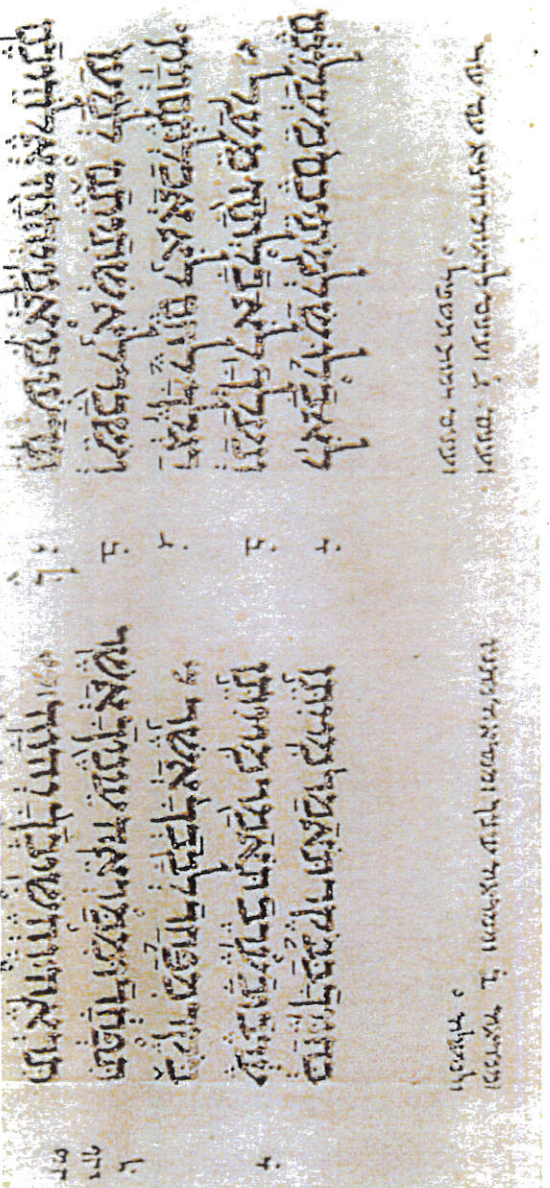


SESSION 1: WHAT DO WE READ WHEN WE READ THE OT?

What physical copies do we have of the OT text?

1. Most important manuscript groups discovered before 1947
 - A. Masoretic Text: Jewish medieval manuscripts (10th cent. or later) that contain Hebrew consonants, vowels, accents, and marginal notes.



This image is from Deuteronomy 28–29 in the Aleppo Codex (930)

- B. Septuagint: Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible carried out between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC.



Codex Vaticanus (mid-4th century), https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1209

John Meade:

The textual history of the Hebrew Bible on the whole shows remarkable care and preservation — but not uniformity. The Hebrew text that became the source for the Medieval manuscripts on which our modern Old Testaments are based — known as the Masoretic Text — was the dominant but not the exclusive form before and after the time of Jesus. Other textual forms existed at the time of Jesus, since some scribes copied that dominant text in freer and more creative ways for different purposes.¹

What is a “textual variant”?

We recognize textual variants when manuscripts differ from one another. Such differences are the result of scribal error (unintentional) or scribal change (intentional).

Why are textual variants a gift?

1. They do not destabilize the theological message of the Bible.
2. They give us a more historically accurate biblical text.
3. They foster meditation on the Bible.

Exegetical variants

How valuable were manuscripts?

Peter Gentry:

Before the invention of the printing press in 1450 AD, all books were copied by hand. Producing books was painstaking and slow work. We call books created in this way manuscripts, a term derived from two Latin words: scriptus (written) and manu (by hand). In 692, Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Abbey in England was granted additional land to raise 200 head of cattle to provide parchment (animal skin) for the ambitious project of producing three complete illustrated Bibles. Bede was undoubtedly involved in this task, which took more than two decades to complete. The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran required as many as seventeen sheepskins for just one book of the OT.²

¹ John Meade, “Did Jesus Read the ESV?” *Think*, 22 (https://www.academia.edu/43804752/Did_Jesus_Read_the_ESV).

² Peter Gentry, “Chaos Theory and the Text of the Old Testament,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 24.3 (2020): 55–81, at 56. <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2021/07/SBJT-24.3-Gentry-Chaos-Theory-and-the-Text-of-the-Old-Testament.pdf>

Two Exegetical Variants in Exodus 2

Masoretic Text

¹ Now a man from the house of Levi married the daughter of Levi. ² The woman became pregnant and delivered a son. She saw him—that he was good—and hid him for three months. ³ When she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, covered it with tar and pitch, set the child in it, and she set it in the reeds by the shore of the Nile.

Exegetical Variants

⁴ QExod^b
...set the child in it, said to her servant, “Go!”
and she set it...

⁴ Then his sister stood far away so that she would know what would happen to him.

⁵ Now the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe by the Nile, while her maidens walked alongside the Nile. She saw the ark among the reeds, sent **her servant**, and took it. ⁶ She opened it and saw the child. The lad was weeping! She had compassion on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrew children.”

⁷ Then his sister said to the daughter of Pharaoh, “Should I go call for you a wetnurse from the Hebrew women who will nurse the child for you?” ⁸ **The daughter of Pharaoh said to her, “Go!”** The young woman went and called the child’s mother. ⁹ The daughter of Pharaoh said to her, “Take this child and nurse him for me, and I myself will provide your pay.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. ¹⁰ The child grew up, and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh. He became her son. She called his name Moses, and she said, “because I drew him from the water.”

...

¹⁵ Pharaoh heard about this and intended to kill Moses. Moses fled from Pharaoh and took up residence in the land of Midian. He sat down by the well. ¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They *came*, drew, and filled their troughs to water their father’s flock.

Septuagint (~4QExod^b)

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, shepherdesses of their father’s flock...

^{Crit 29/9b} Rachel *came* with **her father’s flock** (for she was a **shepherdess**).

4. Pseudepigrapha: Books “falsely written” in the name of biblical characters (e.g., Jubilees, 1 Enoch)

Jesus and the apostles accepted the Jewish canon (Tanakh), both in scope and shape, as scripture. There is no indisputable evidence for Christian acceptance of the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha before the 4th century.

External evidence for the OT canon

1. Prologue to Sirach (c. 130 BC; NRSV)
Many great teachings have been given to us through *the Law and the Prophets and the others* that followed them, and for these we should praise Israel for instruction and wisdom. Now, those who read the scriptures must not only themselves understand them, but must also as lovers of learning be able through the spoken and written word to help the outsiders. So my grandfather Jesus, who had devoted himself especially to the reading of *the Law and the Prophets and the other books* of our ancestors, and had acquired considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom, so that by becoming familiar also with his book those who love learning might make even greater progress in living according to the law...
...Not only this book, but even *the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books* differ not a little when read in the original.

2. 4QMMT (late 1st century BC)
Indeed, we [have written] to you that you might understand the book of Moses, the books of the prophets, and David...]
3. Luke 24:44
He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Internal evidence for the OT canon

1. The seams of the OT canon

Deut 18:18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.

Deut 34:10 Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, ¹¹ who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. ¹² For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

2. Combined references to the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings

The final passage in the OT

2 Chron 36:20 He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia,²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:²³ “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’”

Justification in Romans

Rom 1:17 For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Rom 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

Rom 4:6–8 Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Jesus’s baptism and transfiguration

Matt 3:17 This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

Matt 17:5 This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.

Stephen Dempster:

The assumption everywhere is that there is a settled collection of literature to which the Messiah, Jesus, supplies the key for interpretation. His whole life from beginning to end is saturated with OT scripture. His Messianic birth is verified by him being born in Bethlehem, which was predicted by the prophet Micah. His name is called Immanuel based on the word of the prophet Isaiah. When he is baptized at the Jordan, he gets his identity card from the three parts of the Hebrew Bible: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. “Beloved” comes from Genesis 22 when Abraham was called to sacrifice his beloved son, and “This is my son” derives from Psalm 2:7 where God speaks to the Davidic king: “You are my son, Today I have begotten you.” And Isaiah 42:1 identifies the Servant of God who will bring his Torah to the nations this way: You are my chosen one in whom I am well pleased.⁴

⁴ Stephen Dempster, “From a Smoking Canon to Burning Hearts: The Making of the Hebrew Bible,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 24.3 (2020) 25–52, at 31.

SESSION 3: WHENCE THE ENGLISH BIBLE?

Origin of English translations

1. John Wycliffe (1330–1384): “Morning star of the Reformation” who was the catalyst of the first English translation of the Bible.
2. William Tyndale (1494–1536): Completed the first English translation of the New Testament from Greek. Also translated large portions of the Old Testament from Hebrew.

Bruce Metzger:

The aim of the [King James Bible] revisers is clearly stated in the preface. It was not to make “a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one.” Although usually called a translation, it is in fact merely a *revision* of the Great Bible, and the Great Bible a revision of Coverdale and Tyndale. A great deal of the praise, therefore, that is given to it belongs to its predecessors. For the idiom and vocabulary, Tyndale deserves the greatest credit; for the melody and harmony, Coverdale; for scholarship and accuracy, the Geneva version.⁵

Tyndale’s translation of the Old Testament is free, bold, and idiomatic. The serpent says to Eve in Genesis 3:4, “Tush, ye shall not die”; in Genesis 39:2 we read that “the Lorde was with Joseph, and he was a luckie fellowe”; in Exodus 15:4 Pharaoh’s “jolly captains” are drowned in the Red Sea; and in verse 26 of the same chapter God introduces himself as “the Lord thy surgeon.”⁶

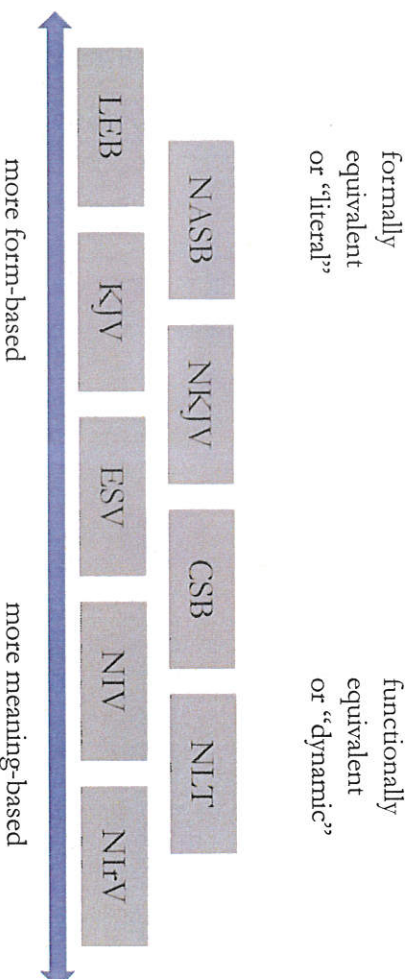
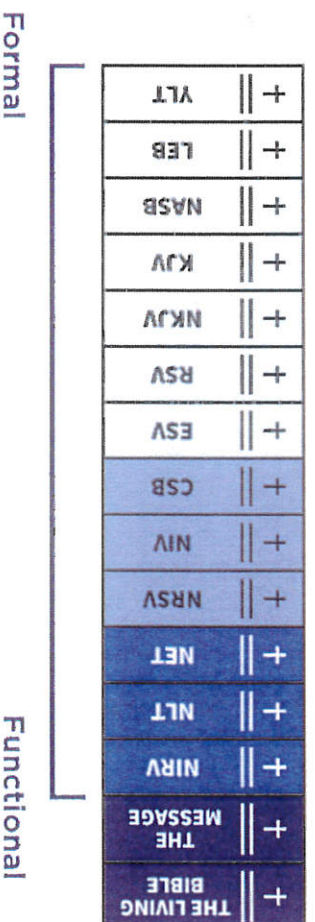
William Tyndale:

I assure you, if it would stand with the King’s most gracious pleasure to grant only a bare text of the Scripture to be put forth among his people...be it of the translation of what person soever shall please his Majesty, I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more, nor abide two days in these parts after the same: but immediately to repair unto his realm, and there most humbly submit myself at the feet of his royal majesty, offering my body to suffer what pain or torture, yea, what death his grace will, so this be obtained. Until that time, I will abide the asperity of all chances, whatsoever shall come, and endure my life in as many pains as it is able to bear and suffer.⁷

⁵ Bruce Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 76–77.

⁶ Bruce Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 59.

⁷ Quoted in John Piper, *21 Servants of Sovereign Joy*, 512.

B. Mark Ward's comparison of English translations⁹C. Karen Engle's comparison of English translations¹⁰

Mark Ward:

But I believe the tribalism—the belief that a group's chosen translation is one of many marks of its superiority over other groups—needs to stop. *All Bible-loving-and-reading Christians need to learn to see the value in all good Bible translations.*

People who use the NIV exclusively need to also see the value of the NASB. People who use the ESV exclusively need to discover the help the NLT can provide. People who are KJV-Only need to stop seeing the translation work of godly, careful brothers and sisters in Christ...as threats, and instead as gifts.

The existence of multiple English Bible translations is a benefit to us all, not a justification for banner-hoisting and wagon-circling. I hate to see Bibles becoming symbols of division: "I am of Crossway!" "I am of Zondervan!" "I am of B&H!"¹¹

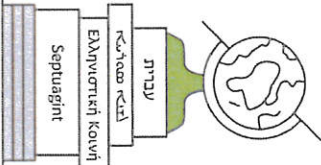
⁹ Mark Ward, *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible*, 123.

¹⁰ Karen Engle, "A Visual Guide to Choosing the Best Bible Translation," blog.logos.com. See also the illustration on page 15 below.

¹¹ Mark Ward, *Authorized*, 124.

The Value of Different Kinds of Bible Translations

- The entire Bible has been translated into over **700 languages**. Portions have been translated into even more. Thousands of languages, however, still need God's word.
- The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew with a few small portions in the related language of Aramaic.
- The New Testament was originally written in **Koine** ("common") Greek.
- The first Bible translation was the **Septuagint**, a pre-Christian Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- Every Bible translation includes countless "**formal**" and countless "**functional**" renderings, but the weight or balance between the two differs in any given Bible translation.

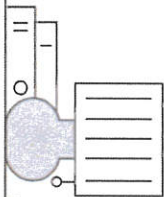


+	+	+	+	+	+
YLT	LEB	NASB	KJV	NKJV	RSV
==	==	==	==	==	==



Formal

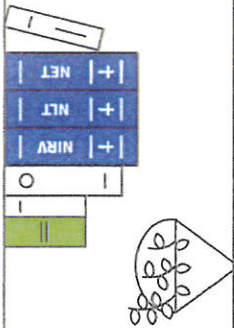
Formal translations tend to mimic the forms—word choice, word order, grammatical category—of the Hebrew and Greek even when this causes awkward English (sometimes called "Biblish").



+	+	+
CSB	NIV	NRSV
==	==	==

Moderate

Moderate translations try to find an optimal blend of formal and functional translation choices.



Functional

Functional translations work to choose renderings that achieve the same "function" for today's readers that the original texts would have had for their first readers—even if this means introducing more interpretation than might be strictly necessary.

Paraphrases

Paraphrases bring the text into the world of the reader by summarizing, rephrasing, and even "transculturating"—replacing ancient metaphors and literary structures with concepts and terminology familiar today.

