# Septuagint

The **Septuagint** (/ˈsɛptjuədʒɪnt/ *SEP-tew-ə-jint*),[1] sometimes referred to as the **Greek Old Testament** or **The Translation of the Seventy** (Koinē Greek: Ἡ μετάφρασις τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα, romanized: *Hē metáphrasis tôn Hebdomḗkonta*), and abbreviated as **LXX**,[2] is the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from the original Biblical Hebrew.[3][4] The full Greek title derives from the story recorded in the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates that "the laws of the Jews" were translated into the Greek language at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247 BC) by seventy-two Hebrew translators—six from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.[5][6][7]

Biblical scholars agree that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible were translated from Biblical Hebrew into Koine Greek by Jews living in the Ptolemaic Kingdom, centred on the large community in Alexandria, probably in the early or middle part of the 3rd century BC.[8] The remaining books were presumably translated in the 2nd century BC.[4][9][10] Some targums translating or paraphrasing the Bible into Aramaic were also made during the Second Temple period.[11]

Few people could speak and even fewer could read in the Hebrew language during the Second Temple period; Koine Greek[3][12][13][14] and Aramaic were the linguas franca at that time among the Jewish community. The Septuagint, therefore, satisfied a need in the Jewish community.[8][15]

| Septuagint | |
|---|---|
| |  |
| | Fragment of a Septuagint: A column of uncial book from 1 Esdras in the *Codex Vaticanus* c. 325–350 AD, the basis of Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's Greek edition and English translation |
| **Also known as** | LXX · Greek Old Testament |
| **Date** | c. 3rd century BC |
| **Language(s)** | Koine Greek |

## Etymology

The term "Septuagint" is derived from the Latin phrase *Vetus Testamentum ex versione Septuaginta Interpretum* ("The Old Testament from the version of the Seventy Translators").[16] This phrase in turn was derived from the Koinē Greek: Ἡ μετάφρασις τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα, romanized: *hē metáphrasis tôn hebdomḗkonta*, lit. 'The Translation of the Seventy'.[17] It was not until the time of Augustine of

Hippo (354–430 AD) that the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures was called by the Latin term *Septuaginta*.[18] The Roman numeral LXX (seventy) is commonly used as an abbreviation,[2] in addition to 𝔊 or *G*.[19]

# Composition

### Jewish legend

According to tradition, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (the Greek Pharaoh of Egypt) sent seventy-two Hebrew translators—six from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel—from Jerusalem to Alexandria to translate the *Tanakh* from Biblical Hebrew into Koine Greek, for inclusion in his library.[20] This narrative is found in the possibly pseudepigraphic Letter of Aristeas to his brother Philocrates,[21] and is repeated by Philo of


Beginning of the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 11th century)

Alexandria, Josephus (in *Antiquities of the Jews*),[22] and by later sources (including Augustine of Hippo).[23] It is also found in the Tractate Megillah of the Babylonian Talmud:

> King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher". God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did.[6]

Philo of Alexandria writes that the number of scholars was chosen by selecting six scholars from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Caution is needed here regarding the accuracy of this statement by Philo of Alexandria, as it implies that the twelve tribes were still in existence during King Ptolemy's reign, and that the Ten Lost Tribes of the twelve tribes had not been forcibly resettled by Assyria almost 500 years previously.[24] Although not all the people of the ten tribes were scattered, many peoples of the ten tribes sought refuge in Jerusalem and survived, preserving a remnant of each tribe and their lineages. Jerusalem swelled to five times its prior population due to the influx of refugees. According to later rabbinic tradition (which considered the Greek translation as a distortion of sacred text and unsuitable for use in the synagogue), the Septuagint was given to Ptolemy two days before the annual Tenth of Tevet fast.[15][25]

According to Aristobulus of Alexandria's fragment 3, portions of the Law were translated from Hebrew into Greek long before the well-known Septuagint version. He stated that Plato and Pythagoras knew the Jewish Law and borrowed from it.[26]

In the preface to his 1844 translation of the Septuagint, Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton acknowledges that the Jews of Alexandria were likely to have been the writers of the Septuagint, but dismisses Aristeas' account as a pious fiction. Instead, he asserts that the real origin of the name "Septuagint" pertains to the fact that the earliest version was forwarded by the authors to the Jewish Sanhedrin at Alexandria for editing and approval.[27]

The Jews of Alexandria celebrated the translation with an annual festival on the island of Pharos, where the Lighthouse of Alexandria stood—the location where the translation was said to have taken place. During the festival, a large gathering of Jews, along with some non-Jewish visitors, would assemble on the beach for a grand picnic.[28]

## History

The 3rd century BC is supported for the translation of the Pentateuch by a number of factors, including its Greek being representative of early Koine Greek, citations beginning as early as the 2nd century BC, and early manuscripts datable to the 2nd century BC.[29] After the Torah, other books were translated over the next two to three centuries. It is unclear which was translated when, or where; some may have been translated twice (into different versions), and then revised.[30] The quality and style of the translators varied considerably from book to book, from a literal translation to paraphrasing to an interpretative style.

The translation process of the Septuagint and from the Septuagint into other versions can be divided into several stages: the Greek text was produced within the social environment of Hellenistic Judaism, and completed by 132 BC. With the spread of Early Christianity, this Septuagint in turn was rendered into Latin in a variety of versions and the latter, collectively known as the *Vetus Latina*, were also referred to as the Septuagint[31][32][33] initially in Alexandria but elsewhere as well.[17] The Septuagint also formed the basis for the Slavonic, Syriac, Old Armenian, Old Georgian, and Coptic versions of the Christian Old Testament.[34]

## Language

The Septuagint is written in Koine Greek. Some sections contain Semiticisms, which are idioms and phrases based on Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Aramaic.[35] Other books, such as Daniel and Proverbs, have a stronger Greek influence.[20]

The Septuagint may also clarify pronunciation of pre-Masoretic Hebrew; many proper nouns are spelled with Greek vowels in the translation, but contemporary Hebrew texts lacked vowel pointing. However, it is unlikely that all Biblical Hebrew sounds had precise Greek equivalents.[36]

## Canonical differences

The Septuagint does not consist of a single, unified corpus. Rather, it is a collection of ancient translations of the *Tanakh*, along with other Jewish texts that are now commonly referred to as apocrypha. Importantly, the canon of the Hebrew Bible was evolving over the century or so in which the Septuagint was being written. Also, the texts were translated by many different people, in different locations, at different times, for different purposes, and often from different original Hebrew manuscripts.[8]

The Hebrew Bible, also called the *Tanakh*, has three parts: the *Torah* ("Law"), the *Nevi'im* ("Prophets"), and the *Ketuvim* ("Writings"). The Septuagint has four: law, history, poetry, and prophets. The books of the Apocrypha were inserted at appropriate locations.[3][4] Extant copies of the Septuagint, which date from the 4th century AD, contain books and additions[37] not present in the

Hebrew Bible as established in the Jewish canon[38] and are not uniform in their contents. According to some scholars, there is no evidence that the Septuagint included these additional books.[39][9] These copies of the Septuagint include books known as *anagignoskomena* in Greek and in English as deuterocanon (derived from the Greek words for "second canon"), books not included in the modern Jewish canon.[40][10] These books are estimated to have been written between 200 BC and 50 AD. Among them are the first two books of Maccabees; Tobit; Judith; the Wisdom of Solomon; Sirach; Baruch (including the Letter of Jeremiah), and additions to Esther and Daniel. The Septuagint version of some books, such as Daniel and Esther, are longer than those in the Masoretic Text, which were affirmed as canonical in Rabbinic Judaism.[41] The Septuagint Book of Jeremiah is shorter than the Masoretic Text.[42] The Psalms of Solomon, 1 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, the Letter of Jeremiah, the Book of Odes, the Prayer of Manasseh and Psalm 151 are included in some copies of the Septuagint.[43]

The Septuagint has been rejected as scriptural by mainstream Rabbinic Judaism for a couple of reasons. First, the Septuagint differs from the Hebrew source texts in many cases (particularly in the Book of Job).[15] For example, according to Heinrich Guggenheimer, intentional mistranslations in Deuteronomy 6 make reference to ancient sources of the Passover Haggadah.[44] Second, the translations appear at times to demonstrate an ignorance of Hebrew idiomatic usage.[15] A particularly noteworthy example of this phenomenon is found in Isaiah 7:14, in which the Hebrew word עַלְמָה (*'almāh*, which translates into English as "young woman") is translated into the Koine Greek as παρθένος (*parthenos*, which translates into English as "virgin").[45]

The Septuagint became synonymous with the Greek Old Testament, a Christian canon incorporating the books of the Hebrew canon with additional texts. Although the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church include most of the books in the Septuagint in their canons, Protestant churches usually do not. After the Reformation, many Protestant Bibles began to follow the Jewish canon and exclude the additional texts (which came to be called the Apocrypha) as noncanonical.[46][47] The Apocrypha are included under a separate heading in the King James Version of the Bible.[48]

| Greek name[17][49][a] | Transliteration | English name |
|---|---|---|
| Προσευχὴ Μανασσῆ | Proseuchē Manassē | Prayer of Manasseh |
| Ἔσδρας Αʹ | 1 Esdras | 1 Esdras |
| Τωβίτ (called Τωβείτ or Τωβίθ in some sources) | Tōbit (or Tōbeit or Tōbith) | Tobit |
| Ἰουδίθ | Ioudith | Judith |
| Ἐσθήρ | Esthēr | Esther (with additions) |
| Μακκαβαίων Αʹ | 1 Makkabaiōn | 1 Maccabees |
| Μακκαβαίων Βʹ | 2 Makkabaiōn | 2 Maccabees |
| Μακκαβαίων Γʹ | 3 Makkabaiōn | 3 Maccabees |
| Μακκαβαίων Δ' Παράρτημα | 4 Makkabaiōn Parartēma | 4 Maccabees[50] |
| Ψαλμός ΡΝΑʹ | Psalmos 151 | Psalm 151 |
| Σοφία Σαλομῶντος | Sophia Salomōntos | Wisdom or Wisdom of Solomon |
| Σοφία Ἰησοῦ Σειράχ | Sophia Iēsou Seirach | Sirach or Ecclesiasticus |
| Βαρούχ | Barouch | Baruch |
| Ἐπιστολὴ Ἰερεμίου | Epistolē Ieremiou | Letter of Jeremiah |
| Δανιήλ | Daniēl | Daniel (with additions) |
| Ψαλμοὶ Σαλομῶντος | Psalmoi Salomōntos | Psalms of Solomon[b] |

Title: Deuterocanonical and apocryphal books in the Septuagint

## Final form

All the books in Western Old Testament biblical canons are found in the Septuagint, although the order does not always coincide with the Western book order. The Septuagint order is evident in the earliest Christian Bibles, which were written during the 4th century.[20]

Some books which are set apart in the Masoretic Text are grouped together. The Books of Samuel and the Books of Kings are one four-part book entitled Βασιλειῶν (Basileon, 'Of Reigns') in the Septuagint. The Books of Chronicles, known collectively as Παραλειπομένων (Paraleipoménon, 'Of Things Left Out') supplement Reigns. The Septuagint organizes the minor prophets in its twelve-part Book of Twelve, as does the Masoretic Text.[20]

Some ancient scriptures are found in the Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew Bible. The books are Tobit; Judith; the Wisdom of Solomon; Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach;[c] Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah, which became chapter six of Baruch in the Vulgate; the additions to Daniel (The Prayer of Azarias, the Song of the Three Children, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon); the additions to Esther; 1 Maccabees; 2 Maccabees; 3 Maccabees; 4 Maccabees; 1 Esdras; Odes (including the Prayer of Manasseh); the Psalms of Solomon, and Psalm 151.

Fragments of deuterocanonical books in Hebrew are among the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran. Sirach, whose text in Hebrew was already known from the Cairo Geniza, has been found in two scrolls (2QSir or 2Q18, 11QPs_a or 11Q5) in Hebrew. Another Hebrew scroll of Sirach has been found in

Masada (MasSir).[52]:597 Five fragments from the Book of Tobit have been found in Qumran: four written in Aramaic and one written in Hebrew (papyri 4Q, nos. 196-200).[52]:636 Psalm 151 appears with a number of canonical and non-canonical psalms in the Dead Sea scroll 11QPs(a) (also known as 11Q5), a 1st-century AD scroll discovered in 1956.[53] The scroll contains two short Hebrew psalms, which scholars agree were the basis for Psalm 151.[52]:585–586 The canonical acceptance of these books varies by Christian tradition.

# Use

## Jewish use

It is unclear to what extent Alexandrian Jews accepted the authority of the Septuagint. Manuscripts of the Septuagint have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and were thought to have been in use among various Jewish sects at the time.[54]

Several factors led most Jews to abandon the Septuagint around the 2nd century AD. The earliest gentile Christians used the Septuagint out of necessity, since it was the only Greek version of the Bible and most (if not all) of these early non-Jewish Christians could not read Hebrew. The association of the Septuagint with a rival religion may have made it suspect in the eyes of the newer generation of Jews and Jewish scholars.[34] Jews instead used Hebrew or Aramaic Targum manuscripts later compiled by the Masoretes and authoritative Aramaic translations, such as those of Onkelos and Rabbi Yonathan ben Uziel.[55]

Perhaps most significant for the Septuagint, as distinct from other Greek versions, was that the Septuagint began to lose Jewish sanction after differences between it and contemporary Hebrew scriptures were discovered. Even Greek-speaking Jews tended to prefer other Jewish versions in Greek (such as the translation by Aquila), which seemed to be more concordant with contemporary Hebrew texts.[34]

## Christian use

The Early Christian church used the Greek texts,[15] since Greek was a *lingua franca* of the eastern parts of the Roman Empire at the time and the language of the Greco-Roman Church, while Aramaic was the language of Syriac Christianity. The relationship between the apostolic use of the Septuagint and the Hebrew texts is complicated. Although the Septuagint seems to have been a major source for the Apostles, it is not the only one. St. Jerome offered, for example, Matthew 2:15 and 2:23, John 19:37,[56] John 7:38,[57] and 1 Corinthians 2:9[58][59] as examples found in Hebrew texts but not in the Septuagint. Matthew 2:23 is not present in current Masoretic tradition either; according to Jerome, however, it was in Isaiah 11:1. The New Testament writers freely used the Greek translation when citing the Jewish scriptures (or quoting Jesus doing so), implying that Jesus, his apostles, and their followers considered it reliable.[60][35][15]

In the early Christian Church, the presumption that the Septuagint was translated by Jews before the time of Christ and that it lends itself more to a Christological interpretation than 2nd-century Hebrew texts in certain places was taken as evidence that "Jews" had changed the Hebrew text in a way that

made it less Christological. Irenaeus writes about Isaiah 7:14 that the Septuagint clearly identifies a "virgin" (Greek παρθένος; *bethulah* in Hebrew) who would conceive.[61] The word *almah* in the Hebrew text was, according to Irenaeus, interpreted by Theodotion and Aquila (Jewish converts), as a "young woman" who would conceive. Again according to Irenaeus, the Ebionites used this to claim that Joseph was the biological father of Jesus. To him that was heresy facilitated by late anti-Christian alterations of the scripture in Hebrew, as evident by the older, pre-Christian Septuagint.[62]

Jerome broke with church tradition, translating most of the Old Testament of his Vulgate from Hebrew rather than Greek. His choice was sharply criticized by Augustine, his contemporary.[63] Although Jerome argued for the superiority of the Hebrew texts in correcting the Septuagint on philological and theological grounds, because he was accused of heresy he also acknowledged the Septuagint texts.[64] Acceptance of Jerome's version increased, and it displaced the Septuagint's Old Latin translations.[34]

The Eastern Orthodox Church prefers to use the Septuagint as the basis for translating the Old Testament into other languages, and uses the untranslated Septuagint where Greek is the liturgical language.

Critical translations of the Old Testament which use the Masoretic Text as their basis consult the Septuagint and other versions to reconstruct the meaning of the Hebrew text when it is unclear, corrupted, or ambiguous.[34] According to the New Jerusalem Bible foreword, "Only when this (the Masoretic Text) presents insuperable difficulties have emendations or other versions, such as the [...] LXX, been used."[65] The translator's preface to the New International Version reads, "The translators also consulted the more important early versions (including) the Septuagint [...] Readings from these versions were occasionally followed where the MT seemed doubtful"[66]

# Textual history

| | Books | |
|---|---|---|
| **Greek name**[17][49][a] | **Transliteration** | **English name** |
| **Law** | | |
| Γένεσις | Genesis | Genesis |
| Ἔξοδος | Exodos | Exodus |
| Λευϊτικόν | Leuitikon | Leviticus |
| Ἀριθμοί | Arithmoi | Numbers |
| Δευτερονόμιον | Deuteronomion | Deuteronomy |
| **History** | | |
| Ἰησοῦς | Iēsous | Joshua |
| Κριταί | Kritai | Judges |
| Ῥούθ | Routh | Ruth |
| Βασιλειῶν Αʹ[d] | 1 Basileiōn | Kings I (I Samuel) |
| Βασιλειῶν Βʹ | 2 Basileiōn | Kings II (II Samuel) |
| Βασιλειῶν Γʹ | 3 Basileiōn | Kings III (I Kings) |
| Βασιλειῶν Δʹ | 4 Basileiōn | Kings IV (II Kings) |
| Παραλειπομένων Αʹ | 1 Paraleipomenōn[e] | Chronicles I |
| Παραλειπομένων Βʹ | 2 Paraleipomenōn | Chronicles II |
| Ἔσδρας Αʹ | 1 Esdras | 1 Esdras |
| Ἔσδρας Βʹ | 2 Esdras | Ezra-Nehemiah |
| Ἐσθήρ | Esthēr | Esther[f] |
| Ἰουδίθ | Ioudith | Judith |
| Τωβίτ[g] | Tōbit[h] | Tobit |
| Μακκαβαίων Αʹ | 1 Makkabaiōn | Maccabees I |
| Μακκαβαίων Βʹ | 2 Makkabaiōn | Maccabees II |
| Μακκαβαίων Γʹ | 3 Makkabaiōn | Maccabees III |
| **Wisdom** | | |
| Ψαλμοί | Psalmoi | Psalms |
| Ψαλμός ΡΝΑʹ | Psalmos 151 | Psalm 151 |
| Προσευχὴ Μανασσῆ | Proseuchē Manassē | Prayer of Manasseh |
| Ὠδαί | Odai | Odes |
| Παροιμίαι | Paroimiai | Proverbs |

| Ἐκκλησιαστής | Ekklēsiastēs | Ecclesiastes |
|---|---|---|
| Ἆσμα Ἀσμάτων | Asma Asmatōn | Song of Songs or Song of Solomon or Canticle of Canticles |
| Ἰώβ | Iōb | Job |
| Σοφία Σαλομῶντος | Sophia Salomōntos | Wisdom or Wisdom of Solomon |
| Σοφία Ἰησοῦ Σειράχ | Sophia Iēsou Seirach | Sirach or Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Sirach |
| **Prophets** | | |
| Ὡσηέ Αʹ | I. Hōsēe | Hosea |
| Ἀμώς Βʹ | II. Āmōs | Amos |
| Μιχαίας Γʹ | III. Michaias | Micah |
| Ἰωήλ Δʹ | IV. Iōēl | Joel |
| Ὀβδιού Ε′[i] | V. Obdiou | Obadiah |
| Ἰωνᾶς Ϛʹ | VI. Iōnas | Jonah |
| Ναούμ Ζʹ | VII. Naoum | Nahum |
| Ἀμβακούμ Ηʹ | VIII. Ambakoum | Habakkuk |
| Σοφονίας Θʹ | IX. Sophonias | Zephaniah |
| Ἀγγαῖος Ιʹ | X. Angaios | Haggai |
| Ζαχαρίας ΙΑʹ | XI. Zacharias | Zachariah |
| Μαλαχίας ΙΒʹ | XII. Malachias | Malachi |
| Ἠσαΐας | Ēsaias | Isaiah |
| Ἰερεμίας | Hieremias | Jeremiah |
| Βαρούχ | Barouch | Baruch |
| Θρῆνοι | Thrēnoi | Lamentations |
| Ἐπιστολὴ Ἰερεμίου | Epistolē Ieremiou | Letter of Jeremiah |
| Ἰεζεκιήλ | Iezekiēl | Ezekiel |
| Δανιήλ | Daniēl | Daniel[j] |
| **Appendix** | | |
| Μακκαβαίων Δ' | 4 Makkabaiōn | Maccabees IV[k] |
| Ψαλμοὶ Σαλομῶντος | Psalmoi Salomōntos | Psalms of Solomon[l] |

## Textual analysis

Modern scholarship holds that the Septuagint was written from the 3rd through the 1st centuries BC, but nearly all attempts at dating specific books (except for the Pentateuch, early- to mid-3rd century BC) are tentative.[20] Later Jewish revisions and recensions of the Greek against the Hebrew are well-attested. The best-known are Aquila (128 AD), Symmachus, and Theodotion. These three, to

varying degrees, are more-literal renderings of their contemporary Hebrew scriptures compared to the Old Greek (the original Septuagint). Modern scholars consider one (or more) of the three to be new Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible.

Although much of Origen's *Hexapla* (a six-version critical edition of the Hebrew Bible) is lost, several compilations of fragments are available. Origen kept a column for the Old Greek (the Septuagint), which included readings from all the Greek versions in a critical apparatus with diacritical marks indicating to which version each line (Gr. στίχος) belonged. Perhaps the *Hexapla* was never copied in its entirety, but Origen's combined text was copied frequently (eventually without the editing marks) and the



The inter-relationship between significant ancient Old Testament manuscripts (some identified by their *siglum*). LXX denotes the original Septuagint.

older uncombined text of the Septuagint was neglected. The combined text was the first major Christian recension of the Septuagint, often called the *Hexaplar recension*. Two other major recensions were identified in the century following Origen by Jerome, who attributed these to Lucian (the Lucianic, or Antiochene, recension) and Hesychius (the Hesychian, or Alexandrian, recension).[20]

## Manuscripts

The oldest manuscripts of the Septuagint include 2nd-century BC fragments of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Rahlfs nos. 801, 819, and 957) and 1st-century BC fragments of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and the Twelve Minor Prophets (Alfred Rahlfs nos. 802, 803, 805, 848, 942, and 943). Relatively-complete manuscripts of the Septuagint postdate the Hexaplar recension, and include the 4th-century AD Codex Vaticanus and the 5th-century Codex Alexandrinus. These are the oldest-surviving nearly-complete manuscripts of the Old Testament in any language; the oldest extant complete Hebrew texts date to about 600 years later, from the first half of the 10th century.[34] The 4th-century Codex Sinaiticus also partially survives, with many Old Testament texts.[34]:73:198 The Jewish (and, later, Christian) revisions and recensions are largely responsible for the divergence of the codices.[20] The Codex Marchalianus is another notable manuscript.

## Differences from the Vulgate and the Masoretic Text

The text of the Septuagint is generally close to that of the Masoretes and Vulgate. Genesis 4:1–6[67] is identical in the Septuagint, Vulgate and the Masoretic Text, and Genesis 4:8[68] to the end of the chapter is the same. There is only one noticeable difference in that chapter, at 4:7:

| Genesis 4:7, LXX and English Translation (NETS) | Genesis 4:7, Masoretic and English Translation from MT (Judaica Press) | Genesis 4:7, Latin Vulgate and English Translation (Douay-Rheims) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| οὐκ ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς, ἥμαρτες; ἡσύχασον· πρὸς σὲ ἡ ἀποστροφὴ αὐτοῦ, καὶ σὺ ἄρξεις αὐτοῦ. | הֲלוֹא אִם תֵּיטִיב שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל בּוֹ:<br><br>Is it not so that if you | *nonne si bene egeris, recipies : sin autem male, statim in foribus peccatum aderit? sed sub te erit appetitus ejus, et tu* |

| | | *dominaberis illius.* |
|---|---|---|
| Have you not sinned if you have brought it righteously, but not righteously divided it? Be calm, to you shall be his submission, and you shall rule over him. | improve, it will be forgiven you? If you do not improve, however, at the entrance, sin is lying, and to you is its longing, but you can rule over it. | If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? but if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? but the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it. |

The differences between the Septuagint and the MT fall into four categories:[69]

1. *Different Hebrew sources for the MT and the Septuagint*. Evidence of this can be found throughout the Old Testament. A subtle example may be found in Isaiah 36:11;[70] the meaning remains the same, but the choice of words evidences a different text. The MT reads *"...al tedaber yehudit be-'ozne ha`am al ha-homa"* [speak not the Judean language in the ears of (or—which can be heard by) the people on the wall]. The same verse in the Septuagint reads, according to the translation of Brenton: "and speak not to us in the Jewish tongue: and wherefore speakest thou in the ears of the men on the wall." The MT reads "people" where the Septuagint reads "men". This difference is very minor and does not affect the meaning of the verse. Scholars had used discrepancies such as this to claim that the Septuagint was a poor translation of the Hebrew original. This verse is found in Qumran (1QIsa*a*), however, where the Hebrew word *"haanashim"* (the men) is found in place of *"haam"* (the people). This discovery, and others like it, showed that even seemingly-minor differences of translation could be the result of variant Hebrew source texts.
2. *Differences in interpretation* stemming from the same Hebrew text. An example is Genesis 4:7,[71] shown above.
3. *Differences as a result of idiomatic translation issues*: A Hebrew idiom may not be easily translated into Greek, and some difference is imparted. In Psalm 47:10,[72] the MT reads: "The shields of the earth belong to God"; the Septuagint reads, "To God are the mighty ones of the earth."
4. *Transmission changes in Hebrew or Greek*: Revision or recension changes and copying errors

## Dead Sea Scrolls

The Biblical manuscripts found in Qumran, commonly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), have prompted comparisons of the texts associated with the Hebrew Bible (including the Septuagint).[73] Emanuel Tov, editor of the translated scrolls,[74] identifies five broad variants of DSS texts:[75][76]

1. Proto-Masoretic: A stable text and numerous, distinct agreements with the Masoretic Text. About 60 per cent of the Biblical scrolls (including 1QIsa-b) are in this category.
2. Pre-Septuagint: Manuscripts which have distinctive affinities with the Greek Bible. About five per cent of the Biblical scrolls, they include 4QDeut-q, 4QSam-a, 4QJer-b, and 4QJer-d. In addition to these manuscripts, several others share similarities with the Septuagint but do not fall into this category.
3. The Qumran "Living Bible": Manuscripts which, according to Tov, were copied in accordance with the "Qumran practice": distinctive, long orthography and morphology, frequent errors and corrections, and a free approach to the text. They make up about 20 per cent of the Biblical corpus, including the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa-a).
4. Pre-Samaritan: DSS manuscripts which reflect the textual form of the Samaritan Pentateuch, although the Samaritan Bible is later and contains information not found in these earlier scrolls, (such as God's holy mountain at Shechem, rather than Jerusalem). These manuscripts,

characterized by orthographic corrections and harmonizations with parallel texts elsewhere in the Pentateuch, are about five per cent of the Biblical scrolls and include 4QpaleoExod-m.

5. Non-aligned: No consistent alignment with any of the other four text types. About 10 per cent of the Biblical scrolls, they include 4QDeut-b, 4QDeut-c, 4QDeut-h, 4QIsa-c, and 4QDan-a.[75][77][m]

The textual sources present a variety of readings; Bastiaan Van Elderen compares three variations of Deuteronomy 32:43, the Song of Moses:[74]

| Deuteronomy 32.43, Masoretic | Deuteronomy 32.43, Qumran | Deuteronomy 32.43, Septuagint |
| --- | --- | --- |
| . . 1 Shout for joy, O nations, with his people ------- 2 For he will avenge the blood of his servants 3 And will render vengeance to his adversaries ------- 4 And will purge his land, his people. | 1 Shout for joy, O heavens, with him 2 And worship him, all you divine ones ------- ------- 3 For he will avenge the blood of his sons 4 And he will render vengeance to his adversaries 5 And he will recompense the ones hating him 6 And he purges the land of his people. | 1 Shout for joy, O heavens, with him 2 And let all the sons of God worship him 3 Shout for joy, O nations, with his people 4 And let all the angels of God be strong in him 5 Because he avenges the blood of his sons 6 And he will avenge and recompense justice to his enemies 7 And he will recompense the ones hating 8 And the Lord will cleanse the land of his people. |

## Print editions

The text of all print editions is derived from the recensions of Origen, Lucian, or Hesychius:

- The *editio princeps* is the Complutensian Polyglot Bible. Based on now-lost manuscripts, it is one of the received texts used for the KJV (similar to *Textus Receptus*) and seems to convey quite early readings.[78]

- The Brian Walton Polyglot by Brian Walton is one of the few versions that includes a Septuagint not based on the Egyptian Alexandria-type text (such as Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus), but follows the majority which agree (like the Complutensian Polyglot).

- The Aldine edition (begun by Aldus Manutius) was published in Venice in 1518. The editor says that he collated ancient, unspecified manuscripts, and it has been reprinted several times.

- The Roman or Sixtine Septuagint,[79] which uses *Codex Vaticanus* as the base text and later manuscripts for the lacunae in the uncial manuscript. It was published in 1587 under the direction of Antonio Carafa, with the help of Roman scholars Gugliemo Sirleto, Antonio Agelli and Petrus Morinus and by the authority of Sixtus V, to assist revisers preparing the Latin Vulgate edition ordered by the Council of Trent. It is the *textus receptus* of the Greek Old Testament and has been published in a number of editions, such as: those of Robert Holmes and James Parsons (Oxford, 1798–1827), the seven editions of Constantin von Tischendorf which appeared at Leipzig between 1850 and 1887 (the last two published after the death of the author and revised by Nestle), and the four editions of Henry Barclay Swete (Cambridge, 1887–95, 1901, 1909). A detailed

description of this edition has been made by H. B. Swete in *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (1900), pp. 174–182.

- Grabe's edition was published in Oxford from 1707 to 1720 and reproduced, imperfectly, the Codex Alexandrinus of London. For partial editions, see Fulcran Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 1643 and later.
- Alfred Rahlfs' edition of the Septuagint. Alfred Rahlfs, a Septuagint researcher at the University of Göttingen, began a manual edition of the Septuagint in 1917 or 1918. The completed *Septuaginta*, published in 1935, relies mainly on the *Vaticanus*, *Sinaiticus* and *Alexandrinus* and presents a critical framework with variants from these and several other sources.[80]
- The Göttingen Septuagint (*Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum*), a critical version in multiple volumes published from 1931 to the present, is not yet complete; the largest missing parts are the historical books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles), Proverbs and Song of Songs, as well as a new edition of Psalms. Its two critical apparatuses present variant readings in the Old Greek text and variants of the other Greek recensions (i.e., the Hexapla, Theodotion, Symmachus, Aquilla, Lucian).[81]
- In 2006, a revision of Alfred Rahlfs' *Septuaginta* was published by the German Bible Society. This revised edition includes over a thousand changes.[82] The text of this revised edition contains changes in the diacritics, and only two wording changes: in Isaiah 5:17 and 53:2, Is 5:17 $\dot{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\lambda\eta\mu\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\nu$ became $\dot{\alpha}\pi\eta\lambda\epsilon\iota\mu\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\nu$, and Is 53:2 $\dot{\alpha}\nu\eta\gamma\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\lambda\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$ became by conjecture $\dot{\alpha}\nu\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\iota\lambda\epsilon$ $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\grave{\alpha}$.[83]
- The *Apostolic Bible Polyglot* contains a Septuagint text derived primarily from the agreement of any two of the Complutensian Polyglot, the Sixtine, and the Aldine texts.[84]
- *Septuaginta: A Reader's Edition*, a 2018 reader's edition of the Septuagint[85] using the text of the 2006 revised edition of Rahlf's Septuaginta.[86]

## Onomastics

One of the main challenges, faced by translators during their work, emanated from the need to implement appropriate Greek forms for various onomastic terms, used in the Hebrew Bible. Most onomastic terms (toponyms, anthroponyms) of the Hebrew Bible were rendered by corresponding Greek terms that were similar in form and sounding, with some notable exceptions.[87]

One of those exceptions was related to a specific group of onomastic terms for the region of Aram and ancient Arameans. Influenced by Greek onomastic terminology, translators decided to adopt Greek custom of using "Syrian" labels as designations for Arameans, their lands and language, thus abandoning endonymic (native) terms, that were used in the Hebrew Bible. In the Greek translation, the region of Aram was commonly labeled as "Syria", while Arameans were labeled as "Syrians". Such adoption and implementation of terms that were foreign (exonymic) had far-reaching influence on later terminology related to Arameans and their lands, since the same terminology was reflected in later Latin and other translations of the Septuagint, including the English translation.[88][89][90][91]

Reflecting on those problems, American orientalist Robert W. Rogers (d. 1930) noted in 1921: "it is most unfortunate that Syria and Syrians ever came into the English versions. It should always be Aram and the Aramaeans".[92]

## English translations

The first English translation (which excluded the apocrypha) was Charles Thomson's in 1808,[93] which was revised and enlarged by C. A. Muses in 1954 and published by the Falcon's Wing Press.[94]

*The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* was translated by Lancelot Brenton in 1854. It is the traditional translation, and most of the time since its publication it has been the only one readily available. It has also been continually in print. The translation, based on the Codex Vaticanus, contains the Greek and English texts in parallel columns.[95] It has an average of four footnoted, transliterated words per page, abbreviated *Alex* and *GK*.

*The Complete Apostles' Bible* (translated by Paul W. Esposito) was published in 2007. Using the Masoretic Text in the 23rd Psalm (and possibly elsewhere), it omits the apocrypha.

A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under that Title (NETS), an academic translation based on the New Revised Standard version (in turn based on the Masoretic Text) was published by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS) in October 2007.[96]

The *Apostolic Bible Polyglot,* published in 2003, features a Greek-English interlinear Septuagint. It includes the Greek books of the Hebrew canon (without the apocrypha) and the Greek New Testament; the whole Bible is numerically coded to a new version of the Strong numbering system created to add words not present in the original numbering by Strong. The edition is set in monotonic orthography. The version includes a Bible concordance and index.

The *Orthodox Study Bible,* published in early 2008, features a new translation of the Septuagint based on the Alfred Rahlfs' edition of the Greek text. Two additional major sources have been added: the 1851 Brenton translation and the New King James Version text in places where the translation matches the Hebrew Masoretic text. This edition includes the NKJV New Testament and extensive commentary from an Eastern Orthodox perspective.[97]

Nicholas King completed *The Old Testament* in four volumes and *The Bible*.[98]

*Brenton's Septuagint, Restored Names Version* (SRNV) has been published in two volumes. The Hebrew-names restoration, based on the Westminster Leningrad Codex, focuses on the restoration of the Divine Name and has extensive Hebrew and Greek footnotes.

*The Holy Orthodox Bible* by Peter A. Papoutsis and *The Old Testament According to the Seventy* by Michael Asser are based on the Greek Septuagint text published by the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.[99]

In 2012, Lexham Press published the *Lexham English Septuagint* (LES), providing a literal, readable, and transparent English edition of the Septuagint for modern readers.[100] In 2019, Lexham Press published the *Lexham English Septuagint,* Second Edition (LES2), making more of an effort than the first to focus on the text as received rather than as produced. Because this approach shifts the point of reference from a diverse group to a single implied reader, the new LES exhibits more consistency than the first edition.[101] "The Lexham English Septuagint (LES), then, is the only contemporary English translation of the LXX that has been made directly from the Greek."[102]

# Society and journal

The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS), a non-profit learned society, promotes international research into and study of the Septuagint and related texts.[103] The society declared 8 February 2006 International Septuagint Day, a day to promote the work on campuses and in communities.[104] The IOSCS publishes the *Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies*.[105]

# See also

- Biblical apocrypha
- Biblical canon
- Book of Job in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts
- Brenton's English Translation of the Septuagint
- Deuterocanonical books
- Documentary hypothesis – Theory that the Torah was composed over a long period by many authors
- *La Bible d'Alexandrie*
- Samareitikon

**Bible portal**

# Notes

a. The canon of the original Old Greek LXX is disputed. This table reflects the canon of the Old Testament as used currently in Eastern Orthodoxy.
b. Not in the Eastern Orthodox canon, but originally included in the LXX.[51]
c. This Jesus is not to be confused with Jesus of Nazareth.
d. Βασιλειῶν (Basileiōn) is the genitive plural of Βασιλεία (Basileia).
e. That is, *Of things set aside* from Ἔσδρας Αʹ.
f. Includes additions.
g. also called Τωβείτ or Τωβίθ in some sources.
h. or Tōbeit or Tōbith
i. Obdiou is genitive from "The vision *of* Obdias", which opens the book.
j. Includes additions.
k. Originally placed after 3 Maccabees and before Psalms, but placed in the appendix of some Eastern Orthodox Bibles if it is included.
l. Originally placed in an appendix after the Old and New Testaments in the Table of Contents of the Codex Alexandrinus, but not included in any modern canon due to its text being lost until the 17th century.

m. These percentages are disputed. Other scholars credit the Proto-Masoretic texts with 40 per cent, and posit larger contributions from Qumran-style and non-aligned texts. *The Canon Debate*, McDonald and Sanders editors (2002), chapter 6: "Questions of Canon through the Dead Sea Scrolls" by James C. VanderKam, p. 94, citing private communication with Emanuel Tov on biblical manuscripts: Qumran scribe type c. 25 per cent, proto-Masoretic Text c. 40 per cent, pre-Samaritan texts c.5 per cent, texts close to the Hebrew model for the Septuagint c. 5 per cent and nonaligned c. 25 per cent.

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# Further reading

- Siegfried Kreuzer, ed. *Introduction to the Septuagint* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; 2019) 671 pages; general information on the history and transmission of the Septuagint; information on each book of the Septuagint.
- Eberhard Bons and Jan Joosten, eds. *Septuagint Vocabulary: Pre-History, Usage, Reception* (Society of Biblical Literature; 2011) 211 pages; studies of the language used

- W. Emery Barnes, *On the Influence of Septuagint on the Peshitta* (https://archive.org/stream/journaltheologi00unkngoog#page/n208/mode/2up), JTS 1901, pp. 186–197.
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- Andreas Juckel, *Septuaginta and Peshitta Jacob of Edessa quoting the Old Testament in Ms BL Add 17134* (https://web.archive.org/web/20110525185517/http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol8No2/HV8N2Juckel.html) *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*.
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- Alfred Rahlfs, *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments, für das Septuaginta-Unternehmen* (https://archive.org/stream/mitteilungendess00akaduoft#page/n9/mode/2up), Göttingen 1914.
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- Alison G. Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint* (Oxford University Press; 2021) 776 pages; ISBN 978-0191644009
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# External links

### Texts and translations

- Elpenor's Bilingual (Greek/English) Septuagint Old Testament (https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/default.asp) Greek text (full polytonic unicode version) and English translation side by side. Greek text as used by the Eastern Orthodox Churches.
- Titus Text Collection: Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes (https://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/grie/sept/sept.htm) (advanced research tool)
- Septuagint published by the Church of Greece (http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=old_testament/contents.asp&main=OldTes)
- Plain text of the whole LXX (http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/text/religion/biblical/lxxmorph/)
- Bible Resource Pages (http://www.katapi.org.uk/) – contains Septuagint texts (with diacritics) side-by-side with English translations
- The Septuagint in Greek (http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~hancock/sept.zip) as a Microsoft Word document. Introduction and book abbreviations in Latin. Non-free Antioch (Vusillus Old Face, Vusillus) (http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~hancock/antioch.htm) TrueType font file required.
- The New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS), electronic edition (http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/)
- LXX2012: Septuagint in American English 2012 (http://www.ebible.org/eng-lxx2012/index.htm) – The Septuagint with Apocrypha, translated from Greek to English by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton and published in 1885, with some language updates by Michael Paul Johnson in 2012 (American English)