

How our Bibles Were Put Together (The Hebrew and Greek Manuscripts) By Moshe Schwab

I would like to talk about understanding how we got our Bibles and some of the problems scholars encountered when putting together our Bibles. I hope this will help you understand the Bible better. We are not trying to destroy God's words as some are, but we seek the truth. Most people have access to the Bible through printed translations. So, we then absolutely must understand the Hebrew culture and the cultural issues that are being presented because that was the culture that was trying to preserve and keep what the Bible says. Sometimes what is being said is clear, at other times there may be a cultural issue behind what is being presented.

We have no original manuscripts of the Bible, but thousands of manuscripts and fragments. A standard text from the manuscripts has been put together for both the Old and New portions of the Bible by scholars. We have both Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Old and New Testament portions.

Older translations of the standard text which was put together from the manuscripts have tried to give us a word for word translation. For example, the New King James Version is a word for word attempt to translate the text they put together. Whereas, the newer translations often try to reinterpret the standard text. One translation uses a car instead of a chariot. This reinterpretation in some versions can sometimes change the intended meaning of the original. I use the New King James Version because it is based on a word for word rendering and therefore easier to try to understand if there are any cultural issues to decipher.

No translation is perfect. Translations present a hurdle for those who wish to understand the scriptures because they are prone to human error. People will call their translation perfect and vilify anyone who says otherwise, but we must seek and follow the truth, or we will just have made-up religion. We must also understand that no standard text that is put together from a compilation of the manuscripts is perfect and therefore, no Bible translation is perfect.

Both Greek and Hebrew manuscripts in ancient times have been altered or mistakes have been made when copying the manuscripts. Scholars use multiple manuscripts to determine what the standard text should be, but since we have no originals, we can only do the best we can. I know of some 84 manuscripts of the Hebrew New Testament portion as of this writing. It is obvious that there is some altering of the Hebrew manuscripts because there are minor differences between them. Some were trying to correct what they thought were errors in the Hebrew and also there are copying errors. The Hebrew has a lot less errors than the Greek historically and it was used to help modify the Greek manuscripts over the centuries. Jerome even quotes some of the Hebrew scriptures of the New Testament and they match the Hebrew manuscripts of the New Testament that we have. There is evidence that the Hebrew manuscripts are of a better quality than the Greek manuscripts and even Jerome in the 4th century attests that the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament portion had lots of errors.

For example, the Greek manuscripts have consistent errors. In some Hebrew manuscripts it says in Matthew 1:16, "And Jacob begot Joseph the father of Mary" and not the husband of Mary. If you count the names, you come up one short the number of generations when Joseph

is the husband of Mary. Matthew 1:17 gives us the number of generations. When Joseph is the father of Mary the number of generations matches correctly. All the Greek manuscripts contain the error that Joseph is the husband of Mary. So, someone changed some of the Hebrew manuscripts to match the Greek manuscripts. A man by the name of Joseph was Mary's father. Another man by the name of Joseph was her husband. The copiers of the Greek manuscripts evidently could not understand this.

Mathew has the genealogy of Yeshua through Mary, and Luke contains the genealogy through Mary's husband Joseph. They are entirely different genealogies. Theology says they are two genealogies of Joseph. Why would we need that? They are not as smart as they might seem. We most of all need a genealogy of Yeshua that links Him through Mary going back to kingly line of David. Joseph was not Yeshua's actual father, but God created Yeshua in Mary miraculously.

The scholars did a great job with the thousands of manuscripts of the Greek. But there are sometimes up to 10 deviations of just one verse between the manuscripts and there are almost 8,000 verses in the New Testament portion. I have a copy of the standard Greek text put together from the manuscripts and it is called, Novum Testamentum Graece. If you look at a page, you may see just a few verses at the top of the page and the rest of the page filled with deviations for those verses between the manuscripts in small print. If we use a small number such as 3 deviations as the average number of deviations in the verses of the New Testament, we end up with 24,000 deviations that the scholars had to deal with in order to come up with a standard text from the Greek manuscripts. Even if we say the average is one, 8,000 is a lot of deviations!

I sometimes tell the story of this Bible teacher who said to someone he was talking to, "How dare you say there is anything wrong with the Greek manuscripts!" There are some people who do not want the truth, but only want others to believe what they believe. God will judge them for their lies. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." Think twice before contradicting what the Bible says.

We should also mention that the Roman Empire intended to make Christianity entirely Roman, and they hunted down the Hebrew manuscripts of the New Testament portion and killed anyone who had them. This accounts for the fewer number of Hebrew manuscripts that we have available. Their false doctrine then got passed down into Christianity. We now have found a lot of Hebrew manuscripts of the New Testament portion.

The exceeding number of deviations in the Greek manuscripts does not account for the changes made to the Greek by the Roman Empire to make the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament portion into a religion of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was anti-Jewish, so they even added words to make the Greek sound anti-Jewish. We know this because the Hebrew New Testament is worded without these anti-Jewish insertions. For example, it says in John 1:11 in the Greek that Yeshua came to His own, meaning the Jews, but they did not receive Him. In the Hebrew it says that Yeshua came to the world and the world did not receive Him. So, it is His creation, mankind, that did not receive Yeshua.

Many of the insertions of the word Jew in the New Testament Greek was meant to be anti-Jewish. There is even one insertion in Luke that insinuates that people should kill the Jews. God said you shall not murder. Murder is a direct contradiction of the Bible. The Roman Empire made it illegal to keep God's feasts (See Leviticus 23:2, where it says they are God's feasts.) and they replaced God's feasts with their own feasts. We should also understand that they tampered with the meaning of the scriptures to specifically distance the true faith of the believers that was passed down from Noah, Abraham, and Israel. The Roman Empire wanted to make the New Testament scriptures more palatable for the pagans. For example, in the Hebrew James 1:25 it says we are to keep the Torah. In the Greek it says we are to keep the law of liberty.

Much of James talks about keeping God's commandments. For example, James 2:24 NKJV says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." The heretic insertion of "law of liberty" changes the whole idea that Ya'akov is trying to make. We do not know the extent of the modifications that were made to replace the true Christianity of our Messiah. Whenever something seems to be saying that we are not to keep God's commandments there must be some suspicion of tampered wording.

Do not throw out your Bibles. But you have to go by the clear verses and not by verses that are not clear or that say not to keep God's commandments. Shaul said in Romans 3:31 NKJV, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." He said that the Old Testament law was not done away with and that it was established!

Theology comes along with its man-made ideas and says the Old Testament has been done away with. You are not following God if you are following the made-up theology of the theologians. Following God means you are doing what God says to do. So, keep His commandments. Malachi 3:6 NKJV says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change." God did not change His mind about His commands in the Old Testament. If they were good back then, they are still good. Yeshua said in Matthew 15:9 NKJV, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

People think they are following Yeshua, but instead they are following the false doctrines of theology. Do not be fooled by their blind assertions. 2 Corinthians 11:3 NKJV says, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Eve subtracted and changed God's command. Then the devil said, they will not die. Theologians say that we do not have to keep God's commandments just like the devil did through the serpent. They preach a different Jesus and not what Jesus taught.

Take for example what Yeshua said in Matthew 5:17 NKJV, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." Yeshua as God who gave us the Old Testament commandments tells us to keep His commandments in the Gospels and attests that He is not doing away with the Old Testament commandments. Strong's Dictionary says that the Greek word for destroy here in Matthew can mean demolish which would mean not to do away with them in a very strong way. Yeshua is emphasizing that He is not doing away with the Old Testament portion commandments.

Then, theologians say that the Old Testament portion commands are done away because Yeshua fulfilled them; they are subtracting from God's commandments. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." Strong's Dictionary says that the word fulfill there in Matthew is to fill up. So, it has more to do with completing the commandments than taking away. If we have half a glass of water, I can add more water and completely fill it up.

New Testament believers are commanded to receive the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38-39). Shaul says in Ephesians 5:18 NKJV, "Be filled with the Spirit." We are filled up with the Holy Spirit or we could say that we are completely filled up. Colossians 2:10 says, "You are complete in Him." Theologians are not trying to find truth but to get us to believe in their belief system and explain away anything that contradicts what they have already decided to believe. Again, I hope this helps you understand the Bible better. We are not trying to destroy God's words as some are, but we seek the truth.