

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

Number 104

“How we got the Old Testament”

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With

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June 12, 2016

How we got the Old Testament

On a previous episode, Mike interview Rick Brannan on how we go the New Testament Testament and why conspiratorial ideas about the Greek New Testament are bogus. In this episode the Old Testament gets equal time. Mike overviews how the OT books were composed, edited, received, transmitted by scribes, and published to the present day (with a little Dead Sea Scrolls conspiracy debunking along the way).

Article referenced:

***Inspiration, Inerrancy, and The OT Canon: The Place Of Textual Updating
In An Inerrant View Of Scripture***

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 104, How we got the Old Testament. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you?

MSH: Very good, this is one of my favorite subjects. I like textual criticism stuff and we had Rick Brannan on earlier. He talked about the New Testament and try to inject some sanity into some of the conspiratorial stuff that goes on with that. So here we are with equal time, and like I said, I just like this subject. I think it's really interesting, and hopefully listeners will, too.

TS: I can guarantee we all think it's interesting.

MSH: I want to start off by trying to go from composition, like how did we get the Old Testament books in terms of them being composed or written, do a little bit with the editorial process, some of the things that went into that, and then the talk about how the things that were produced, the books that were produced were recognized as canonical or inspired or given sacred status, just a little bit on that. And then we'll talk about transmission, which a lot of people when you say let's talk about how we got the Old Testament, it's what do scribes do, what about all these manuscripts and what not? So we'll hit that as well and that's pretty involved but I think it's a really interesting subject that once we get to that point, we will be able to touch a little bit on conspiracy land. So there is some of this in the Old Testament. Once the text was transmitted by hand, you do reach a certain point where it begins to be published, things like the printing press and all the way up to the modern day, actual sort of official published editions of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament.

And we'll end by mentioning that even though we got this stuff published, there are actually three ongoing Old Testament text projects as we speak. You might wonder isn't the job done? Don't we have the Hebrew Bible? The answer's we do but as we'll learn as we get, especially, in the manuscript transmission, there are different approaches that scholars have taken with regard to producing a particular addition of the Hebrew Bible. And there are naturally disagreements on approaches and sort of methods and so that's what a lot of the current work is doing, people just taking different approaches on how to produce a useful Hebrew Bible for today. Let's just jump in kind of at the beginning with composition and editorial activity. And chronologically, this is something if you take a conservative view of Mosaic authorship, whether that means Moses lived and wrote something or Moses wrote the whole Torah, right away you get into chronological issues that roughly 1400 BC, that would be the early date of the Exodus, 1446, so authorship of what we think of as the Torah, the initial books, at least in that reconstruction, would be around 1400. But if you take a late date, it's around 1200. So just going with the early date, the books of the Hebrew Bible, and the Hebrew Bible is essentially like a library.

It's composed of many books. That began in the lifetime of Moses. We're talking 1400-1200 BC and it continues all the way into the second century BC. Now that is especially true if you assign late authorship to a book like Daniel. A lot of people don't. Daniel's got big

controversy. Was it written in the six century BC or was it written the second century BC, whatnot. But I'm giving a second century BC date also because even if Daniel was written in the six century and you have other books that are written maybe in the 500s and the 400s, books like Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, those sorts of things, you're still running right into around 400 BC for the original compositions but then you have editorial activity that begins in the exile and then moves on for a few centuries that, to the best estimates of scholars, this is a process that went on for a couple centuries, so third century going down in the second century BC is typically when the scholars of all varieties, whether they're confessional or not, they would sort of say the whole thing was kind of wrapped up by this point, at least as far as the Old Testament goes. So you got a good 1000 years, 1400 to 200 BC, that's 1200. But even at the late date, you still get a 1000 years course of time for the creation of the books of the Hebrew Bible. What are they doing? Well, when we talk about composition, some books would've been composed in the old Hebrew script.

We're going to talk about scripts a little bit, both now and little bit later. But folks need to realize that when you look at Hebrew today, see a picture of the Hebrew Bible or you actually have a Hebrew Bible or you see it online or whatever, the style of letters or script that's used was not the original Hebrew script. The original Hebrew script looked quite a bit different. If you know about the history of the alphabet, you know where this comes from. The Semitic alphabet has Egyptian origins and then it moves into different parts of Syria Palestine where Semitic peoples are using this particular alphabet. It often gets assigned units of the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians weren't the ones who invented the alphabet but the style that they came up with was widely used throughout the ancient world, including Israel, the biblical lands. So you do have some books written in the old Hebrew script. The block script, that's the script that we're accustomed to now, the way Hebrew looks to our eye now, that was something that came about during the exile. So during the exile, you might have a book written in that script and not the old one but eventually, during and after the exile over the course of a few centuries, you're going to have books that may have been written in the old Hebrew script that have to be updated and reproduced in the new script.

So that's part of composing and editing. You also have instances where you're taking oral tradition and you're codifying it. You're putting it into writing. If you take a non-Mosaic view of at least parts of the Torah, you might say something like Israel's early history, the patriarchs that was something that was put into from oral tradition into writing during the exile. Others would say Moses could have done that. He doesn't have to invent that stuff. He would've known the oral history of his people and so he did it. But regardless, some books when they're written are not just written from scratch so to speak. They're actually reproductions. They're written codifications of oral traditions. So that's part of how books were composed. Sometimes you get a book that's "complete" and gets added to. In our last episode, we talked about Moses and the serpent in the wilderness and I said to my preference is to see Genesis 1-11 as written later than Moses during the Exile then added to the Torah, sort of a primeval history added prior to the history of the people of Israel which begins with Abraham and what not.

So if either that's the case or some other instance, we're going to talk about a few these instances, then you have books that were "complete" but then they get added to or they get changed or edited so that something else could be fit in there. That happens in the creation of a biblical book. When I talk about editing, some of that I've already talked about, is part of the picture. We got something to add here so we need to change the wording here and there so the

addition makes sense. And because we've added something, we might need to change a word or two down the road a little bit so that it all makes sense. You have sort of traditional editing like that, and we'll look at some examples, but you also have the kind of editorial activity that only people who are either reading the text in Hebrew or who knows Semitic languages would recognize. And that is, Hebrew is like any other language. It evolves over time. Its vocabulary changes. That's the most obvious change that most people know about a language. Even over the course of our lifetime, English has changed. Every year they give awards to new words invented that get added to the dictionary. Which one is the best one or the most popular one? Words like Internet didn't exist when I was in high school. World Wide Web was a term that just didn't exist, all sorts of things.

Smart phones didn't exist when I was in high school. So you have vocabulary changes and they're the easiest ones to understand. But you also have grammatical changes. And Hebrew, because Hebrew is a very old language, the grammar used in earliest Hebrew is not quite the same as we find in the Hebrew Bible. And so sometimes in the Hebrew Bible, you'll be reading along and you will see what scholars call an archaic form. There's an old form, an old grammatical form in the text that never got changed and sometimes that helps you date a text. Sometimes it doesn't. But it happens and it is evidence that either some editor who was updating it to go from old Hebrew language whenever this book was originally written, now we're updating it to biblical Hebrew prose "classical Hebrew". They either missed that or they let it go for some specific reason. Scholars like try to figure out why it's still here and that sort of thing but you get that. One of the more prominent examples of this would be the vowels. Hebrew originally had no vowels. It doesn't get dots and dashes like we're used to seeing today for Hebrew vowels. That doesn't happen until the Middle Ages. But prior to that, Hebrew used certain consonants to do double duty as vowels and that practice of using certain consonants to also function as vowels varied over time.

It was more common in earliest Hebrew as opposed to the Hebrew Bible we have today because once the dot and dash vowel system was invented, scribes didn't see a use for making consonants do double duty. That's why a biblical Hebrew passage will have different letters, different spelling then like a Dead Sea scroll, and we'll talk a little bit more about all these things. I'm just giving you kind of an overview of the things that you have to think about or the things that are happening, even when you trying to just write the text out, when you try to produce a book to be copied and transmitted. All of these things are happening. Yes, prophets, prophetic voices in the believing community, people called by God, sit down and write stuff. They do that but what they write will get re-fashioned. It will get updated either by script or by grammar, by vocabulary. All of these things happened over the course of time as scribes take what exists and then modify it according to what people are reading or able to read at their particular time. Over the span of 1000 or 1200 years, this just happens. The text of the Hebrew Bible doesn't just drop from heaven. It is the product of human beings that God chooses, God calls, and to produce a readable thing by the end of that thousand year period, you've had all sorts of things happen to it.

You've had all sorts of hands touch it, scribes, people who know what they're doing, and they produce what we call in scholarship as the "final form" of the text. And the final form of biblical books you can pretty much say in 200 BC, Hebrew Bible is in its final form around that time. That's a safe number. Now let's talk a little bit about some of the specifics here when it comes to new content editing, just giving you some examples of how things in the text have to be

changed. I'm not going to grammatical forms and this is what the first common singular used to look like. That just doesn't translate well to podcasts and it also requires certain knowledge of Semitic morphology. I'm not going to do that. So I'm going to stick to more substantive examples of how the Hebrew Bible itself informs us that it did have editorial hands in it. Example, just a couple from content editing, Ezekiel 1. I've used this example in other discussions before. It might be familiar to listeners but if you open your Bible and you go to Ezekiel 1, the first three verses, I'm going to read it to you and just ask yourself if anything sounds unusual here. So here we go to Ezekiel 1:1,

In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. ²On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), ³the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

MSH: That's Ezekiel 1:1-3. What's odd about it? What's odd is that in three verses, you have a change from the first person, I was among the exiles, I saw visions of God, to the third person, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, that guy over there. The hand of the Lord was upon him. It doesn't say the word of the Lord came to me. It doesn't say the hand of the Lord was upon me after the first person. It doesn't do that. It changes from first person to third person just the span of three verses, and mentioned twice, once with the first person references and once with a third person references. This is just point-blank evidence that someone did an editorial work. So we could have had a text that Ezekiel himself wrote in the first person and a scribe comes along, maybe they collected a lot of Ezekiel sermons or whatnot, and they want to fashion them into a readable book. And so we'll leave the first person in here. Ezekiel gets to introduce his own book but now we have to start filling in some gaps here to tell a story about Ezekiel so it switches to third person. So someone is working with the text, with resource, whether they be sermons written down by somebody, stenographer or scribe or maybe Jeremiah had Baruch scribe. There was a school of the prophets where people were trained to do what prophets do, which was preach.

So somebody's writing stuff down and then somebody has to fashion it into a book. It's a very easy example to see how this comes about, how this happens and how it's reflected in the text. Here's another one. You'll read in the Psalms, Psalm 72:20, the prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended. Really, because you'll find Psalms after Psalm 72 that are Psalms, prayers, of David. There's an error in Psalm 72:20 because they're Psalms of David that come afterwards. This is an error. No, what it tells you, if you look at the Psalms it's actually composed of five separate books. The book of Psalms is five distinct books and they were collected over time. And so at some point the collection ended at Psalm 72:20 and a scribe or editor said the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. This is what we got. Maybe somebody living 100 years after him said there's more of these. David wrote more of them and we need to put them in there, too. So they get added to the end. That's just the way it is and they don't bother to correct the language of 72:20. It just stays in there. It's proof of editorial activity, or in this case, it's proof of more material being brought into a book and then this kind of language is just left untouched for whatever reasons. Scribes do what they do.

They have reasons for not doing or doing something because they're people. We just are dealing with the product of their decisions. We also have in Psalms changes in the divine name or at least unusual patterns. For instance, in the Psalms, Psalm 1-41, you got 40 Psalms there, and then Psalms 90-106 use the term Yahweh, the divine name, almost exclusively, almost 100% of the time. But in between those two groups, Psalms 73-83, you almost never see Yahweh. You see Elohim instead. Why is that? Then afterwards, from Psalm 84-89, you get both. And then you're going to have both scattered all along the way as you keep going in the book of Psalms. Why these patterns? Why do you have clusterings of Yahweh in some sections almost exclusively and then in other completely flipped around? You never use Yahweh. You only use Elohim. Scholars refer to these sections, the ones that use Elohim, as the Elohistic Psalter. It was put together by a different group or different scribe or scribes than the ones who collected and edited the other group. They just had a different preference for what they were going to use. Are we going to use the divine name or use Elohim?

We're just left to look at and observe the product of their decisions but these patterns are there. They're not contrived. They're just there. There's also duplicate Psalms. Why does Psalm 53, is that the same as Psalm 14? Why is Psalm 70 same as Psalm 40? Psalm 108 similar to sections in Psalm 57 almost word for word, why is that? Nobody really knows but for some reason, you have duplication going on as well in the Psalms. Someone had to either decide to produce the duplication or just leave it in and not take it out. These are just editorial decisions. Another example, this is a common and I'm going to mention an article here and read from it because I think it's a good overview of this issue, plus I know the author, and he's a good guy, Mike Grisanti, who teaches at Masters Seminary wrote an article a number of years ago called *Inspiration and Inerrancy in the Old Testament Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an inerrant view of Scripture*.

Whether you like the word inerrancy or not isn't the issue here. In my view, you don't have to use it to understand this article and get a lot of benefit out of the article. But what Grisanti does in the article is show examples of how the biblical text was updated. And he knows that you could point out the content of his article to people and they might be troubled. How can I believe the Bible as a trustworthy source if these things were changed? They wouldn't have been changed unless there were errors. So he tries to correct some of the frankly poor thinking that goes into that, hence the title of his article. But let me just read from Grisanti and give you a few examples. This is all the process of composition, all the process of "achieving the final form of the text." That's what we're talking about. How do we get our Old Testament? Well, first you have to have the final form of all the books and then they're put together in this thing we call the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. So this is where we're starting. How do we get the final forms of the books? What's going on? What's happening to them? What's the process? I'm just giving you little glimpses of the process. So Grisanti says,

The place name "Dan" often appears in the historical books as a reference to the northernmost point of the Promised Land (Judg 18:29; 20:1; 1 Kgs 12:29-30; 15:20; etc.) and is part of the common geographical expression, "from Dan to Beersheba" (1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kgs 4:25). It is customarily identified with Tell el Qadi. This ancient city was known as Laish in the Egyptian execration texts and Mari texts.

MSH: Execration texts was kind of a form of sympathetic magic where Egyptians would, priests or what not, they would write names of either people or places, cities, on like pieces of pottery, their enemies, and then they would smash the ball and stomp on it and grind into a powder, like that's going to make them go away. This is part of defeating my enemies. So execration texts was this kind of stuff written on pieces of pottery or, in theory, you could have it written on anything and just destroyed but a lot of the execration texts we know comes from discoveries of the pottery. You put them back together and that's what you got. Grisanti mentions this place pretty much identifies with Dan used to be known as Laish in the Egyptian execration text. A number them it predate the Mosaic Era. The Mari text certainly do and Grisanti continues,

The city of Dan received its name in the settlement period when the Danite tribe migrated north and conquered the city of Laish (Gen 14:14)/Leshem (Josh 19:47-48). Consequently, it appears that this place did not receive the name of Dan until after the Mosaic period (Judg 18:29).

²⁹ And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was Laish at the first.

MSH: It actually says that in the Bible. So when you have Dan used of this spot, this location, prior to this period, somebody after the name change occurred had to update the text. This is what Grisanti is pointing out. He continues,

Gen 14:14 mentions Dan as the ending point of the first phase of Abram's pursuit of Lot's captors. From Dan, Abraham and his men divided into two groups and pursued the enemy as far as the region to the north of Damascus. We may assume that Moses originally wrote "Laish," which was later changed to Dan when that place name was changed. The geographical parameter of "Gilead as far as Dan" in Deut 34:1 and the placement of the blessing for the tribe of Dan (Deut 33:22) after the blessings promised to Zebulun, Issachar, Gad and before the blessings promised to Asher (all northern tribes) suggests a similar updating.

MSH: Here's the point. So if Moses is supposed to be writing Deuteronomy, Moses is using, at least when we look at our Bible, you have references in Deuteronomy supposedly from the hand of Moses using the term Dan but that place only became Dan in the period of the judges, which is well after Moses because of what it says in Judges 18:29. It was changed in the period of the judges from Laish to Dan. So it was changed after Moses was long dead so Moses would not have used the word Dan. He would've used the word Laish because that was the name of the place when he was living. So in our Hebrew Bible where it says Dan everywhere, instead of Laish from what Moses was supposed to have written, either Moses didn't write it or somebody had to update the place names. Now, Grisanti's view of Deuteronomy is that Moses wrote it and that someone, in this case a place name, had to go through the text and change the name of these locations so that people who were reading it in the period of Judges and beyond would know what the text is even talking about because if they kept using Laish, if they kept the text as it was, no one living in the period of judges or later is going know where that place is because there is

no Laish anymore. It had been renamed. So scribes, this the kind of thing they do. They will work through a text and they will update place names. Sometimes they will do it with personal names but typically this happens with place names so that their readers know where these things happen, what the text is even talking about. You have phrases like unto this day in the Hebrew Bible, This is also from Grisanti.

“The statement that Bashan was called Havoth Jair "to this day" in honor of Jair the son of Manasseh who was influential in the conquest of that region (Deut 3:14). This would make little sense in the time of Moses when that region was first taken over by Israel. This phrase suggests that passage of some time.”

MSH: So in a Moses day it would've been called one thing and after Moses day, it would've been called another. So when you see the more recent name in a Mosaic text and you know it shouldn't have been there because it only got changed after Moses died, somebody else had to do that. The text gets edited and that's all we're talking about. So when it comes to achieving the final form of the text, the books of the Hebrew Bible go through a considerable process. There's updating of the script. We have to basically rewrite everything that had been written in the old Hebrew lettering script because now for the people alive here in the exile, the Jewish community right here, nobody can read that so we need to use the new script, the block script that we are familiar with. But that was adopted during the exile because that's what people in Babylon were using for Aramaic, which was the language of commerce, the language of the day. Everybody knew Aramaic and this is the way Aramaic was written so the Hebrew scribes adopted the script and they converted the text of the Hebrew Bible into that script so that people living during that time and beyond would be able to read the Bible. So that just happens, grammatical changes happen, vocabulary changes happen, place name changes happen, arrangement of material gets edited. New material gets added.

All of these things just happen. They are part of the process of producing the final form of the Hebrew Bible. Each book has undergone to some degree this kind of process. And we have to get away from this notion that when we look at it, the Hebrew text, in some cases people even think this way with the English Bible, it just wasn't dictated. It just didn't drop from heaven. That is not the way you got it. It just isn't by virtue of its own testimony, the features in the text. This has nothing to do with do you believe there's a God or not? Do you believe in inspiration or not? Do you believe science...it has nothing to do with any of that talk. This has to do with what you actually find in the text that has to be accounted for. Theologically, this is not a troublesome thing, why, because you know what it means? It means that God used people to produce the Bible. What a novel thought. Newsflash, that's what the Bible actually says. God used people to produce it and people use, drumroll please, human processes. They're not supernaturally gifted. They don't become mutants. They don't go into trances. They write and they edit and frankly, they do a good job. The Bible in terms of literary quality is a wondrous thing even if no one assigns any theological or religious validity to it. It has long been recognized as a thing of wonder just in terms of the literary output.

They knew what they were doing. So this is how the final form of the text, we get it. Now once have it, then you get into the issue of there's lots of other stuff being written so how do we know like the books that are in the Hebrew Bible, how do we know we got the right ones, that we

got the inspired ones and no others and we didn't miss any of the inspired ones and all that kind of stuff? For those who have had a little theological background, this is going to sound familiar because I think it's a very kind of understandable model. But the belief was within the believing community, the people who are serious about their faith, they believe that the Spirit of God, God would use the Spirit of God over time, not to zap them with a lightning bolt if they made a wrong choice, but over time the believing community would successfully recognize the books that God wanted preserved and elevated to the level of Scripture. In other words, there was just this belief that the Spirit of God would do this. God would work it out. He would use people to get the job done and get it right. And that means along the way, there was discussion. There was debate and not every book was discussed and debated. Most of the books of the Hebrew Bible were like no-brainers to the believing community. There were some outliers. There were some that the people wondered about.

We'll get to those in a second but for the most part, this was an easy task. But there was some discussion but they just believed God is going to work through his people and the Spirit of God is going to make sure we do this right. And overtime, there is a consensus achieved and that was good enough for the Jewish community. Now having said that, there are historical references to parts of this process. For instance, around 400 BC there is a reference in 2 Maccabees chapter 2, verses 13 to 15 that says to the effect that they found a library or founded a library and collected books about the Kings and the Prophets and the writings of David. Books about the Kings and the Prophets, those are going to be some of the historical books, books of Samuel, books of Kings, books of Chronicles. Writings of David, there you're going to have a reference to the Psalms, and so it's just a reference to the fact that there are people collecting this material and putting it into a library sort of form. And they are telling you here's what we've got. It's just a little snippet of history that they were actively doing this. You'll also get a reference to a "great assembly", which was actually 120 scribes and Jewish authorities, theological religious authorities that did what they did.

They functioned as a group from roughly 200 BC to 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed. But they are described and given credit by tradition as being the ones who sort of kind of shook the whole process out. They were the ones that were discussed, why do some among us not think that the book of Esther should be in here or something like that. So they're the ones who had the discussion. And so when you get into 200 BC or so, most of it's fixed, most of the sense of what would be canon, what is sacred? It's fixed. You got to the final form of the Hebrew text. It's recognized for what it is. The discussion on a couple items went a little bit longer than that but by the timing of Jesus and the Apostles, the Jewish community has a Bible. They have an Old Testament. And what you actually see in the Gospels, for instance, let's just take a few examples. The Torah was accepted by all of the major Jewish groups, Pharisees, Samaritans, Sadducees, and whatnot. Prophets and the writings, there are some historical references to people wondering about certain books. I've mentioned Esther. I'll mention a couple more here in a moment.

So there was a little bit of disagreement. There wasn't with the Torah but some of the other ones, there's some ongoing discussion. Jesus recognized the threefold division, the law, the prophets, and the writings (Luke 24:44). So that's evidence that Jesus recognized what would become the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible that we're familiar with. So he would have been in the camp of that's how he looked at things. The total books, there are references to this in Jewish writings of the Second Temple period. Some ancient sources like 2 Esdras was

given number of the books of the Hebrew Bible at 24. Josephus gives the number at 22. The Modern Hebrew Bible has 36. The modern English Old Testament has 39. If you go with the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but that translation came from a Hebrew Bible, a Hebrew text, if you go with the Septuagint as a translation product, that had 46 books of the Old Testament written in it. What is going on here? Well, what's going on here is a couple things. Some Old Testament books could either be separated into two books or put together in one. For instance, we have Ezra and Nehemiah. In a lot of ancient traditions and text manuscript evidence, those two are one. That's going to affect your count number. Same with the books of Samuel.

Is it one book or is it two? Kings, is that two books or one? Chronicles, two books or one? You have things like this that affect the counting number so these historical references to really a wide divergence of the numbering of the books of the Old Testament should not be taken as evidence that people couldn't figure it out. What it actually is, is evidence of how they are divided or not and then how they are counted. The exception of this is the Septuagint because the Septuagint is going to have books that the Jewish community ultimately is not going to approve of, books like 1 and 2 Maccabees. When I say they do not approve of, I mean they don't view at the same level as sacred books as the canon, as the ones that are inspired. So you will have most of the Jewish community reject extra books like the Maccabees book and forth Ezra and Esdras and Judith and Tobit, the things that you find in the Septuagint that you also find in the Catholic Old Testament. We'll talk about what the relationship is there in a moment. But the Jewish community far and away, they're dealing with the same list, if we take the Septuagint out of the picture for a moment. The Jewish community has the same set of books. It's just how do we divide them or combine them and then what's the count. Don't be misled by historical references like this that make it seem that basically you got a bunch of Keystone cops running around and nobody knows what to count and what not to count. That isn't the case. The Septuagint is its own thing.

Since that became the Bible of the early church, that was a factor as well into how the Jewish community settled. They already settled on the books that they wanted but then you have Christians come along and certain people who preferred the Septuagint because they were better Greek readers. That had more books in them than the rabbinic community wanted and so there was an issue there of competition. But for the most part, Jewish community has their Hebrew Bible certainly by the time of Jesus and the Apostles. It's recognized and produced around 200 BC and it's recognized. You have these debates going up to the first century. But it's a secure collection. The only issue is what about this thing called the Septuagint. There were a couple of handful of other outliers that that I should mention. If you look at what's going on with the Dead Sea Scrolls, with this particular Jewish sect living out in the desert collecting ancient books, there are books, there are pieces of writing, there are texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls that will quote the book of 1 Enoch as an inspired book. That does happen. It happens with a few church fathers, too, but it's an outlier because this is the only place you're going to find it. They also looked at what's called the Temple scroll and they quote the Temple scroll, which is something that the community would've created, really, and they view that at the same level as Scripture. They quote it as Scripture.

The people at Qumran, I'm referring to them as outliers because that's kind of what they were in this regard. They are citing things that nobody else cites as Scripture but it's part of the record. They did do that and we can look at that and say some Jews thought this way and they

did. Books that were questionable, books that were getting debated, I've already mentioned Esther. Why would Esther be debated? Why did some people have questions about that? A number of different reasons, one of them would be Esther's conduct here. She is the heroine and she does save the Jewish people but she sleeps with the Gentile king to do this. Some people thought is this really a book that we ought to have in the canon? Would God really prompt someone to record this and give it the same status? Eventually, the book of Esther was considered by the masses of the community as that one belongs. And so the belief was that God will lead us to a consensus and we're going to go with that. That will be our consensus. Song of Solomon, same reason, a lot of the sexual language, the erotic language there. By the way, the Song of Solomon is not about the relationship of Israel and the Church or Israel to God or the church to Jesus.

This is not the purpose of the Song of Solomon. How do we know that, especially the relationship of Christ to the Church, that that is not the point? It's pretty simple. The New Testament writers talk about the bride of Christ and things like that and never once did they quote the Song of Solomon to make the point. They had plenty of opportunities to make the point using the book and they never do. In fact, the Song of Solomon is never cited at all. So can we dispense with the sort of modern view that tries to allegorize the book can and not treat it for what it is? This is a book about erotic love poetry. That's what it is. For that reason in the ancient Jewish community, it's like well this one's not like all the other ones so what do we do with it? There were debates over it. Ezekiel 40 to 48, people expressed an opinion that these chapters at the end of the book of Ezekiel, should we let them in there? Should that be part of the canon? You say what's the problem there? It's because the dimensions of the Temple don't match the other temples. So it's like did they get that wrong? What is it? What's going on here? There were people who actually wondered about that. Ecclesiastes was another one because it's so pessimistic or least it sounds that way. You can read Ecclesiastes optimistically as well. Eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we're going to die.

That can cut two ways, either let's enjoy life that the Creator's given to us to the fullest because life is short or you can read pessimistically like everything's going to hell in a hand basket so who cares? But the fact that you could read it so negatively, and it seems to say certain things, it seems to question certain things about faith, about God's operation history, about the life of the believer, and all this kind of stuff, it became an object of discussion. Is this inspired? These are just examples of books that there was some question over them. And during these couple hundred years leading up to the time of Jesus when these debates are getting hashed out, this is what you'll run into, what you'll read. Now, when you have Jesus and the church born, and since the church incorporated Gentiles into it, that really made the Septuagint the Bible of choice because most Gentiles could not read Hebrew or they could not read Aramaic. Aramaic would be an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible. They were called targums and the Jewish communities would be reading Hebrew or Aramaic. When you get Gentiles into the church, and there were a lot of them. Think about the missionary journeys of Paul, the whole surrounding of the Mediterranean, there were lots of people coming to embrace Jesus as Messiah. Paul starts who knows how many churches.

There's a need for a translation of the Bible as it existed, which was the Old Testament at the time, that everybody could read whether you were Jew or Gentile. The answer to that dilemma was the Septuagint because it was written in Greek and everybody could read it. So that became the Bible of the early church by convenience, by historical happenstance, you could say

by providence, whatever. That was the Bible of the early church. It just was. If you recall, this particular edition, this particular Old Testament had books that the Jewish people who might be coming into the church, that Septuagint has books that we don't recognize. You got 46 of them in there and we have a lesser number than that. What's going on here? Well, through historical circumstance, the church grows. Eventually it becomes not persecuted. It becomes legalized and sort of swallows up the whole Roman world with the advent of Constantine's influence, the decree of Theodosia and all these historical circumstances. Well, the Old Testament of the Septuagint becomes the Old Testament for Christians everywhere and that's why when the Bible gets put into Latin, Jerome produces the Vulgate and the church becomes the "Catholic Church" after several centuries, this is why even today the Catholic Old Testament has those extra books. This is just the way it was.

Now when you get to the Reformation, and there's this reaction against Catholicism, what the reformers did, you could look at them and say what can we do to poke the Catholic Church in the eye? Let's cut some books out of the Old Testament. It's not that simplistic. It's not what they did. What Luther wanted to do was, and other reformers, it's not just him. Their sort of litmus test was let's just have as our Old Testament the books that we know to exist in Hebrew. We have a Hebrew text that corresponded to them. Let's just do that and so that's what they decided to do. That was actually the ancient Jewish method. The books that could be witnessed in Hebrew and then there was a clear manuscript history in Hebrew for these books, those are the ones that the predominant Jewish community adopted as their Old Testament. But there were other Jews open to these extra ones being created in between the Testaments. This is the Hellenistic era. They're being written in Greek but they're being added to the Septuagint which was this translation of the Old Testament. So there were some Jews and a pile of Gentiles that said no. This is our Old Testament. It's the Septuagint thing with these extra books. That is our Bible. That is the Old Testament whereas the mainline Jewish community is like we're only going with the ones we know that were produced in Hebrew originally. This is what we want. So when you get to the Reformation period, that's what the reformers do. We're going back to the old Jewish standard.

We're going back to the old Jewish litmus test. Was it originally composed in Hebrew? If it was, thumbs up. If it's not, it ain't in. And so that is why today if you're not a Catholic, you have the Protestant Bible, whatever the English translations are, King James, even though the King James did have the Apocrypha produced with it in kind of a nice concession to people who were used to that. But if you have to buy a King James today, you can buy one with an Apocrypha as part of the edition but most King James aren't going to have it. Most of them are going to be published in the Protestant tradition like most modern English Bibles are not affiliated with Catholicism. That's what you're going to get. You're going to get the old Jewish standard books, the ones that were originally composed in Hebrew and our number for them is 39. That's the way we divide them up in the history of English Bible production. That's why the Protestant Bible is different than the Catholic Bible even today. It's a circumstance of history. Let's go back to here we are at the time of Jesus, we'll just say. These debates have shaken out and we're just about done wrangling over these few outliers. Should we have Enoch? Should we have Ecclesiastes, whatever? Most of the books, they were no-brainers. So all that's kind of settling out, settling down around the first century. So now what? Now it's time to copy this. Now it's time to preserve it by hand in the enterprise of copy.

This is what scribes do. So we're going to talk about textual transmission, and to do that, we have to sort of transport ourselves into the modern world in the 20th century. That might sound odd but it's necessary because when it comes to the Hebrew Bible the key date is 1947. Before 1947, so imagine you're living around World War II. Before 1947, the witnesses to the Hebrew Bible were few but they were well known and they were also all the product of the Middle Ages. Yes, you heard me correctly. There was no Hebrew Bible, no manuscript of the complete Hebrew Bible older than 1008 AD. And we know that date because the scribe put it in there, the person who produced that particular thing. So before 1947, here's what you had. The oldest mostly complete edition of the Hebrew Bible was the Aleppo Codex, what we call the Aleppo Codex now. It has everything in the Hebrew Bible except for most of the Torah. It has a few chapters of Deuteronomy. Most of the Torah was destroyed in a fire, at least that's the story that history has told us. There have been scraps of Aleppo Torah that have surfaced in recent years and people have wondered if it was just a scrap that somebody managed to pull out of an ash heap somewhere or is more the Torah of the Aleppo Codex preserved somewhere and nobody knows about it. Nobody does know about it but what we know is the Aleppo Codex is incomplete.

Its missing most of the Torah and that dated to the 10th century, so 900s A.D. It is considered even today the most authoritative and accurate manuscript in what we call the Masoretic tradition. You can actually go look at it online. If you go to Aleppo Aleppocodex.com, you can look at it in facsimile and high-resolution. It's kind of nice. The oldest complete Hebrew Bible though was a manuscript known as Leningradensis. It is housed in Leningrad. It's known as L for Leningradensis. It's also known as B 19 to textual critics. This is the one that was dated to 1008 AD. It is complete. It is the oldest complete Hebrew Bible still in existence but in 1947, this was the best you can get. There were other manuscripts known in 1947 that came from a thing, a storage room called the Cairo Geniza. Geniza means hiding place or it's a storage room. This was discovered in the late 1800s, 1896 to 97. In this storeroom, it's the world's largest and arguably the most important single collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts ever. There were in all 193,000 manuscripts in the storeroom when it was discovered. The storeroom was actually built in 882 A.D. and you actually have manuscripts that old. They began using it right away and they used it all the way up into the 19th-century there in Cairo. Now a lot of this stuff is not biblical. A lot of it's like rabbinic liturgy because this was part of a synagogue.

There is marriage contracts and letters and all this kind of stuff, but there were additions of the Hebrew Bible in there. So here's your date range, from the 800s A.D. all the way up into modern history. This is what you got, this is what you dealing with. So prior to 1947, if you wanted a complete Hebrew Bible, you're looking at Leningradensis. That's your choice even if you like Aleppo. You might prefer Aleppo. That's maybe a century earlier but its 10th 11 century A.D. That's what you've got. If you want to go beyond Hebrew material in 1947, you do have the Septuagint and some of those fragments are as old as second century BC but they're not Hebrew, they're Greek. They don't count as Hebrew Bible witnesses but at least they're the Old Testament. You also have, lastly, the Torah used by the Samaritan community. The oldest copy of that in 1947 and still today was around the 12th century A.D. so it's medieval. Basically, here's what you've got in 1947. You got three Hebrew Bible traditions. You have what is known as the Masoretic text. The oldest complete representative of that text is 1000 A.D., Leningradensis. You have number two, fragments of the Septuagint that are much older than Leningradensis but they're in Greek, not Hebrew. And so you're wondering like there had to be a Hebrew

manuscript that somebody used to produce this Septuagint thing. I wish we had that because we can look at the Septuagint then we can look at Leningradensis.

And we know that there places they don't agree so whoever did the Septuagint was using a different Hebrew text. It would be nice if we could recover some of that. It would be nice. But in 1947 that was all you could say, wouldn't that be nice. And then thirdly, you have the Torah, the Hebrew Torah by the Samaritan community, which is very idiosyncratic. It changes the mountain locations to Gerizim, just like the Gospel of John did. There are things about it that are very Samaritan because it's their Bible so they changed certain place names to fit with their tradition. But you can just pick one up and know it's Samaritan if you read certain passages because that's what they do. But nevertheless, that was part of the toolbox. So what is it about 1947 that matters to all this? Well, as you probably guessed, 1947 was the year that the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. And they were slowly extracted from the caves from 1947 onward, and more caves were discovered after that year. But at Qumran, the main location for what we think of as the Dead Sea Scrolls, there were 11 caves in all. There were lots of manuscripts. Some of them were scrolls put in large pieces of pottery, large mason jars if you want to use that term, and in relatively good condition. Most of it though were little pieces or fragments maybe as big as the palm of your hand down to the size of your thumbnail. And in the case of cave 4, they were buried under lots of bat guano. So as important as it was, they're not just laying out there. It's not just like we discovered a library. Let's pull some books off the shelf. That is not what you dealing with, with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

You're dealing with manuscript fragments, most of its written on animal skin, things like that. That's what you dealing with. It might be whole but most of it's in pieces and you have to figure out how in the world to put it back together. Now the biblical stuff, scholars could pick up portions and read it. That comes from the Bible so this is a biblical scroll. That helped because you could compare the Dead Sea Scrolls against an existing Hebrew Bible and you can at least read it and try to put the puzzle together, put the pieces together. A lot of it was nonbiblical that all had to be sorted out. There were other locations, other the text discoveries that get lumped in with what we call the Dead Sea Scrolls. That went on into the 50s and even the early 60s, people still discovering things. So that was a key event though because once scholars started to realize what they had, especially when it came to the biblical material, they could see right away, these were dated with carbon-14, other methods. They were dated by Paleographical analysis. Scholars had made tables of the style of handwriting of various different texts that had historical things in them, like a name, place, date or event. And you can plot out tables, like the way you would look at fonts today, of how every letter in the alphabet was written according to which text, and if that text is datable, then you knew that during this time period, this is how they would make the letter.

Scholars actually spent decades creating typologies like this so the text could be cross dated by that method, not just carbon-14 and some of the other scientific methods. But when this started to happen and they started to realize what they had, this is why they're important. All three of the textual traditions known prior to 1947, the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, whatever the Hebrew was that underlie the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, all three of those text traditions were found in existing manuscripts at Qumran. So they actually did find Hebrew manuscripts that aligned with the Septuagint against the Masoretic Text. They found remnants of whatever the Hebrew Bible looked like that the translators of the Septuagint had to produce their translation. And they found plenty of text that aligned with the Masoretic Text and

they found text that aligned with the Samaritan Pentateuch. They found all three of it and they also found lots of text that didn't match the other three. Those are called by scholars unaffiliated texts. So what this does is it shows us that at the time of Jesus, some of these date to first to second century BC, the biblical material here so in the intertestamental period toward the end and certainly by the time of Jesus, what the Dead Sea Scrolls show us is that there was no one Hebrew Bible.

The Jewish communities living in Judea and Syria Palestine, Israel, were content to live with textual plurality and the people at Qumran preserved all of them. They didn't destroy one text tradition in favor of another. They preserved all of them and all of them had been used. They were all in circulation. It's like our circumstance with English translations today. You walk into a Christian bookstore and there's like a hundred English translations. Well, that's the Bible but they're all different translations. They're the same but they're different because of the wording that you can find in them. That's the same kind of situation that you're looking at a time of Jesus. There's no one Hebrew Bible. The idea that there's one Hebrew Bible that goes all the way back to Moses or anyone else in the Old Testament and that was the only one existing that got copied forever ad infinitum, Lord without end, that sort of thing is a myth. At the time of Jesus, you had at least three and you actually had more, textual plurality, and no one text was elevated above any of the others. They were all just fine and used by Jews in their synagogues, in their communities, for their personal reading, whatever.

That's what Qumran tells us. How then did we get to the situation nowadays when I read on the Internet, and you'll especially read this with Bible code nonsense, about the Hebrew Bible, the Masoretic text, the Hebrew Bible, this edition? The reason that becomes what it is, is because people are just telling you stuff. There was no one Hebrew Bible that survived the last gasp of the kingdom before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and someone ran away with it and started copying it. You don't have evidence for that. You have evidence for three, at least, and they all hit the same chronological wall, the Dead Sea Scrolls. They all hit 200 BC. That's just the way it is. So we have to align our thinking with the data that actually exists, not a story or narrative that we want to invent. What we know as the Masoretic Text actually was created at around 100 A.D. Now what happened was because of this textual plurality and because of the Septuagint, that irritated a lot of people in the Jewish community because the Christians favored it not only because they're Gentiles but the Septuagint reflected certain readings in whatever Hebrew Bible was used to produce it that actually helped Christian theology. So it was the choice of the early church for several reasons. So the Jewish community around 100 A.D. made a decision and said we are going to standardize our Bible.

We are going to standardize the text of the Hebrew Bible and we're going to do the work. We're going to look at all these different versions of it. We're going to decide what it should say and then we are going to transmit and copy that thing for the rest of time. That's going to become the Bible for the Jewish community and that decision, that product, the thing that was produced out of that effort is what we know as the Masoretic Text, because the scribal families from that point on that were assigned to copy it, they were called the Masoretes. They are the ones that were tasked to copy this thing for the rest of posterity. Some people in the Jewish community weren't happy with that. You'll actually read in the Talmud, for instance, the Mishna, some of these Jewish theological writings, when Jewish writers and rabbis quote the Hebrew Bible, they actually don't quote word for word what we know as the Masoretic Text. There are variations. Someone named Aptowitz, a long dead German scholar actually collected

these and he reproduced them in several volumes. We know that not only was the Masoretic Text created in 100 A.D. but there wasn't even a one version of that that was acceptable to the Jewish community. There were other rabbis that liked this reading here or liked that verse used to say, and they would still quote it that way. They would still use it, still wind up in their writings. And you had competing scribes that when they copied out of Torah or a manuscript, they would put those in. There was a little bit of we'll show you. Thanks for the effort but we liked our Bible before. It might only be 12 different places in the whole the Old Testament, 12 different words, but those were the words they wanted and so they did it. There wasn't even one Masoretic Text even after its creation. Now why am I mentioning all this, because there's this myth out there that if you're reading along in your Bible and there's a footnote, Deuteronomy 32:8 is the best example,

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
when he divided mankind,
he fixed the borders of the peoples
according to the number of the sons of God.

MSH: The Masoretic Text says sons of Israel and that's the Bible that God created. That's the Bible that God gave the Jewish community. That's the correct reading there because it's the Masoretic Text. That's the sacred one. Sorry but it wasn't. It only was created in the first century, one hundred A.D. but the older material, the Dead Sea Scrolls, says something different. What you're depending on is a decision of a rabbi somewhere and even his compatriots in some cases didn't like all his decisions. This is an ex cathedra from the voice of God saying sons of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:8. But yet in evangelical circles, we prop up this notion of the Masoretic Text as being something that's like literally handed down by God and it's not the case. It is the product of a set of historical circumstances and we know that because of data, because of manuscripts, because of things that exist that you can go look at. There's no way around it. And while I'm on it commenting on scribal practices and how evangelicals kind of talk about the Hebrew Bible, not only do we have this sort of mystical or mystical view of the Masoretic Text, it's not a bad text. It's a good text but they're other good texts and some of the manuscript data is a lot older than Masoretic Text. We ought to pay attention to that. That's all I'm saying. Along with that, we have this mythology about scribes like they were infallible or something. Before they could write the name of Yahweh they had to go take a bath or something like that. This is the talk of apologetics.

This is not the talk of factual reality in many instances. A lot of these scribal practices that you hear apologetics teachers talk about come from later practices in certain rabbinic communities. They do not reflect the scribal practices of the people who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. How do you know that Mike? You just don't like rabbis or something? How do you know that? I know that because we can look at the texts. I think the best place that I could illustrate some of these things for you is if you go up to my website Bible code myth.com, there's a link there once you get on the page to a PDF that will show you Isaiah 53. I created this way back in 2003, I think it was, where I was on the Art Bell show and I was supposed to debate Grant Jeffrey about the Bible code. Grant Jeffrey had no frame of reference for basically anything I said. He was just dealing in mystical evangelical mythologies about the Hebrew text and he was trying to defend the every letter sequencing of the Bible code. I said it can't work this way

because if you look in the Dead Sea Scrolls, they use different spelling tactics. They were still using the consonants for vowels. And so if you just count the letters, there are hundreds of letters in the oldest manuscript data for Isaiah 53 that are not in the Hebrew text you're using because you're using a modern edition of the Masoretic Text. And if you're doing Bible code stuff, even one letter difference messes up the sequence.

Well, in 13 versus I produced a bunch of screenshots, you can look at the PDF now, that said there's over a hundred spelling differences here, 100 letter sequence differences. You're ethereal Bible code simply cannot work. If you're going to argue that God handed down this text then you ought to be using the Dead Sea Scrolls version but instead you're using this other thing that works in a software program so that you can make these claims. That's what you're doing. That's what all Bible coders do. They don't incorporate any of the text critical data. The Bible code is dead on arrival. Show me someone who believes in the Bible code, I will show you someone who doesn't understand how we got the Hebrew Bible and doesn't incorporate text critical stuff like the Dead Sea Scrolls. They just don't do it. So why am I saying that, because if you look at that PDF you will see what scribes actually did. They will do stuff like erase things. They don't go take a bath and then scrap the whole text. I misspelled Yahweh or forgot it so now let's burn this thing, go take a bath, and now start over again. That is a myth at least in terms of greater antiquity. They would erase things. They would insert lines in between lines when they knew something had been missed. That was their correction. We got to put it in there. Let's stick it in there. If they didn't have room, they would insert a line that went vertical. They would put dots over letters that they thought were mistakes, mistaken words or letters. They would suspend the letters.

You can actually just visually look at what scribes did. They're doing the best they can. It's not like you can just go down to OfficeMax and get another animal skin to start your Hebrew Bible over. There is no paper in the modern sense. This is what you had to use. And it took a long time to prepare the thing you were going to write on and so they tried to make the best use of their material that they could. So they would scratch out things. They would do erasures and they would have the word suspended and put dots. Just go look at it. If you're really interested in this, Emmanuel Tov, has a recent book, it's probably pricey, anything Tov writes has to be priced pretty expensively, on scribal habits in the Hebrew Bible, specifically in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Now prior to Tov's work, this is going to be a name familiar to many of you, especially if you're old Coast-to-Coast AM listeners, but prior to Tov's work, the best work on scribal practices in the Dead Sea Scrolls was written by none other than Malachi Martin. Yes, that Malachi Martin, the guy who was the exorcist. Martin's dissertation was on scribal practices in the Dead Sea Scrolls and specifically, the Isaiah scroll, the great Isaiah scroll. It exists in two volumes. It is impossible to find so you're not going to go out and buy this, trust me. I've seen a copy of it at the UW Madison when I was a grad student. I actually checked it out once just so I could see it and kind of flipped through it.

But it's grossly expensive if you ever find a copy of it. It is just extraordinarily hard to find. That was the best up until Tov's recent book. We know what scribes did. So let me just get off that point. Let's bring it up to the modern day here and wrap up here. So what's happening after the Masoretic Text is created around 100 A.D., it begins to be copied by professional scribal families. This was their trade as a family and their children would be trained in it and it would be passed down from generation to generation. Some of the most famous manuscripts that I already mentioned, like the Aleppo Codex, is not only important because it was your produced in

the 900s A.D. but there is evidence that was hand pointed, by pointed I mean the vowels were added, because by the 800s AD, the vowel system had been invented, Aleppo was pointed by hand by the famous scribe Aaron Ben Asher. So in the Jewish community it has a special status because this is a well-known scribe in the scribal tradition. Leningradensis was also probably pointed, vocalized by a Ben Asher member of the family but not Aaron. So it is not looked upon with as much esteem in the Jewish community as Aleppo but it's still complete and Aleppo is not. So what you have during the Middle Ages is you have hand work, just really difficult hand work to preserve the Masoretic Text. So what happened at that point, it was all done by hand. When you get up to the time of the printing press in the early 1500s, you have modern printed editions that become available.

They are typeset and produced. Scholars can use them in universities that existed at the time. Synagogue congregations would have a copy. You could distribute more copies of it because it had been typeset and printed. So in 1516, 1517, you have what's called the first rabbinic Bible developed or published. It's called a diplomatic edition. There are two kinds of editions of the Hebrew Bible. Diplomatic edition means that you're trying to reproduce a particular text tradition like the Masoretic Text. Eclectic editions are editions that were produced to try to incorporate variant readings, readings from other manuscripts that are not in the Masoretic tradition to incorporate them into the text of the Hebrew Bible. You don't really get any eclectic editions until the 1800s so most of what happens after the printing press happens is producing copies of different editions of the Masoretic Text, the first rabbinic Bible in 1520. You have something called the Complutensian Polyglot, which was actually six volumes. A polyglot is a biblical text in several languages or columns. Volumes one through four was the Old Testament and volumes five and six was the Greek New Testament with the critical apparatus. This is just an example of what people are producing. 1524-25, you have the second edition of the rabbinic Bible. It was much like the first. It's a diplomatic edition, trying to reproduce a better preservation of the Masoretic Text as they were able to do it. However, this one actually bends the Septuagint in few places because Christians had grown used to certain readings in their own translations or other languages. For instance, in Psalm 22:16, the second rabbinic Bible will have, they pierced my hands and my feet.

That actually follows the Septuagint text and not the Masoretic Text. Masoretic Text says, like lions my hands and feet. So the creators of the second rabbinic Bible went with what would be the Septuagint in that case just because people were familiar with that reading. They departed from trying to reproduce the Masoretic text at that point. People who produce editions will do things like this and produce translations. They'll make concessions like this for their community. In terms of modern times in the 20th century, to abbreviate this because we have a lot of editions and whatnot. In 1906, you have something called Biblia Hebraica produced. The editor was a guy named Kittle. So this became known as BHK, Biblia Hebraica Kittle, BHK, 1906. This was produced with the help of the German Bible Society. There were nine editions of this in all. It was an eclectic text. It was not just a rehash of what had been the most popular version of the Masoretic text. So it's not that it's different. There were two editions, 1906 and 1913. They weren't real popular because the eclectic approach was different. It was new so it took a while for this approach to catch on. 1936, there was a third edition and this one was a deliberate attempt to adjust BHK to Leningradensis, to try to reproduce a version of Leningradensis.

That was mostly achieved in near-perfect fashion four decades later in 1977. The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, BHS as we referred to it in graduate school and seminary, this is what you buy. When you take Hebrew in schools, you buy BHS and that was also produced by the German Bible Society. It revised BHK, the third edition. So this is actually a fourth go around here and this is a near-perfect copy of *Leningradensis*. It's been reproduced in software a lot, this particular version. Now today, to wrap up here, where are we at today in modern times? There's actually three projects going on to go beyond BHS. BHS was done in 1977 in near-perfect edition of *Leningradensis*. But scholars have wanted to do different things. For instance, one group says why don't we try to produce an edition of Aleppo? Most of the Torah is missing but why don't we have an Aleppo Bible and then you use *Leningradensis* and other things to do the Torah? Why don't we do that? And so that's one of the projects. It's called the Hebrew University Bible project, HUBP. When it's going to be done and it might take decades. It was begun in 1956 and only four volumes have appeared so far, if that gives any indication about how it's going. When it's done, it will be the first edition of the Hebrew Bible that reproduces the Aleppo Codex. That's the goal. There's another project called BHQ. The Q stands for Quinta, so a fifth edition of *Biblia Hebraica*.

So this is the next thing after BHS. This is a text based on *Leningradensis* and it's corrected against color photos of *Leningradensis* but sometimes it's hard to read what letter it is. So the editors go through and try to make it an even more perfect edition of *Leningradensis*. This is expected to be completely done in 2020. There's a lot of it that's already out there. Every year at academic conferences they seem to have another volume there to sell, another fascicle as they call them. So BHQ is getting adopted into Hebrew exegesis classes and whatnot because it's the most current text available for students and whatnot, so that's a second project. The third project is something called the Oxford Hebrew Bible project and this is aims to be a critical edition, so not a reproduction of Aleppo, not a reproduction of *Leningradensis*, but let's make a true critical edition where we compare all the manuscript data together and produce a Hebrew Bible. If you remember the episode we did on the Greek New Testament, the reasoned eclectic approach to compare all the manuscript data and then put together a text, that's what they're trying to do here at Oxford with the Hebrew Bible. This is going to take a long long time but it aims to be a true critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. It will be published by Oxford University Press. So even today, this kind of thing is still going on.

You say they fuss a lot. How differences are there between BHS and *Leningradensis*? If I had Rick here at work, he'd probably tell me the exact number but I think it's like a couple dozen and everything else is identical except for the vowel pointing and the accenting and stuff like that that gets added by scribes, scribal traditions, Masoretic tradition, whatnot. Why do they fuss over it, because the rabbinic community, the Jewish community cares, lots of other people care, Hebrew scholars, professors who want their students to work with the best edition possible to be able to compare variance in manuscripts. So it's an ongoing process and thing. Frankly, it works a lot better in the digital world because you can make the changes and corrections a lot quicker and make it more useful but scholarship is still really run on print, especially when it comes to something like this. So these projects tend to take a long time. But that is really how we got the Hebrew Bible. It took a while to write the thing, establish the final form of text, 1200 years, probably took another couple hundred years to argue about are we all on the same place and are we on board with the books we are going to include in this thing we call the Hebrew Bible?

And then after that, we had the Jewish community say we need to get away from the Septuagint stuff. We need to deal with the textual plurality and create what has become known as the Masoretic Text. And then it just starts getting copied by hand, printing press gets invented, certain editions of the Masoretic Text get published and there you go. That's how we got it. But what I want to accomplish is to give you an overview of all that. There's lots of great resources if you're into textual criticism, if you like manuscript stuff, lots of books I can recommend. If I get enough questions on that, maybe we'll post a few of those of the episode. But I also wanted to deal with certain mythologies. There is no such thing as one Hebrew Bible that goes all the way back to the last Israelite fleeing Nebuchadnezzar and then it gets copied from there on out. That is not the way it works. It's not what the manuscripts have for us. It's not the enterprise. It's not what the data has. Myths about that, myths about the Masoretic Text, there's not even one of those that everybody fell in love with and thought came from the hand of God, even in the Jewish community. These are myths. So the value of pointing them out is that when you're reading a commentary, when you're reading an article, when you're listening to a podcast, this one or some other one, when they talk about different manuscripts say this or that, you should not immediately assume what does the Masoretic Text say. That is flawed thinking. What we should be doing is evaluating all the evidence. And just like I said with our interview with Rick Brannan, the best explanation as far as what the correct original reading of the text was is the reading that explains all the other ones, how all the other ones could have arisen. That just takes thought and time and there are people who devote their lives to it so we can have a reliable Hebrew Bible and reliable English translations.