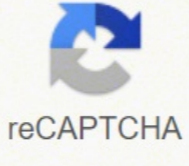




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## What is the original bible version

Bible Odyssey has been made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this website, do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Can the scrolls help expose the original Bible language within the Masoretic Text and Septuagint? Noah Wiener December 23, 2021 75 Comments 178736 views The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:8) in the Masoretic Text describes the Most High dividing the nations according to number of “the sons [children?] of Israel.” This Dead Sea Scroll fragment (4QDeutj) and the third-century B.C.E. translation of the Hebrew Pentateuch into Greek (the Septuagint [LXX]), however, say the nations were divided according to the “sons of Elohim” (God). What did the original Bible text say? Photo: IAA.For centuries, Bible scholars examined two ancient texts to elucidate the original language of the Bible: the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint. The Masoretic Text is a traditional Hebrew text finalized by Jewish scholars around 1000 C.E. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Torah created by the Jews of Alexandria in the third century B.C.E. (The other books of the Hebrew Bible were translated over the course of the following century.) According to Septuagint tradition, at least 70 isolated ancient scholars came up with identical Greek translations of the Torah. Which is the “original” Bible? How do we decide which of these two ancient texts is more authoritative? In “Searching for the ‘Original’ Bible” in the July/August 2014 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review, Hebrew University of Jerusalem scholar and long-time editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication team Emanuel Tov suggests we turn to the Dead Sea Scrolls to help us compare the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint. Interested in the history and meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls? In the free eBook Dead Sea Scrolls, learn what the Dead Sea Scrolls are and why they are important. Find out what they tell us about the Bible, Christianity, and Judaism. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls actually have more in common with the Greek Septuagint than the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text. This suggests that the Greek translators must have been translating from Hebrew texts that resembled the Dead Sea Scrolls. Are the Dead Sea Scroll texts as trustworthy as these other two sources? Are they as close to the text of the original Bible? The Great Isaiah Scroll is one of the most iconic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, yet it does not reflect the original language of the Bible. Tov calls it “a classroom example of what an inferior text looks like, with its manifold contextual changes, harmonizations, grammatical adaptations, etc.” Photo: John C. Trevor, Ph.D. Digital Image: James E. Trevor. Some turn to the Dead Sea Scrolls simply because they are older: 2,000-year-old texts were less likely to be subjected to scribal corruption; they should reflect a more original Bible language. Tov supplements this chronological reasoning with a logical—and admittedly subjective—approach: He examines which text makes the most sense in a given context. Tov examines a number of textual discrepancies between Bible versions (Did God finish work on the sixth or seventh day before resting on the seventh day? How were the nations divided according to the number of the sons of God?) in his search for the original Bible. The Dead Sea Scrolls have been called the greatest manuscript find of all time. Explore the BAS Dead Sea Scrolls page for dozens of articles on the scrolls’ significance, discovery and scholarship. As an example, Tov asks: Did Hannah bring one bull or three bulls as an offering at Shiloh? (1 Samuel 1:24): When the infant Samuel had been weaned and his mother, Hannah, finally came to Shiloh with her son, she also brought with her an offering for the Lord that is described in two ways in our textual sources. According to the Masoretic Text, she brought “three bulls,” but according to the Septuagint and a Qumran scroll (4QSama from 50–25 B.C.E.) she brought one “three-year-old bull.” I believe that Hannah probably offered only a single bull (as in the Septuagint and 4QSama), supporting this choice is the next verse in the Masoretic Text which speaks about “the bull.” I believe the Masoretic Text was textually corrupted when the continuous writing (without spaces between words) of the original words prm/shlshh (literally: “bulls three”) underlying the Septuagint was divided wrongly to pr mshlsh (“three-year-old bull”).\* The evidence of the Septuagint, being in Greek, always depends on a reconstruction into Hebrew, and consequently the Qumran scroll here helps us decide between the various options. Incidentally an offering of a “three-year-old bull” is mentioned in Genesis 15:9. It shows that a Hebrew text underlying the Septuagint once existed in which Hannah brought only one three-year-old bull. Tov uses the Dead Sea Scrolls to elucidate the original language of the Bible not only because they are the oldest Bible manuscripts, but also because they provide additional logical clues. He concludes: “In finding our way in the labyrinth of textual sources of the Bible, we must slowly accumulate experience and intuition. When maneuvering among the sources, we will find much help in the Dead Sea Scrolls. But they must be used judiciously.” —————Subscribers: Continue on the search for the “original” Bible as Emanuel Tov explores different versions of important Biblical passages. Read the full article “Searching for the ‘Original’ Bible” by Emanuel Tov as it appeared in the July/August 2014 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review. Not a subscriber yet? Join today. This Bible History Daily article about ancient translations of the Bible was originally published on June 27, 2014. Notes: \* Many thanks to Joseph Lauer for a careful reading of the text, and to Emanuel Tov for clarification. The text: “...of the original words prm/shlshh (literally: ‘bulls three’) underlying the Septuagint was divided wrongly to pr mshlsh (‘three-year-old bull’)” Should read: “...of the original words pr mshlsh (‘three-year-old bull’) underlying the Septuagint was divided wrongly to prm/shlshh (literally: ‘bulls three’)” Get more biblical Archaeology: Become a Member The world of the Bible is knowable. We can learn about the society where the ancient Israelites, and later Jesus and the Apostles, lived through the modern discoveries that provide us clues. Biblical Archaeology Review is the guide on that fascinating journey. Here is your ticket to join us as we discover more and more about the biblical world and its people. 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The All-Access membership pass is the way to get to know the Bible through biblical archaeology. In 1604, England’s King James I authorized a new translation of the Bible aimed at settling some thorny religious differences in his kingdom—and solidifying his own power. But in seeking to prove his own supremacy, King James ended up democratizing the Bible instead. Thanks to emerging printing technology, the new translation brought the Bible out of the church’s sole control and directly into the hands of more people than ever before, including the Protestant reformers who settled England’s North American colonies in the 17th century. Emerging at a high point in the English Renaissance, the King James Bible held its own among some of the most celebrated literary works in the English language (think William Shakespeare). Its majestic cadences would inspire generations of artists, poets, musicians and political leaders, while many of its specific phrases worked their way into the fabric of the language itself. Even now, more than four centuries after its publication, the King James Bible (a.k.a. the King James Version, or simply the Authorized Version) remains the most famous Bible translation in history—and one of the most printed books ever.READ MORE: The BibleKing James I of England, 1621.Ann Ronan Pictures/Print Collector/Getty ImagesHow the King James Bible came to beWhen King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England in 1603, he was well aware that he was entering a sticky situation. For one thing, his immediate predecessor on the throne, Queen Elizabeth I, had ordered the execution of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, who had represented a Catholic threat to Elizabeth’s Protestant reign. And even though Elizabeth had established the supremacy of the Anglican Church (founded by her father, King Henry VIII), its bishops now had to contend with rebellious Protestant groups like the Puritans and Calvinists, who questioned their absolute power. By the time James took the throne, many people in England at the time were hearing one version of the Bible when they went to church, but were reading from another when they were at home. While one version of Christianity’s holy texts—the so-called Bishops’ Bible—was read in churches, the most popular version among Protestant reformers in England at the time was the Geneva Bible, which had been created in that city by a group of Calvinist exiles during the bloody reign of Elizabeth’s half-sister, Mary I. For the new king, the Geneva Bible posed a political problem, since it contained certain annotations questioning not only the bishops’ power, but his own. So in 1604, when a Puritan scholar proposed the creation of a new translation of the Bible at a meeting at a religious conference at Hampton Court, James surprised him by agreeing. Over the next seven years, 47 scholars and theologians worked to translate the different books of the Bible: the Old Testament from Hebrew, the New Testament from Greek and the Apocrypha from Greek and Latin. Much of the resulting translation drew on the work of the Protestant reformer William Tyndale, who had produced the first New Testament translation from Greek into English in 1525, but was executed for heresy less than a decade later. READ MORE: Explore 10 Biblical Sites: PhotosA 1616 printed King James bible translated by James I on display at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. on September 27, 2011. Linda Davidson/The Washington Post/Getty ImagesBringing the Bible directly to the peoplePublished in 1611, the King James Bible spread quickly throughout Europe. Because of the wealth of resources devoted to the project, it was the most faithful and scholarly translation to date—not to mention the most accessible. “Printing had already been invented, and made copies relatively cheap compared to hand-done copies,” says Carol Meyers, a professor of religious studies at Duke University. “The translation into English, the language of the land, made it accessible to all those people who could read English, and who could afford a printed Bible.” Whereas before, the Bible had been the sole property of the Church, now more and more people could read it themselves. Not only that, but the language they read in the King James Bible was an English unlike anything they had read before. With its poetic cadences and vivid imagery, the KJV sounded to many like the voice of God himself. READ MORE: The Bible Says Jesus Was Real. What Other Proof Exists?Religious and political impactBy giving more people direct access to the Bible, the King James Version also had a democratizing influence within Protestantism itself, especially in the English colonies being settled in the New World. The Puritans and other reformers “didn’t overtake the Anglican Church in England,” Meyers explains. “But in the colonies, the Anglicans no longer had supremacy, because the Puritans, Presbyterians, Methodists came,” all of whom made use of the King James Bible. Meanwhile, back in England, the bitter religious disputes that had motivated the new Bible translation would spiral by the 1640s into the English Civil Wars, which ended in the capture and execution (by beheading) of King James’s son and successor, Charles I. If James had hoped to quash any doubt of his (and his successors’) divine right to power, he clearly hadn’t succeeded. Meyers points out that the King James Bible gave people access to passages that were not ordinarily read in church—passages that limit the power of secular rulers like James. As an example, she cites Deuteronomy 17, which reads, “One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee.” But it also suggests that the king should not acquire too many horses, wives or silver and gold for himself, and that he, like anyone else, should be subject to the laws of God. “King James wanted to solidify his own reputation as a good king by commissioning the translation,” Meyers says. “Maybe he didn’t know about those passages about the limits of the king’s powers, or think making them available to all might threaten his divine right as king.” READ MORE: What Did Jesus Look Like? A copy of the King James translation of the Bible seen in the Bible Baptist Church in Mount Prospect, Illinois.Darrell Coemaat/Chicago Tribune/MCT/Getty ImagesThe cultural legacy of the King James BibleFrom Handel’s Messiah to Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise,” the King James Bible has inspired a wide swath of cultural expression across the English-speaking world over generations. Writers from Herman Melville to Ernest Hemingway to Alice Walker have drawn on its cadences and imagery for their work, while Martin Luther King Jr. quoted the King James Version of Isaiah (from memory) in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Beyond the countless artists and leaders inspired by the King James Bible, its influence can be seen in many of the expressions English speakers use every day. Phrases like “my brother’s keeper,” “the kiss of death,” “the blind leading the blind,” “fall from grace,” “eye for an eye” and “a drop in the bucket”—to name only a few—all owe their existence, or at least their popularization in English, to the KJV. From the early 20th century onward, mainstream Protestant denominations increasingly turned toward more modern Bible translations, which have been able to provide more accurate readings of the source texts, thanks to the use of more recently discovered ancient Semitic texts unavailable in 1611. Still, the King James Version remains extremely popular. As late as 2014, a major study on “The Bible in American Life” found that 55 percent of Bible readers said they reached most often for the King James Version, compared with only 19 percent who chose the New International Version, first published in 1978 and updated most recently in 2011. (The high percentage also likely included people who favor the New King James Version, an update of the classic English text published in the 1980s.) It’s clear that after more than 400 years, the King James Bible has more than proven its staying power. “[For] reading in worship services, it’s much more majestic than most of the modern translations,” says Meyers. “It’s had a very powerful influence on our language and our literature, to this very day.”



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