrus Fouad 266** [possessed by the **Société Egyptienne Deuteronomy Papyrologie, Cairo**], containing parts of the second half of Deuteronomy according to the **Greek Septuagint**.
 - In various places therein, the Tetragrammaton, **YHWH** in English, of the divine name is found in a form of **Old Hebrew** characters right within the **Greek** script.

See Also YEHOWAH

·· **The Greek Septuagint**

- The **Greek Septuagint** has thus been preserved in numerous manuscripts, many fragmentary, others fairly complete. Notably, the **Septuagint** texts are preserved in the three famous uncial manuscripts written on vellum the **Vatican Manuscript No. 1209** and the **Sinaitic Manuscript**, both of the **Fourth Century C.E**, and the **Alexandrine Manuscript** of the **Fifth Century C.E**.
- The **Septuagint** as found in the **Vatican Manuscript No. 1209** is almost complete, part of the Hebrew Scriptures once included in the **Sinaitic Manuscript** has been lost, that in the **Alexandrine Manuscript** is rather complete, though lacking parts of Genesis, First Samuel, and Psalms.

·· **Later Greek Versions**

- In the second century, Aquila, a Jewish proselyte of Pontus, made a new and very literal Greek **translation** of the Hebrew Scriptures. Except for fragments and quotations thereof by early writers, it has perished.
- Another Greek **translation** of the same century was produced by Theodotion. His was apparently a revision of the **Septuagint** or some other Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, though he considered the **Hebrew** text itself.
- No complete copy of Theodotion's version is extant. Another Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures of which no complete copy is extant was that of Symmachus. His rendition, probably **translated** about **200 C.E.**, endeavored to convey the right sense rather than to be literal.
- About **245 C.E.**, Origen, the noted scholar of Alexandria, Egypt, completed a mammoth multiple version of the Hebrew Scriptures called the *Hexapla*, which means, sixfold.
- Though fragments of it are extant, no complete **manuscript** copy has survived. Origen arranged the text in six parallel columns containing
 - (1) the consonantal **Hebrew** text
 - (2) a **Greek** transliteration of the Hebrew text
 - (3) Aquila's **Greek** version
 - (4) Symmachus **Greek** version
 - (5) the **Septuagint**, revised by Origen to correspond more exactly to the **Hebrew** text.
 - (6) Theodotion's **Greek** version. In the Psalms, Origen used anonymous **versions** he called **Quinta, Sexta, and Septima**. The **Quinta** and **Sexta** were also employed in other books.

· Christian Greek Scriptures

- Translations of the **Christian Greek Scriptures** into Syriac, an Aramaic dialect, were produced from the second century onward. A Syriac

version of particular note is **Tatians Diatessaron**, a Gospel harmony of the **Second Century C.E.**

- It may have been written originally at Rome in Greek and later translated into Syriac in Syria by Tatian himself, but that is uncertain.
- The **Diatessaron** is extant today in an Arabic **translation**, in addition to a small **Third Century** vellum fragment in Greek and an Armenian **translation** of a **Fourth Century** commentary on it that contains lengthy quotations from its text.
- Only incomplete manuscripts of an **Old Syriac** version of the Gospels, a translation other than the **Diatessaron** are extant, the **Curetonian** and the **Sinaitic Syriac Gospels**.
- Though these manuscripts were probably copied in the **Fifth Century**, they likely represent an older Syriac text. The original version may have been made from the Greek about **200 C.E.**
- Quite likely, Old Syriac renditions of other books of the **Christian Greek Scriptures** once existed, but there are no extant manuscripts thereof.
- All books of the **Christian Greek Scriptures** except Second Peter, Second and Third John, Jude, and Revelation were included in the **Syriac Peshitta** of the fifth century.
- In about **508 C.E.** Philoxenus, bishop of Hierapolis, had Polycarp make a revision of the **Peshitta Christian Scriptures**, and this was the first time Second Peter, Second and Third John, Jude, and Revelation were added to a Syriac version.
- The **Christian Greek Scriptures** had already been translated into Latin by the end of the **Second Century C.E.** They were also available in Egyptian by about the middle of the **Third Century C.E.**

•• Ancient Versions Of The Entire Bible

- The **Peshitta** of Syriac-speaking people professing Christianity was in general use from the **Fifth Century C.E.** onward. The word **Peshitta** means, **simple**.
- The Hebrew Scripture portion was basically a translation from the Hebrew, probably made during the second or **Third Century C.E.**

though a later revision involved comparison with the **Septuagint**. Numerous **Peshitta** manuscripts are extant, the most valuable being a **Sixth or Seventh Century** codex preserved at the **Ambrosian Library in Milan, Italy**.

- One **Peshitta** manuscript of the Pentateuch, lacking Leviticus, has a date corresponding to about **464 C.E**, making it the oldest **dated** Bible manuscript in any tongue.

•• **Old Latin Versions**

- These probably appeared from the latter part of the **Second Century C.E.** onward. The whole Bible in Latin seems to have been used in Carthage, North Africa, at least by **250 C.E.**
- The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Old Latin from the **Greek Septuagint**, not yet revised by Origen, but the Christian Scriptures were rendered, not from a translation, but from the Greek.
- Various translations may have been made, or at least a number of translators worked on the Old Latin version. Scholars usually refer to two basic types of Old Latin text, the African and the European. No complete manuscripts are extant, only about 30 fragments.

•• **Latin Vulgate**

- The **Latin Vulgate**, **Vulgata Latina**, is a version of the entire Bible by the foremost Biblical scholar of that time, Eusebius Hieronymus, otherwise known as Jerome.
- He first undertook a revision of the Old Latin version of the Christian Scriptures in comparison with the Greek text, he began with the Gospels, which were published in **383 C.E.**
- Between about **384 and 390 C.E**, he made two revisions of the Old Latin Psalms, in comparison with the **Greek Septuagint**, the first was called the Roman Psalter and the second the Gallican Psalter, because of their adoption first in Rome and Gaul.
- Jerome also translated the Psalms directly from Hebrew, this work being called the Hebrew Psalter. Just when he completed his revision of the Old Latin Christian Scriptures is uncertain.

- He began to revise the Hebrew Scripture portion but apparently never completed such a revision, preferring to translate directly from Hebrew, though also referring to Greek **versions**. Jerome labored on his Latin translation from the Hebrew from about **390 to 405 C.E.**
- Jeromes version was originally received with general hostility, and only gradually did it gain wide approval. With its later general acceptance in western Europe, it came to be called the **Vulgate**, denoting a commonly received version, the Latin **vulgatus** meaning, **common**, that which is popular.
- Jeromes original translation underwent revisions, the Roman Catholic Church making the one of **1592 C.E.** its standard edition. Thousands of **Vulgate** manuscripts are extant today.

•• Other Ancient Translations

- As Christianity spread, other **versions** were required. At least by the **Third Century C.E.**, the first translation of the **Christian Greek Scriptures** had been made for the Coptic natives of Egypt.
- Various Coptic dialects were used in Egypt, and in time various Coptic versions were produced. The most important are the **Thebaic, or Sahidic, Version** of Upper Egypt, in the South, and the **Bohairic Version** of Lower Egypt, in the North.
- These versions, containing both the Hebrew and **Christian Greek Scriptures**, were probably produced in the **Third and Fourth Centuries C.E.**
- The Gothic version was produced for the Goths during the **Fourth Century C.E.** while they were settled in Moesia, Serbia and Bulgaria. Missing from it are the books of Samuel and Kings, reportedly deleted because **Bishop Ulfilas**, who made the translation, thought it would be dangerous to include for use by the Goths these books that consider warfare and that contain information against idolatry.
- The Armenian version of the Bible dates from the **Fifth Century C.E.** and was probably prepared from both Greek and Syriac texts. The Georgian **version**, made for the Georgians in the Caucasus, was completed toward the end of the **Sixth Century C.E.** and, while revealing Greek influence, has an Armenian and Syriac basis.

- The Ethiopic **version**, used by the Abyssinians, was produced perhaps about the fourth or **Fifth Century C.E.** There are several old Arabic **versions** of the Scriptures.
- **Translations** of parts of the Bible into Arabic may date from as early as the **Seventh Century C.E.**, but the earliest record is that of a version made in Spain in **724 C.E.** The Slavonic **version** was made in the **Ninth Century C.E.** and has been attributed to two brothers, Cyril and Methodius.