The New Testament: The Hebrew Behind The Greek

The Language and Mindset of God:
Hebraic or Hellenistic?

by
Paul F Herring

Copyright Information Page:

Latest Update April 2016

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

This book presents the contention, or hypothesis, that much, if not most[1] of the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew not Greek, and that the quotes of the Tanakh (OT) which are almost all thought to be from the Septuagint[2] (LXX) are much more likely to have been from a Hebrew version, very similar to the Masoretic Text (MT).

This hypothesis, if true, clearly indicates that some significant redacting has occurred, but it also has an enormous impact on how we understand the whole NT and it's relation to both its foundational text, the Tanakh, and the Jewish people generally, as well as its message to the Gentile World.

In this book I try to present the evidence for this hypothesis and then touch on the conclusions and impact of this hypothesis.

I would like to introduce this hypothesis through a familiar narrative from the Synoptic Gospels.

Let us consider what really took place when Yeshua stood up and read from a scroll of Isaiah in his local synagogue (this was quite likely the Haftarah[3] for that Shabbat).

Consider how this is presented in Luke 4:16-19

> *"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*
> ***'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives***

---

1 I will not make any serious judgment on the language used for the autographs (originals) of the apparently pseudepigraphic epistles of the Apostle Paul (i.e. by other authors), namely Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus.

2 The **Septuagint** (from the Latin *septuaginta*, "seventy" - in Romans numerals, LXX) is a translation of the Hebrew Bible and some related texts into Koine Greek. Composed around 250 BCE in Alexandria, Egypt, it first consisted of just the 5 Books of Moses and was used by the Hellenistic Jews in Egypt. It is estimated that the Jewish population of Alexandria at the time was quite large and around 25%. While the rest of the Tanakh was also translated into Greek over the following centuries (and is loosely labelled the LXX in this book, though should more correctly be called the Greek Tanakh, and in academic circles is often just called the 'Old Greek').

3 On Shabbat (Sabbath) and the morning services for the holi-days, a selection from one of the biblical books of the Prophets is read after the Torah reading (the Parshah). The portion is known as the *haftarah* (*hahf-tah-RAH)*.

and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'"[4](ESV)

This quote of Isaiah 61 (most translations have an almost identical quote) is from the Septuagint version of Isaiah.

'The Septuagint in English' (Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton 1851) has:
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to declare the acceptable year of the Lord,"

Note that while they might not look identical, they both have the underlined section above ('*recovery of sight to the blind*').

But here's the problem. The rabbi's did not allow translations, whether Greek or even Aramaic, in the Temple, especially in any liturgies (services). This restriction was also likely also in place in all the synagogues throughout Israel, except for those of Hellenistic Jews.

And further, it is very likely that there was no Septuagint Isaiah (i.e. Greek version) in the first century CE either!

So *'Houston, we have a problem!',* and it's a big one, as this is only just one example of it.

To repeat (details to follow), Yeshua did not, and indeed could not, have read from the Greek LXX version of Isaiah 61. Someone has deceived us, and it is most likely a deliberate deception, or at the very least an ignorant one, as I will explain.

But firstly some details:

Consider the discoveries of the Qumran or 'Dead Sea Scrolls' (DSS). Prof. Gary Rendsburg of Rutgers University is a leading expert on the Qumran Scrolls and states that:
"Of the 930 assorted documents from Qumran, 790, or about 85% of them are written in Hebrew (120 or about 13% are written in Aramaic, and 20 ***or about 2% are written in Greek****). Of these 930, about 230 are biblical manuscripts, naturally are in Hebrew, so in actuality the percentage of Hebrew texts is 80%.*

[4] Yeshua read from Isaiah 61

On the other hand, our Hebrew texts are the longest ones, such as the Temple Scroll, the Community Rule, the War Scroll, and the Hodayot—with only the Genesis Apocryphon as a lengthy Aramaic scroll.

This might, of course, be the accident of preservation—that is to say, the Aramaic documents are much more fragmentary than the Hebrew ones—but in general we may state that ***the language of choice for the Qumran community was Hebrew*** *and that the percentage of Hebrew material among the Dead Sea Scrolls is actually higher than the aforementioned 80%, perhaps even approaching 90%."*[5]

The writings of this community date from around 250 BCE up to 50 CE. While their language of choice need not be indicative of all of Israel (as they appear to have been a rather distinct, strict and isolated community), it seems a reasonable inference that Hebrew was the default language of all Jewish religious groups, who for very strong historical and theological reasons maintained this primacy of Hebrew.

Also, the Qumran Yachad (community) preserved a translation of the book of Job into Aramaic (part of the 13% of the preserved scrolls that are Aramaic).

There are of course other Aramaic translations, (called Targumim), produced by the Jewish people in the centuries to follow, but this Dead Sea Scroll's rendering of Job represents the oldest known Aramaic translation of a book of the Tanakh.

The Tosefta preserves a tradition that the famous sage Rabban Gamaliel I (1st Century C.E. and the teacher of the Apostle Paul) once banned (from use in the Temple) a translation of Job into Aramaic (Tosefta Shabbat 14:2[6]). Perhaps the DSS text was that version. But why?

Why would he speak so derisively of this translation? Apparently in the synagogues when the Tanakh was being read and spoken out loud to the assembly, the Hebrew text was sometimes translated into Aramaic 'on the fly' and spoken in Aramaic. As Aramaic grew in popularity and as a common language, especially in some areas of Israel like the Galilee, and also in the Diaspora, this become a well-known practice.

---

5 http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/docman/rendsburg/396-qumran-hebrew-studies-on-the-texts-of-the-desert-of-judah/file

6 "It once happened that Rabbi Halafta went to Rabban Gamaliel, to Tiberias, and he found him sitting at the table of Johanan ben Nezif, with the Targum (i.e. Aramaic translation) of the Book of Job in his hand. Rabbi Halafta said to him: "I remember that Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, your father's father, would sit on a stair of the Temple Mount. They brought before him the Targum of the Book of Job, and he said to the builder, 'Bury it under the rubble." - Tosefta Shabbat 14:2

I don't know if Gamaliel objected to this at all, but apparently the written Targum versions, while being highly accurate with *'80-90% of the Hebrew text's linguistic information – morphological, syntactical and semantic'*[7], they also contained a lot of midrashic or 'paraphrastic' commentary (i.e they were an 'amplified' version, or paraphrase like 'The Message').

If so, it is understandable that this senior and very revered Rabbi might object to such versions being used in the synagogues at least, even if they were popular as it appears, with the general population.

The book, *'Targum and Scripture: Studies in Aramaic Translations and Interpretation in memory of Ernest George Clarke'*[8], edited by Paul V M Flesher, also makes the very significant point though (for the thesis of this book), that "**The Palestinian Talmud** [more commonly known as the Jerusalem Talmud] **even contains a passage that forbids the use of written translations in the synagogue (Y Meg. 4:1, 28a or 74d)."** (p 62).

And "**Third, Willem Smelik has recently shown that in the early rabbinic period, the Palestinian rabbis did not like translations into Aramaic. Their remarks in Palestinian rabbinic texts repeatedly indicate that the rabbis reject the targums usefulness and validity."**

These are highly significant statements that indicate the contextual relevance of the language of books of Scripture used in the Temple and synagogues before, and during the first century CE.

Not only Aramaic (which is very closely aligned with Hebrew, though it was still considered a foreign language[9]), but clearly other even more foreign languages such as Greek, the language of the Hellenists, were not used in the 1st Century CE in the Temple or in synagogues in Israel controlled by the Pharisees.

To repeat, the Rabbi's forbid written translations in the synagogue!

The Septuagint would not have been allowed for the reading on Shabbat!

---

[7] http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/27823855?q&versionId=33577534

[8] ibid

[9] "Of all Semitic languages Aramaic is most closely related to the Hebrew, and forms with it, and possibly with the Assyrian, the northern group of Semitic languages. Aramaic, nevertheless, was considered by the ancient Hebrews as a foreign tongue; and a hundred years before the Babylonian exile it was understood only by people of culture in Jerusalem ... " - http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1707-aramaic-language-among-the-jews

Yeshua could not have read Isaiah 61 in Greek. It would not have been permitted.

Most, on recognizing the use of the Septuagint in this account from Luke, would assume that this was very good evidence that Yeshua and his first followers did use the LXX. However, the reality is not that simple.

When we seek evidence regarding the Septuagint and its usage in the first century CE, we find an interesting challenge. There are a few well-known writers of this time period that refer to the existence of this Greek version of the Tanakh. In particular, Flavius Josephus and Philo of Alexandria[10].

Josephus, writing in the latter half of the first century CE, states that the Septuagint was originally only a Greek translation of the Torah (the 5 Books of Moses). Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the early part of first century CE (he visited Rome around 40 CE) also writes in his '*Moses 2'* that the Septuagint was just a Greek translation of the 5 Books of Moses[11].

Neither of these two authors seem to be aware of the Septuagint having been updated to include the rest of the Tanakh at this time.

If the 'LXX proper' (I use this phrase to refer to the original translation) had had the Writings and the Prophets, added to it by Yeshua's day, why did neither of these two men mention it?

Yet, our Greek NT translations have Yeshua, the Apostle Paul, the author of Hebrews, and Peter, etc., all quoting from the LXX version of the rest of the Tanakh, not just the LXX version of the Torah (5 Books of Moses).

When we look for archeological evidence regarding the rest of the books of the Tanakh (other than the Books of Moses) from the LXX version[12], we only have fragments of some of the Minor Prophets like Job and Zechariah that pre-date the first century CE.

---

10 As a Hellenistic Jew and philosopher, Philo read the Tanakh as very much an allegorical document along the lines of the tri-partite philosophy of Plato. This Hellenistic and allegorical approach was certainly rejected by Yeshua, the Qumran Yachad and the Pharisees.

11 While the term Torah (תּוֹרָה in Hebrew) can at times refer to the whole Tanakh or even to the Oral Torah, it is clear in the context that these two Jewish authors speak of the Septuagint as being only the Books of Moses.

12 It is not until the 4th and 5th Centuries CE that we find relatively complete versions of the Tanakh in Greek. – see http://www.theopedia.com/septuagint

The first archeological evidence we have of the LXX version of Isaiah dates to the 3rd century CE.

The following fragments date to this time: Is. 33:7-8.17-19; 40:13-14.24-26 fragm, Is. 36:16-20; 37:1-6 fragm, Is. 49:16-18 fragm, Is. 38:3-5.13-16 fragm., Is. 42:3-4; 52:15-53:3.6-7.11-12; 66:18-19 fragm, Is. 8:18-19:13; 38:14-45:5; 54:1-60:22 with gaps, Is. 21:3-22:1 fragm[13]. There are no known LXX scrolls or fragments of scrolls of Isaiah that have been found that pre-date these.

Some have argued that the whole Tanakh existed in a Greek translation before 132 BCE, based on the words in the prologue of the Greek translation of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) around 132 BCE.

Quoting from the BibleHub source (http://biblehub.com/topical/s/septuagint.htm):
" … The translator, craving his readers' indulgence for the imperfections of his own work, due to the difficulty of reproducing Hebrew in Greek, adds that others have experienced the same difficulties: ***"The Law itself and the prophecies and the rest of the books have no small difference when spoken in their original language."*** From these words we may understand that at the time of writing (132-100 B.C.) Alexandrian Jews possessed Greek versions of a large part (probably not the whole) of "the Prophets," and of some of "the Writings" or Hagiographa."

While this statement may indicate that the LXX was much more than just the 5 Books of Moses, in the context of his comment about the challenge of translating Hebrew to Greek, he may well have been making just a general statement about the canonised Tanakh, rather than explicitly stating that all of it had been translated into Greek.

Further, he speaks of differences in 'speech'. As already noted, it was a known practice in some synagogues for the reader of the scrolls of the Tanakh to translate them in speech (i.e. not writing) from their Hebrew into Aramaic (and perhaps other appropriate languages) so that the audience in certain regions, or countries of the Diaspora could better understand what was being stated.

This may well have been the practice in places like Alexandria, before the composition of the LXX, with spoken translation into Greek.

---

13 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint_manuscripts

So this reference in the prologue to Ben Sira/Sirach may well be just a reference to the challenge of such 'on-the-fly' aural translations.

This is the ONLY evidence that I have to date been able to find that may support the existence of a LXX version of Isaiah, but even this limited evidence may well be no evidence at all.

So the reality is that we have **no solid evidence at all** that an LXX or 'Old Greek' version of Isaiah existed in the first century, when Yeshua was supposedly to have read from it.

To repeat then, Yeshua would not have read Isaiah 61 in Greek because it did not exist!

Therefore, Yeshua <u>could not, and would</u>, not have read the LXX version of Isaiah 61.

As I hope the rest of this book will demonstrate, this generalization regarding quoting from the Tanakh, has huge implications in terms of how we should approach the text and its conceptual, and contextual framework, so as to best understand, interpret and apply it.

<u>Early Manuscript Evidence:</u>
One of the arguments for the NT being first written in Greek is that the earliest manuscripts that have been found are in Greek. This is a rather incomplete and deceptive picture however.

For example, until the DSS and the Cairo Genizah discoveries, a number of Jewish writings from before the first century CE were thought to have originally been written in Greek (such as 1 Maccabees, Ben Sira, Judith, Tobi, Jubilees, & the 'Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs'), as that was the language of the earliest fragments and scrolls that had been found. When all of these Jewish writings were found to be written in Hebrew originally, this Greek identification had to be corrected. That is, an assumption was made based on an incomplete, and as it transpired flawed picture of the reality.

Given the horrendous 'burnings' of Hebrew synagogues, scrolls and books through the centuries during the far too many pogroms, and also under Hitler's rule, who knows what other Hebrew texts have been perhaps lost forever (including quite possibly Hebrew versions of the NT books).

As Prof. Bart Ehrman explains in his '*The History of the Bible: The Making of the New Testament Canon'* (p43):
"It is important to remember when we read the New Testament that we are not reading the originals as produced by the ancient authors. We are reading translations into English of Greek texts whose originals do not survive; these translations are based on copies of the originals, and all of these copies have errors in them. In some places, we may not even know what an author originally said." – p46
And*: "The fact that the originals do not survive was occasionally noted during antiquity and the Middle Ages, but it was not until relatively modern times that it was recognized as a major problem. On occasion, early Christian authors commenting on the text of Scripture will point out that different manuscripts have different texts in some places. And scribes in the Middle Ages would sometimes correct a manuscript they were copying from some other manuscript.*

But it was not until after the invention of the printing press—when printers had to decide which form of the text to set up in type that the vast differences among our manuscripts came to be recognized.

A major breakthrough occurred in 1707, with the publication of an edition of the Greek New Testament by Oxford scholar John Mill. Mill had spent 30 years of his life comparing the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament available to him and considering the ancient translations of the New Testament into other languages and the quotations of the New Testament by the early church fathers.

He compiled all his results and published an edition of the New Testament that included an "apparatus" of variant readings he had discovered, that is, places where there were significant differences among the manuscripts.

To the shock and dismay of many of his contemporaries, Mill's apparatus indicated 30,000 places of variation. And these were only the variant readings he considered "significant" (others that he knew about, he didn't include)!

Since then, scholars have uncovered many more variant readings among our manuscripts. ***Mill had examined 100 manuscripts. Today, we have well over 5000 manuscripts available.***

As a result, we don't actually know how many variant readings survive; no one has been able to count them all. Perhaps it is easiest to put the number in comparative terms. We know of more variants in our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament."

Ehrman goes on to indicate that:
"*We do not have the originals of any of the letters of Paul, the Gospels, or the apocalypse—indeed, of any early Christian text.*

What we have are copies, the vast majority of them produced centuries after the originals from copies that were also centuries removed from the originals and that had themselves been made from earlier copies.

Dating back to AD 125-140, the earliest manuscript in existence is written on papyrus in codex form (like a book); it is called P52 because it is the 52nd papyrus that has been catalogued.

Starting in the 4th century, scribes copied documents on to parchment. We don't have complete books of the New Testament on any surviving manuscripts until about the end of the 3rd century. We don't have complete copies of the New Testament until the 4th century, 300 years after the books themselves were written.

Of the thousands of copies of the New Testament that now survive, most date from the Middles Ages, and no two are exactly alike in all their wording (with the exception of the smallest surviving fragments). "

In fact the earliest almost complete Greek versions of the Apostle Paul's letters for example are the Papyrus 46[14] scrolls dating to around 170 CE[15]. That is, some 100+ years after they were supposedly written. Based on our knowledge of the translation and transcription process these scrolls may only be a 1st or 2nd copy of a Greek version, or a 2nd or 3rd translation and copy from Hebrew autographs.

Given what we have learned from the process with respect to other Jewish writings such as Ben Sira and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (and many others), it is certainly possible that the same translation process has occurred here, as I will detail further in this book.

---

14 http://www.lib.umich.edu/reading/Paul/about.html

15 Uriel Ben Mordechai is making new translations from P46 which, given their Torah centric basis and the use of Hebrew translations of quotes of the Tanakh, rather than the LXX quotes, I consider to be the very best translations we have. So far he has completes Galatians and Hebrews and will soon publish Romans. See http://above-and-beyond-ltd.com/store/books/if.html for details.

Yeshua's Haftarah Reading:
So when Yeshua read from Isaiah 61, he would instead have read something very similar to the Great Isaiah scroll found at Qumran[16]. This scroll is quite incredible. It is a complete scroll of Isaiah and is now the oldest version of Isaiah in existence (dated at no later than 100 BCE, with one carbon dating test suggesting it may be as old as 350 BCE).

When scholars studied this Hebrew scroll they found it to be virtually identical to the next oldest in existence, the Masoretic Hebrew Isaiah scroll from around 700 - 1000 CE.

Thus, we can confidently consider that Yeshua's quote would have been identical, or very near to identical to the Great Isaiah scroll of Qumran and the Masoretic Isaiah of 700 CE.

Below is an English literal translation of the Great Isaiah scroll chapter 61:1-2:
"The spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, and to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, …"[17]

As I have already intimated, almost all NT translations though appear to quote from the LXX here and instead have something very similar to the ESV: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

While on the surface, the difference may be minor especially for this single example, the underlying motive and methods appear to be anything but.

Luke was a proselyte and follower of Yeshua. If, as Professor David Flusser argues so effectively (especially in his book, 'Jesus'), Luke first wrote in Hebrew, then he would have quoted Isaiah 61 correctly, and not used the LXX!

Given that **almost every version** we have today of Luke appears to use either a LXX version[18] or parts therefore mixed with some other early manuscripts we

[16] Known now as the 'Great Isaiah Scroll'.

[17] The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible by Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint & Eugene Ulrich (1999) p 372

18 Firstly, the evidence has surfaced that the Septuagint has been edited over the last 1700+ years so as to match the translations into Greek of the NT and so appear to support this contention (to reiterate, the original Septuagint – a Greek translation of the Torah only, the 5

may not be able to ascertain, this is very strong evidence for the deliberate introduction of the LXX base to the NT.

So why is this important?

At the very heart of the message of the New Testament is a Hebraic approach to the Almighty and His Good News (Gospel).

This approach is so vastly different from the Greek (and modern, Western) mindset, that without some basic appreciation of this foundational truth and perspective, the New Testament can be so totally misunderstood and misused as to render it's central message null and void.

In his book *"Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*", Professor Norman H. Snaith makes this point very emphatically when he states that:
"The aim of Hebrew religion was Da'ath Elohim (the Knowledge of God); the aim of Greek thought was Gnothi seauton (Know thyself).

*Between these two there is a great gulf fixed. We do not see that either admits of any compromise**. They are fundamentally different in a priori assumption, in method of approach, and in final conclusion**…*

The Hebrew system starts with God. The only true wisdom is Knowledge of God. 'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.' The corollary is that man can never know himself, what he is and what is his relation the world, unless first he learn of God and be submissive to God's sovereign will. The Greek system, on the contrary, starts from the knowledge of man, and seeks to rise to an understanding of the ways and Nature of God through the knowledge of what is called 'man's higher nature'.

According to the Bible, man had no higher nature except he be born of the Spirit. We find this approach of the Greeks nowhere in the Bible.

The whole Bible, the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, is based on the Hebrew attitude and approach… "

The great Jewish Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "***The Greeks learned in order to comprehend. The Hebrews learned in order to revere. The modern man learns in order to use***" ('God in Search of Man' p34)

Books of Moses, was written by Hellenistic Jewish scholars somewhere between 280 and 164 BCE).

To know God is to revere God. To revere God is to listen, to listen and act (responsive hearing), to obey.

Perhaps this is why the most important text of Judaism begins with this call. The Sh'ma[19] opens with **'Hear O'Israel …'!**

We are called to love the Almighty, not just with our intellect, not just to try to comprehend Him, but with our all; with our heart, with our mind, with our very strength, our actions!

In this book, I hope to demonstrate how seriously mistaken the Greek approach is, and some of the great errors that have resulted from this approach.

For example, when the word Torah was translated into *'nomos'* in Greek and then into 'Law' in English it lost a lot of its true meaning. Torah ("teaching" or "instruction") is at the very heart and soul of Hebraic thought.

I hope that by the end of this book, you will begin to appreciate how important the Hebraic Mindset is and how 'damaged' the New Testament has become by the deliberate editing of its truth to try to make it conform to a Greek or Hellenistic mindset[20].

It may also help in trying to appreciate the impact of this argument to consider the standard counter argument, which is very well presented and discussed on a Blog site authored by Dr Eric Jobe.

In explaining the issue he writes:
"… It is argued almost universally that Orthodox Christians ought to use the Septuagint Old Testament, because

(1) It represents a translation of an older Hebrew text,
(2) It includes books not found in the Masoretic text (MT),
(3) the Apostles used the Septuagint, and
(4) the Masoretic text is corrupt due to changes that were made in the text in order to obscure Messianic prophecy.

After all, why would you follow a medieval Jewish text when you could follow a Greek text preserved by Christians from the beginning?"

---

[19] Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-22, Numbers 15:37-42

[20] For further information on the Hebraic Mindset, see some podcasts via http://globaltruthinternational.com/ and some articles and talks at http://www.circumcisedheart.info/

In this book I hope to demonstrate that the LXX is not necessarily based on an older *vorlage*[21]. The MT may well derive from a Hebrew vorlage just as old, or older, than the text used for the LXX, but it is certainly based on a vorlage that was accepted by the most of the sects of Israel (certainly the Qumran Yachad and the Pharisees) both before, during and after (Rabbinic Judaism) the Second Temple Period.

I also do not believe that the inclusion of the extra 'book's is significant (at least in terms of my general argument), and I certainly do not see any evidence for significant 'corruptions' by the Rabbi's since the early first century CE.

The Historical Reality:

One of the greatest Biblical scholars of the last century was the late Professor David Flusser of Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He spent his lifetime studying the Synoptic Gospels. As a result he gained an intimate knowledge of the life and times of his Jewish brother Yeshua (Jesus).

As part of his scholarship he became very familiar with not only the Gospels relationship to the Tanakh (that is, the Hebrew Bible, called the 'Old Testament' by Christians), but with the writings of Jewish scholars from the 'inter-testamental' period (approximately 500 BCE to 50 CE) and the many documents found in the Qumran caves between 1947 & 1956 (known as the Dead Sea Scrolls).

Flusser and his many 'disciples'; scholars such as Robert Lindsey, David Bivin, Roy Blizzard have written many papers and books highlighting that the New Testament (NT) is full of Semitic syntax, vocabulary, idioms, and thought patterns.

They argue most pervasively, and with much evidence that:

- Hebrew was the primary spoken and written medium of the majority of the Jews in Israel during the time of Yeshua;
- Yeshua therefore did most, if not all, of his teaching in Hebrew;
- That the original accounts of Jesus' life were composed in Hebrew (as one might conclude anyway from early church history);
- That the Greek gospels which have come down to us represent a third or fourth stage in the *written* transmission of the accounts of the life of Yeshua;
- That Luke was the first gospel written, not Mark; and how this affects

[21] A **vorlage** (from the German for prototype or template) is a prior version or manifestation of a text under consideration.

our understanding,

- That the key to understanding many of the difficult or even apparently unintelligible passages in the Gospels is to be found, not primarily in a better understanding of Greek, but in retroversion to, and translation of, the Hebrew behind the Greek (made possible by the often transparently literalistic translation methods of the Greek translators).

From all of these factors, Professor Flusser became convinced that the majority of the NT, and especially the Gospels, were first written in Hebrew and, when quoting from the Tanakh, they did not quote from the Septuagint (which is the generally accepted wisdom of today), but from Hebrew scrolls.

Given that:

- the Hebrew Bible was first written predominately in Hebrew, (well before the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Pentateuch was begun in the 3rd century BCE)[22];
- that the authors of the NT were Hebrew (with the exception of Luke, a prosleytized Gentile);
- that they primarily spoke Hebrew; and
- that they specifically used Hebrew in the Temple and synagogues; it seems highly probable that in composing a Hebrew NT, a Hebrew commentary on the life and times of a Hebrew 'anointed one' (Messiah Yeshua), that they would quote from Hebrew scriptures not Greek translations thereof.

In '*Translation as Scripture: The Septuagint in Aristeas and Philo'*, Benjamin G Wright III argues that LXX proper was 'subservient' to Hebrew and that it served as a teaching tool to lead to the Hebrew original.

He writes that the Greek LXX often '*cannot stand on its own feet'* and suggests that the most satisfactory place for the LXX was in a *'school, where the subservient and dependent Greek translation would function for students as a kind of crib to the Hebrew.'* The scholar Sebastian Brock is another who argues this same point.

These scholars also argue that the changes in the LXX (compared to the Masoretic

[22] Some of the Tanakh was originally written in Aramaic: "Parts of Daniel and Ezra, as well as a sentence in Jeremiah and a two-word toponym in Genesis, are in Aramaic — but even these are written in the same Hebrew script. Perhaps these portions were written by the original Hebrew prophets, who knew that they were intentionally speaking to an Aramaic audience, as an aside." – from http://www.bibliahebraica.com/the_texts/tanakh.htm Accessed 07/01/2013

Text (MT) and the original Hebrew that it was based on), both intelligible and some un-intelligible, are brought about by the translator's culture.

That is, the Hellenistic environment and culture of the Greek translators affected their translation. This is made more problematic as the rest of the books of the Tanakh were translated over a significant span of time (with some arguing that the Writings and Prophets translations were not added or completed until the 3rd Century CE).

Thus, these scholars argue that to fully comprehend the intended meaning and doctrine in the LXX version, it is best to return to Hebrew and the MT.

One simple example is detailed in '*Messianism in the Septuagint*' by Heinz- Josef Fabry, where he compares LXX Messianic texts with the MT, the Targums, and texts from Qumran, namely the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Psalms of Solomon.

In the LXX he does not find any homogeneous Messianism, but instead some contradictory passages. Some of the Hebrew passages such as Isaiah 9:5 and Micah 5:2 are 'dismantled' or 'reduced' and other passages that were never Messianic in the Hebrew versions, become Messianic (for example Numbers 24:7, Ezekiel 21:30-32).

He argues that this may have resulted from the books of the LXX being translated at different times, and also taken out of the original socio-cultural and political conditions.

That is, Fabry argues that the translators attempted to transfer the texts to a new framework within their Hellenistic culture.

Therefore, given the significant lack of evidence that the LXX was anything more that the 5 Books of Moses in Yeshua's day, it would seem very clear that:

> ***The Septuagint (LXX) was not the primary translation or version of the TaNaK (Tanakh) quoted in the New Testament.***

But it gets worse. There are many examples where there is strong evidence that the LXX has been altered over the last 2000 years to conform to popular translations of the NT.

One such glaring example is Romans 3: 13-18. This passage has a great many problems as outlined in some depth in an article by Frank Selch, '*The Enigma of*

Romans 3'[23]. Frank is able to show quite conclusively that the verses of Romans 3:13-18 were written back into the LXX in the early Christian centuries.

Thus we are confronted with the very challenging discovery that:

> ***The Septuagint has been seriously tainted even to the point of redaction[24] so as to agree with many NT miss-translations (i.e. translations that agreed with neither the Hebrew versions of the Tanakh or the earlier versions of the LXX).***

What follows is an attempt to expand upon this argument and provide convincing evidence of its veracity, as well as analysing the impact of this apparently deliberate distortion and mis-appropriation of Scripture.

Once established, it is then important to see what doctrinal beliefs have been introduced and supported by this faulty understanding and application, as well as what alternative articles of faith should instead be acknowledged and promoted.

These questions and issues I would argue are very serious and foundational to both our individual and corporate lives, and to the momentous events of the approaching 'last days'.

---

[23] http://www.theolivetreeconnection.com/index_htm_files/Romans%203%2010.pdf

24 re-editing, i.e. changed by the transcribers or translators

Chapter 2: The Language of the New Testament

There are a number of very significant facts, some of which have really only become well-identified in recent decades after hundreds of years of mis-information, leading to unhelpful and wayward conjecture, promoted as God ordained truth.

One of these very significant facts is the true language of the New Testament.

It was argued and popularly believed for a great many years that the original autographs[25] of the NT were predominantly, if not totally written in Greek.

Certainly, if the apostles and authors of the books of the NT spoke and wrote in Greek, it would make reasonable sense that they may well have used a Greek version of the Tanakh (that is, the Septuagint).

When scholars over the last few hundred years have looked for the earliest copies of the NT that still remain in some reasonable form, they have only found Greek, and some Aramaic versions or portions. Without further interrogation and investigation it would seem fairly natural and reasonable to assume that these Greek versions are all that remain simply because they are all that was ever in circulation. i.e. If there were no, or very few, Hebrew versions or translations of the NT written in the first few decades after the time of Yeshua, we would clearly not expect to find any portions of them remaining today.

Also, if we had no reason to assume any deceit or vested interests were involved in the publication of NT copies and translations then we would probably not delve any deeper into the non-existence of Hebrew, or even Aramaic, versions.

However, the evidence is now quite strong that Hebrew and Aramaic were languages of the Jewish people living in Israel in the first century[26], and it appears for a number of very significant reasons that the New Testament was first written in these languages.

---

[25] The first versions by the Apostles

[26] The revelations from the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls were most convincing and dramatic. Because of their influence, the highly respected The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, which in its first edition, in 1958, had stated that *"Hebrew had ceased to be a spoken language around the fourth century B.C."*, revised this statement in its third edition (1997) to instead state: "***Hebrew continued to be used as a spoken and written language…in the New Testament period."***

What are these facts and reasons for this more recent understanding?

Firstly, a number of noted scholars have argued that at least portions of the New Testament were originally penned in a Semitic tongue.

This argument has especially been asserted of the four Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.

For example: "*When we turn to the New Testament we find that there are reasons for suspecting a Hebrew or Aramaic original for the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, John and for the apocalypse."*
- Hugh J. Schonfield; ***An Old Hebrew Text of St. Matthew's Gospel***; 1927; p. vii

It also appears that the evidence is very strong that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. All of the "Church Fathers", both East and West, testified to the Semitic origin of at least the Book of Matthew, as the following quotes demonstrate:

Papias (150-170 C.E.)
"Matthew composed the words in the Hebrew dialect, and each translated as he was able."
Ireneus (170 C.E.)
"Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect."
Origen (c. 210 C.E.)
"The first [Gospel] is written according to Matthew, the same that was once a tax collector, but afterwards an emissary of Yeshua the Messiah, who having published it for the Jewish believers, wrote it in Hebrew."
Eusebius (c. 315 C.E.)
Matthew also, having first proclaimed the Gospel in Hebrew, when on the point of going also to the other nations, committed it to writing in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them by his writings. Pantaenus... penetrated as far as India, where it is reported that he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had been delivered before his arrival to some who had the knowledge of Messiah, to whom Bartholomew, one of the emissaries, as it is said, had proclaimed, and left them the writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters.
Epiphanius (370 C.E.)
"They [the Nazarenes] have the Gospel according to Matthew quite complete in Hebrew, for this Gospel is certainly still preserved among them as it was first written, in Hebrew letters."

Isho'dad (850 C.E.)
"His [Matthew's] book was in existence in Caesarea of Palestine, and everyone acknowledges that he wrote it with his hands in Hebrew... "

It has only been in recent times since the discovery and translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls that the evidence for the priority of Hebrew has really become convincing though.

We now know that Israel in the first century of the Common Era was a land where Hebrew, Aramaic & some Greek were commonly spoken (along with Latin due to the Roman occupation). Hebrew though remained the language of the Temple & synagogues and the primary language of all religious writings of that era.

To further detail this finding, following is part of an article by David Bivin of the *"Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research"*:

"Indeed, now over three decades since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is becoming increasingly evident that the spoken and written language of the Jews of the Holy Land at the time of Jesus was Hebrew.

Even apocryphal books (1 Maccabees, Ben Sira, Judith, Tobit) and other Jewish literature of the period (Jubilees, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs) ***which have come down to us in Greek versions have been found to be translations from Hebrew into Greek*** *for the Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora.*

Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), for example, was known only in Greek until less than 90 years ago. Fragments of the Hebrew text of this book then began to come to light, and today we have almost two-thirds of the book in the original Hebrew, the most recent discovery in 1964 occurring at the Masada excavations in the Judean desert.

*As more and more discoveries come to light and scholarly research into ancient sources continues****, we are learning that at least to the end of the first century A.D., and even later, the principal language of the Jews in the Holy Land was Hebrew.***

The Dead Sea Scrolls are almost entirely in Hebrew; the Mishnah (the so-called "Oral Law") is in Hebrew; the later rabbinic commentary on Scripture, the Midrash, is also mostly Hebrew.

Of the thousands of parables in the rabbinic literature, so consonant with the style of Jesus' teaching, only two are in Aramaic, all the other being Hebrew.

All Jewish coins minted between 103 B.C. and A.D. 135 have Hebrew inscriptions, except for one coin of Alexander Jannaeus….

On the basis of his study of Matthew's Gospel and other literature contemporary with the Gospels, an Israeli scholar, Yehoshua M. Grintz, in a monograph entitled "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple,"[27] has asserted that ***"Hebrew was the only literary language of that time; and to this alone we can attribute the fact that the new (Christian) sect of 'unlearned and ignorant men' (Acts 4:13)*** *set out to write its main book****, intended for its Jewish members, in this language."***

Grintz further pointed out ***that Hebrew was a vehicle for communication with Jews who lived outside the Land of Israel****. Already at the beginning of the Christian era Hebrew was a kind of lingua franca for the many-tongued Jewish Diaspora. Recall, for example, the scene (described in the Book of Acts) of the Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost: "... we hear, each of us in his own native language" (Acts 2:8).*

… ***Hebrew remained the language of Jewish Palestine and its masses of people throughout the New Testament period and until the final revolt against Rome in A.D. 135.****"[28]*

So if most, even possibly all, of the NT was originally written in Hebrew, why does it appear today, that where the NT quotes from the Pentateuch (The Five Books of Moses), it appears almost exclusively to quote from a Greek version, that is from the Septuagint?

It is plausible that to reach the Gentile world at some point these books of the NT were translated in to Greek. To those in the Gentile world (who mostly were not Hebrew readers or speakers) who would read these NT books in Greek it would seem sensible to use the Septuagint as the Tanakh (Old Testament) version (which they most likely had access to) and thus the direct quotes would also be copied on translation from this version for consistency's sake.

---

[27] Yehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as a Written and Spoken Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple" *JBL* 79/1 [1960], 32-47.

[28] From 'DO GENTILES NEED HEBREW?' http://webbpage.bravehost.com/Yavo/1_3_Bivin_GentilesNeedHebrew.html – well worth reading in its entirety.

This scenario may be plausible, although it is fraught with a great many issues and inconsistencies.

When, the late Professor David Flusser (Hebrew University) introduced the realization that the normal language of the teaching of Jesus, and especially of his parables, was not Aramaic (or Greek) but Hebrew, he enabled a reconstruction of parts of that teaching through careful comparisons of the text of Luke and Matthew with Jewish sources.

In doing so, Flusser[29] has shown that the use of the Septuagint in quoting from the Tanakh, appears to be an adaptation of the original autographs some time after their translation into Greek.

A significant part of Flusser's approach as a linguist fluent in over 9 languages including Greek and Hebrew, was to translate the Greek versions of Luke, for example, back into Hebrew. When he did this, he was able to show how good a fit such 'reverse-translations' were, as well as highlight small but significant portions where this does not work.

While the introduction of the Septuagint may appear then to have been a valid and appropriate editorial 'enhancement' with the translations into Greek, this change has brought about a great many deliberate and devious distortions leading to doctrines that are incompatible with the teachings of the Tanakh; that is with the divine instructions of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In fact, there are a number of instances where the Greek translators poor understanding of Hebraic customs and commandments, meant that even accidental errors were made. One example is the incorrect recounting of a story which makes Yeshua guilty of breaking a commandment.

It was accepted that on the Sabbath it was permissible to **pick up fallen heads** of grain and rub them between the fingers. According to Rabbi Yehuda, also a Galilean like Yeshua, it was even permissible to rub them in one's hand.

Some of the Pharisees though found fault with Yeshua's disciples for most likely behaving in accordance with their Galilean tradition. That is, it is most probable that these Galileans, picked the fallen heads of grain, rubbed them together and

---

29 Flusser: *"Although the Synoptic Gospels also quote the Septuagint version of the text (the usual way of quoting the Bible in the N.T.),* ***it may be shown that the traditional Hebrew interpretation of the text suits the context as well as the Greek.***" - p10 of 'Judaism and the Origins of Christianity'

ate them. But what we read in Greek (see Matt 12:1-2[30] in the footnote) is that **they 'plucked' the heads** of grain.

It seems fairly clear then, that when the original Hebrew account (written by someone who knew the customs and even the local differences in interpretation) was translated into Greek, the translator, not knowing these customs, and perhaps trying to make the scene more colourful, added the statement about plucking the wheat, and thus introduced the one and only act of transgression of the Torah recorded in the synoptic Gospels[31].

And thus, while the original Hebrew may well have been inspired, the Greek translation clearly wasn't.

The Evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls (also called the Qumran Scrolls):

In evaluating the language used in Israel in the first century CE, we need to re-consider what the 'experts' have declared on this matter as closer examination reveals that a lot of the standard encyclopedia-type commentaries are based on out-of-date archaeological and linguistic evidence.

As I mentioned in the Introduction with reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Prof. Gary Rendsburg states that:

"Of the 930 assorted documents from Qumran, 790, or about 85% of them are written in Hebrew (120 or about 13% are written in Aramaic, and 20 or about 2% are written in Greek). Of these 930, about 230 are biblical manuscripts, naturally are in Hebrew, so in actuality the percentage of Hebrew texts is 80%.

… in general we may state that ***the language of choice for the Qumran community was Hebrew*** *…"*[32]

The writings of this community date from around 250 BCE up to 50 CE. While their language of choice need not be indicative of all of Israel (as they appear to have been a rather distinct, strict and isolated community), it seems a reasonable inference that Hebrew was the default language of all Jewish religious groups, who for very strong historical and theological reasons maintained this primacy of Hebrew.

---

[30] Matthew 12:1-2 "*At that time, Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the grain fields. His disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said to him, "Behold, your disciples do what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."*

[31] See M. Kister, "Plucking on the Sabbath and Christian-Jewish Polemic," Immanuel 24-25 (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 35-51

[32] http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/docman/rendsburg/396-qumran-hebrew-studies-on-the-texts-of-the-desert-of-judah/file

The esteemed LXX scholar Emanuel Tov also argues that Hebrew remained the language of the Rabbi's through to at least 135 CE:

"Since the only text quoted by in the Rabbinic literature and used for the base for the Targumim and Vulgate is the MT [Masoretic Text – written in Hebrew], it stands to reason that it was the text embraced by the Rabbis. Furthermore, all the texts used by the religious zealots of Masada and the freedom fighters of Bar Kochba found in all other sites in the Judean Desert except for Qumran are identical with the medieval MT." [33]

Add to this the recent find of Hebrew writings that date back at least to 500 CE at Kursi on the Eastern shore of Lake Kinneret[34] that shows that even here, where archaeologists previously thought was a pagan town (though the Talmud had said was a Jewish town), the language, of writing at least, was still Hebrew.[35]

Consider that this is nearly 400 years later, after the various revolts and tragedies such as the Fall of Jerusalem (70 CE) and the defeat of the Bar Kochba revolt (135 CE) and yet here, just across the Lake of Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee) from the towns where Yeshua first walked, we have Jewish people, and possibly even followers of Yeshua, still writing in Hebrew.

Even more astonishing in some ways, 900 years later most Jewish communities were still writing in Hebrew even when in lands speaking other languages!

A good example was found in the Cairo Genizah is a letter of introduction from a Jewish community in Kiev, accrediting Jacob b. Ḥanukka to raise funds for his redemption from non-Jewish creditors[36]. This letter is dated to no later than 950 CE., and addressed to a wide range of Jewish communities from Kiev all the way to Cairo, Egypt. It is written in very good Hebrew. This strongly suggests that all these communities still read (and wrote) in Hebrew even some 900 years after the times of Yeshua.

It is also important to recognize that the Jewish people had been a very literate people from very early in their history.

---

33 http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/11.large-scalediffs.2008.pdf?v=1.0 (p14)

34 The modern town of Kursi/Kersa was called Gergesa, and was where Yeshua 'cast out the demons' into swine – Matthew 8:28

35 http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.692277

36 http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-00012-00122/1

To illustrate this, consider that when Gideon was in Succoth (Judges 8:14) he questioned a young lad about the place and this young man was able to write down many names – apparently most of the farmers back then could read and write at least a little[37].

The Jews wrote a lot – the text of the Tanakh was only a very small portion of their efforts. But they wrote with a purpose and their best efforts were for communal benefit and thus subject to social control. The community decided if a text should be accepted as part of the cannon (Sumerian word for 'reed', meaning straight or upright). If so then these writings were maintained and copied.

Other writings, while great in number were not normally preserved for more than a generation or two (though the oral history remembered from these writings lived on to some degree and is found in the Mishnah, Gemerah, etc.)[38].

So by the 1st century of the Common Era, Jewish literacy was still very high.

Muriel Seltman, in her recent book '*The Changing Faces of Antisemitism'* (2015) also argues for the same understanding regarding literacy:

"A significant feature distinguishing the Jews of this time [Second Temple Period] from the other people amongst whom they lived was their much higher literacy rate. Jewish men had to be ready to read aloud in the synagogues a portion of the Torah or the Prophets every Sabbath and by the time of Jesus the vast mass of ordinary Jewish men had been literate for, perhaps, a thousand years.

Women were expected to be able to read at least enough to enable to fulfil their religious duties and to deal with things connected with marriage, menstruation and so forth."

So, even from this limited evidence we can see a plausible picture of Hebrew having such a great primacy to the Jewish people both in Israel and the Diaspora and thus it was also the written language (if not spoken) language of Yeshua and his disciples. Among these disciples were the original authors of the NT autographs. And so while some of them may well have been able to write in Greek as well, clearly Hebrew was their preferred language.

---

37 see SW Baron, 'Social and Religious History of the Jews' p 323

38 This is explained and detailed very well by Prof. Paul Johnson in 'A History of the Jews'.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, being perhaps the greatest archaeological find of the last century, have brought a lot of scholarly attention with the seemingly inevitable competing theories of scholars with different perspectives and perhaps with different agenda's and motives.

For example, Robert Eisenman believes that many if not most of the scrolls date to the
1st century C.E. In addition to positing Zealot connections, he identifies James the Just (Ya'acov), the brother of Yeshua, as the Teacher of Righteousness.

While this may seem an intriguing theory, which has certainly gained great notoriety, it can't be correct based on the carbon-14 dating of the scrolls.

Also Barbara Theiring believes that the scrolls originate in the 1st century C.E., with specific connections to early Christianity, though she goes even further by claiming that the Teacher of Righteousness is John the Baptist and that the Wicked Priest is Yeshua!

Even much more outlandish, but illuminating in how far scholars can push things. For example Jose O'Callaghan argued that 7Q5, written in Greek, is a copy of Mark 6:52–53. However, the only complete word in this tiny Greek fragment is the word kai ('and')!

So to leap to such a conclusion would appear to take a great deal of imagination and little authentic reflection.

One of the most amazing finds at Qumran are 20 tiny scrolls, some with cases, that are the oldest surviving examples of tefillin. The New Testament refers to these objects, worn on the head and the arm, as phylacteries, the Greek word for "amulets," or "protective devices" (Matthew 23:5), **even though Jews have never considered them as such.**
Since the word "tefillin" derives from the Hebrew word tefilla (prayer), perhaps it is better to refer to these items in English as prayer accoutrements. The practice derives from a literal interpretation of Exodus 13:16 and Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18.
We know that the Pharisees and rabbis interpreted these biblical passages in such fashion, and now we know that the Qumran community (and perhaps all Essenes) did likewise.

I think that the use of the Greek word '*phylacteries'* meaning 'protective devices' in Matt 23:5 suggests that the editor in translating the Hebrew 'tefillin' did not really understand what these tiny scrolls really were!

This would suggest, as Flusser argues, that the Greek Matthew was written after 70 CE by a Gentile/Greek person who did not have the best understanding of Jewish practices (though based on a much earlier 'Life of Yeshua' document or documents).

Also worth noting is that some letters written by Simeon Bar-Kokhba and his contemporaries between 132 and 135 C.E. were also discovered in caves near the Dead Sea, though further south in the Ein Gedi region.

These letters are written in a Hebrew with some similarities to Mishnaic Hebrew[39]. Again this is further evidence that the faithful Jews of the first century CE (the Hebraist's, as opposed to those who had embraced the Greek culture and were called Hellenist Jews), still spoke and wrote in Hebrew and so we would expect the Hebraist Jewish authors of the NT to have also used Hebrew, even if it was Mishnaic Hebrew.

The best represented of the biblical books among the Qumran manuscripts are Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah (with 34, 27, and 24 copies, respectively).

These are also the most cited books in the New Testament.

The Qumran sectarians viewed the Temple Scroll as a book of revealed scripture, which means that they saw revelation continuing in their day; the same holds in the New Testament, where revelation is seen as an ongoing process.
In Matthew 3 we read of Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist), speaking very critically towards some Pharisees and Sadducees that came to get a mikvah (a ritual immersion or baptism). His strict attitude and approach is very reminiscent of the Qumran Yachad's writings.

While the vast majority of the DSS scrolls come from a period a century earlier than Yochanan the Immerser, Pliny wrote that the Essene community (assuming the Qumran Yachad were the Essenes) was still resident in the area (if not Qumran specifically) well into the 1st century C.E. So again we see some NT links with Qumran.

"In 2007, a new inscription—not on parchment and not in a cave, but rather on a slab of stone—was made public. It is called the Vision of Gabriel, though the term

---

39 The very large rabbinic corpus, especially the Mishna and the Tosefta (c. 200 C.E.), along with other elucidations of biblical material, are written in a dialect called Mishnaic Hebrew, which diverges considerably from the old biblical Hebrew standard. Most likely this dialect grew out of the everyday spoken Hebrew.

Dead Sea Stone also has been used, and it dates to the 1st century B.C.E.

While the details of its discovery are not known, apparently it was discovered around the year 2000, found its way to a Jordanian antiquities dealer, and was sold to a private collector. The collector was unaware of the significance of the object until a visitor to his collection read the inscribed words, at least as best as possible.

The text is ink on stone, a rare medium, since usually one incises letters into the stone. The ink is very faded, so it is hard to read the entire inscription. The stone stands about one meter high, and the inscription comprises 87 lines in Hebrew.

The best paleographer of Hebrew in the world, Ada Yardeni, has authenticated the inscription. The text is known as the Vision of Gabriel because the angel Gabriel conveys an apocalyptic vision, or perhaps better a series of visions. The sense we get from the text is that an enemy nearly destroyed the "sons of the holy," but now their leader, the "prince of princes," will arise and overcome the adversary.

Much of this, of course, sounds like phraseology known from the New Testament.

In short, wherever one turns, one finds connections between the scrolls (and now the Dead Sea Stone) and the books of the New Testament. The Qumran sect and the Jesus movement were parallel streams, each with its own apocalyptic vision, against the backdrop of the Roman Empire and the panoply of Judaisms under the umbrella of common Judaism. The one group had little or no continuity, while the other group spawned the largest religious movement in the history of the world."[40]

This information about the 'Vision of Gabriel' again illustrates the commonality in understanding between the Qumran Yachad who primarily used Hebrew in their writings, and the NT authors. While again only circumstantial, it is still strong evidence that the Hebraic Jewish authors of the NT would have also predominately preferred Hebrew in their writings.

As an interesting aside, Rendsburg also notes with regard to the Qumran Yachad that: *"… The common theme here appears to be the end of days (Hebrew 'aharit ha-yamim), since we get references to the Temple that is to be built in the end of days, the end of the dominion of Belial, a figure known as the Shoot of David, and so forth.*

40 'The Book of Genesis' by Prof. Gary Rendsburg

The one passage to highlight is proof that the Yahad served as the replacement or surrogate for the Temple. The humans who comprise the community are called in themselves a miqdaš, a holy place, a sanctuary, a temple."

Where else have we heard that designation? Perhaps in Matthew 26:61, 27:40; Mark 14:58, 15:29; John 2:19, and especially John 2:20 where we learn that Yeshua was speaking about the 'temple of his body' and especially in 1 Cor 3:16 where we read: *"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"*

So again we see great parallel's in their Biblical understanding which would surely extend to a common appreciation of the primacy of the Hebrew tongue.

The 'Christian' religion, especially in the development of its Hellenistic perspective, has followed its own course, but its indebtedness to Judaism (or proto-Judaism as Flusser preferred), specifically of the Qumran type, is being acknowledged more and more as the DSS are studied and reported on.

We can also see this indebtedness and commonality is the Apostle Paul's approach to the use of the Minor Prophets like Habakkuk.

Hab 2:2 describes how God told Habakkuk, *"Write down the vision and make it plain upon the tablets."*

For the writer of the Qumran 'Pesher Habakkuk', this prophecy of Habakkuk speaks to his present day: "*And God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end"* - 1QpHab 7:1–3.

The Qumran author clearly saw eschatological (end-times) message in Habukkuk, yet such a prophetic message is not at all clear in the original context.

Hab 2:2 continues with the phrase *" … that he who reads it may read speedily*," which for the Qumran 'Pesher' author *"… concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets*" - 1QpHab 7:4–5.

And then Habukkuk 2:4 states, "*But the righteous shall live by his faith*,". We would normally conclude, as I have certainly argued before, that the righteous person shall prosper by his own faith or trust in God.

Yet the Qumran author of Pesher Habakkuk sees this faith as directed to and through the Righteous Teacher: "*This concerns all those who observe the Torah in the House of Judah, whom God will deliver from the House of Judgment, because of their suffering and because of their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness."* - 1QpHab 8:1–2

But this same passage of Habakkuk is quoted three times in the New Testament in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:37–38 (possibly also authored by the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul, just like the Qumran author before him, sees this passage as referring to the Age to Come (the Kingdom of God), and in the Apostle Paul's case to Yeshua as well.

Without going in to the numerous examples, this interpretative method of applying certain passages from the Tanakh to present realities, as per Pesher Habukkuk, is also quite common in the NT from Matthew to the Apostle Paul's epistles, and to my understanding further supports the common and shared Hebraic mindset that would have included the use of the Hebrew language.

The Book of James:

To repeat, I think the evidence is now very strong, and well-accepted by leading DSS scholars especially, that the 'lingua franca' of the first century CE in Israel was Hebrew.

I also argue in '*James the Just: Re-evaluating his Legacy*'[41], that Ya'acov (James) the brother of Yeshua wrote his Epistle before 45 CE (the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15), and that he only wrote to Jewish readers, not Gentiles at the time.

While these Jewish readers and hearers of his letter (given the likelihood that it was read out loud in synagogues) were scattered throughout the world (the Diaspora) and not just in Israel, it is still most likely that the original text was written in Hebrew.

While this reference does not argue for quite as early a date as I do, it certainly gives some general support for my argument: *"It still seems possible, with Mayor and Robertson, to hold to an early date, even the earliest of any NT book. Indeed, the epistle reflects no knowledge of the existence of Gentile Christians. There is no whisper of the controversy relating to the council at Jerusalem. James was early in power (Acts 12:17). No man in the apostolic circle*

41 http://circumcisedheart.info/James%20the%20Just%20%E2%80%93%20Reevaluating%20his%20legacy.pdf

at this period had the ear of the Jewish Christians as did James. One does not have to wait many decades to find need for strong ethical preaching

…The extreme "Jewishness" of writer and reader in every way tends to confirm the probability of an early date—perhaps a.d. 45-48." [42]

There is little doubt that one of the principal features of Ya'acov's letter is that it is **clearly very Jewish and Hebraic, in its background, focus and emphasis.**

The very Jewish and Hebraic nature and focus is seen in these features:

- from the first verse where Ya'acov states that he is addressing the 12 Tribes of Israel in the Diaspora;
- the emphasis of Torah observance (quoting both Leviticus 19:16-18 in verse 2:8, which is a summary of the Ten Words, as well as specifically addressing them in such places as verses 2:9-12);
- the reference to Avraham as 'our ancestor' (2:21);
- the reference to the Sh'ma in 2:19;
- and in the reference to 'anointing with oil' (5:14-15), which is not found in any other NT letter, and
- the use of many Hebraisms, such as 'parallelisms' (1:9,11,13, 4:8-9, 5:4); frequent use of the possessive pronoun immediately after the noun; repetition of the pronoun(2:6) and the passive used to avoid the use of God's name (1:5; 5:15).

There is also an interesting parallel with Yeshua, in that the very sins and weaknesses that Ya'acov speaks out against, are the very ones that Yeshua was strong in condemning amongst his fellow Israelites, especially the Pharisees.

In fact, in his '*An Introduction to the NT*' (1891), M Dods went so far as to write ***"the epistle is Jewish in every line".***

Historical evidence regarding Ya'acov also appears to indicate that he spent much time in the Temple in Jerusalem[43].

---

[42] From https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/epistle-james and referring to the works of J. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (1913), and A. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (1959).

[43] Jerome, in '*De Viris Illustribus'*, quotes Hegesippus' 2nd century account of Ya'acov (James) from the fifth book of his lost *Commentaries*: *"After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the Church at Jerusalem. Many indeed are called James. This one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no flesh, never shaved or anointed himself with ointment or bathed. He alone had the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, since indeed he did not use woolen vestments but linen and went alone into the temple and*

Given the evidence I have already detailed regarding the Temple and synagogues use of Hebrew, it also seems reasonable to conclude that Ya'acov would have also given great primacy to Hebrew in his letter.

Biblical Greek scholars also argue that the Greek of Ya'acov's letter is very fluent, and not what would be expected of his Jewish upbringing and education as a Galilean. Also while the quotes of the Tanakh in Ya'acov's letter are from verses where the Septuagint translations are very literal, and thus don't really differ from the Hebrew in any significant manner, any later translation into Greek (using the LXX for these quotes), would not require any significant editing.

As a result, I would suggest that most likely reality is that Ya'acov first wrote in Hebrew, to a mostly Hebrew/Jewish audience and then, perhaps years or decades later a Gentile, and expert in Greek writing, wrote an excellent Greek translation.

The Letters of the Apostle Paul:
Firstly, while Jewish (the son of a Pharisee) Rav Sha'ul (the Apostle Paul) grew up in the Tarsus, (Turkey) and was a Roman citizen of a Greek speaking region, he remained very Jewish and Hebraic in his understanding, even after his Damascus Road encounter.

As already mentioned in the introduction, he was a student of the great Rabbi Gamaliel I, and clearly demonstrates his very Hebraic mindset and Torah centric theology throughout his letters.

I recommend my book '***Defending the Apostle Paul: Weighing the Evidence***'[44] for details on this.

Professor Mark Nanos, a leading Jewish theologian on the Apostle Paul (he is the author of a number of books on the Apostle Paul, and a great many articles and presentations as well (see his website for details - http://www.marknanos.com), argues very powerfully that the Apostle Paul's letters to Rome specifically, as well as to all the Diaspora communities, would have been circulated in the local 'synagogues', and read out to Jewish congregations that contained both Jews and Gentile 'God-fearers' who

---

prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees.". While this 'historical' account has some questionable statements, for example, only the High Priest, (and only on Yom Kippur), could enter the 'Holy of Holies', there are a number of other references that seem to support the general tenure of this statement.

[44] http://www.amazon.com/Defending-The-Apostle-Paul-Weighing-ebook/dp/B009TLLK0U/

accepted Yeshua as the eschatological Messiah, as well as perhaps a majority of Jews who did not.

Here is a few quotes from his article '*Romans: To the Churches of the Synagogues of Rome*'[45]:
"What happens if we read Romans anew based on the proposition that the audience to which Paul addressed the letter met together as subgroups of the larger Jewish community (or communities) of Rome? Do the features of Paul's letter make sense when approached from this contextual vantage point?

… In these texts I find reason to propose that Paul and his communities--including the community he did not found but wrote to in Rome--were subgroups of the Jewish communities that believed Jesus represented the dawning of the awaited age.

The Jews in these subgroups, Paul included, observed the covenantal obligations of Torah, for they were Jews involved in a fully Jewish movement. *(Note that Tacitus, Ann. 15.44, seems to suggest this, and Ambrosiaster in the 4th cent. in his commentary, Ad Romanos (ed. H. J. Vogels, CSEL 81:1), described the earliest Christ-followers in Rome being taught to keep Torah by Christ-following Jews).*

They upheld that by the gift of the Holy Spirit now made available with the arrival of the awaited age to come they were enabled to practice their commitment to the God of Israel according to the highest of ideals of Torah. The non-Jews who joined them did not become Jews and were thus not under the Mosaic legislation (Torah) on the same terms[46] as Jews; however, they were committed to lives of righteousness defined in Jewish communal terms and thus by Torah, for they met in Jewish groups, and thus according to the Jewish norms for these groups, and enabled by the same Spirit of God.

…The population of Rome at the time is estimated to be just short of one million, and the Jewish population to be twenty to fifty thousand, although the overall population of Rome as well as that of the Jewish people may have been much smaller. There is no evidence of any structures from the time used for meetings of Jews or for Christ-followers. ***There is no reason to suppose that Christ-followers such as Paul, when he refers to "gatherings"/"churches" (ekklēsia), is involved in distinguishing his group from any other Jewish subgroup or its gatherings, which could equally be referred to as ekklēsia, and for that matter, to any other community or assembly of people.***

---

45 http://www.marknanos.com/romans-synagogues-8-31-10.pdf

46 See my book 'Defending the Apostle Paul' for an explanation of what this meant doctrinally.

Just as we use the terms community, meeting, gathering, and assembly as general terms today, so too were they used then. To be sure, it later came to be the case that "church/ekklēsia" specifically referred to Christian gatherings and buildings, while "synagogue"/synagōgē referred to Jewish gatherings and buildings.

The Greek word translated church, ekklēsia, and the Greek word translated synagogue, synagōgē, were used interchangeably in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Scriptures) to translate the basically synonymous Hebrew word 'kahal', all of which refer to the assembling of people together, that is, to a meeting or a community including the overall people of Israel (and in James 2:2 synagōgē was used to refer specifically to gatherings of Christ-followers).

Paul appears to use ekklēsia not, as often claimed, to distinguish his groups from synagōgē, but rather to signify their identity as subgroups "meeting" specifically within the larger Jewish communities.

*… **Paul addressed households where meetings took place, and households were also the likely venue for many meetings among Jews.** Of the few synagogue buildings that are dated to Paul's time or before, there are none in Italy.*

Philo, who wrote just before Paul, referred to the 'proseuche' of Rome in which Jews met on the Sabbath (Embassy 156-57), although it is not clear whether he was using language common in his native Alexandria to communicate to fellow Alexandrians, who used proseuchē ("place of prayer," apparently originally temples in Egypt) to refer to buildings, but not necessarily by his contemporaries in Rome, since to date the inscriptions from Rome refer to synagōgē ("congregations" most likely, not "buildings") but not to proseuchē.

There may have been some buildings in Rome, even large ones, and they may have been referred to as proseuche or synagōgē, but there is no evidence of it. In any case, even if there were several public structures that could hold several hundred people for a meeting, there were likely hundreds more small meetings to facilitate reading and discussing Scripture, worship and prayer, celebrating Sabbaths and other holidays, and other mutual interests and causes as well as social life in general, whether supplementary to meetings in larger public buildings, or in lieu of their availability to some or much of the Jewish population. These gatherings would take place in adapted homes or apartments or workshops or even outdoors.

… The Jewish communities were treated by Romans in some exceptional ways since the time of Julius Caesar (based on Senate documents of 48 to 44 BCE; Ant. 14.190-212), which were granted in appreciation of Judean support for his

military operations in Egypt in the first century BCE (Ant. 14.192-95; 16.52-53).

Josephus explains that although Caesar issued an edict forbidding (religious/political activities by) "associations [thiasous]," that, ***nevertheless, "even in Rome" the Jews were not similarly banned, but were permitted "to live in accordance with their customs and to contribute money to common meals and sacred rites," "to assemble and feast in accordance with their native customs and ordinances"*** *(Ant. 14.214-16; trans. Marcus, emphasis added; reiterated by Augustus, Ant. 16.162-65, 172). Suetonius corroborates that Caesar "dissolved all guilds (collegia), except those of ancient foundation" (Julius 42.3; trans. Rolfe; cf. Josephus, Ant. 14.213-16; 18.83-84), …*

… ***Philo mentions that when grain distributions were scheduled in Rome on a day that Jews regarded to be a Sabbath, their proceeds were set apart until the next day (Embassy 158), which suggests a generally positive attitude on the part of Roman leadership toward Jews close to Paul's time, and likely that these Jews were citizens, since it was for citizens in particular that these distributions were apparently made.***

I recommend a full reading of this article, or better yet a reading of '*The Mystery of Romans*' by Mark Nanos[47] for a much better appreciation of the historical and theological context.

In summary, the historical evidence suggests that the Apostle Paul was also, like Ya'acov, writing first to Jewish communities who revered the Torah (in Hebrew, rather than Aramaic or Greek), and who generally maintained the practice of using Hebrew in their 'liturgies' on the Sabbath and for the special feast or holi-days, would have also preferred Hebrew (despite his Greek language heritage).

[47] See my introduction to this book here - http://circumcisedheart.info/The%20Mystery%20of%20romans%20a%20torah%20and%20shema%20centric%20view.pdf

Chapter 3: Semitic Idiomatic Expressions

"There are close to 28 000 Greek manuscripts or fragments containing all or part of the NT. The alarming fact is that "every one of these handwritten copies differs from every other one"! This being the case then, which one was the Greek manuscript breathed-out by the Almighty? (If we believe that the original autographs were inerrant and inspired).

For example, in the text of Ephesians 1:18, one Greek manuscript reads, "the eyes of your heart being enlightened", whereas a different Greek manuscript reads, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened". Now which word represents the actual word which the Almighty inspired to be written - "heart" or "understanding"?

If the original text was not Greek, but Hebrew or Aramaic, the different Greek readings are easily explained as being translations. In Hebrew idiom the heart is the seat of the mind or thoughts, whereas in Greek idiom (as with English) the heart is the seat of the emotions. Thus one translator rendered the Hebrew word for "heart" by the Greek word for "heart", while the other rendered it by the Greek word for "understanding".

Both renderings then are valid; one as a "literal" translation of the Hebrew word (carrying also the danger of being misunderstood as "emotions" by the Greek or English reader); the other as a translation of the Hebrew concept. Thus variant Greek manuscripts may not necessarily be in conflict with one another if we consider them to be translations of an inspired Hebrew or Aramaic original."[48]

Evidence for a Semitic (and especially a Hebraic background) for the New Testament is found in the abundance of Semitic idiomatic expressions in the NT text. Idiomatic expressions are phrases whose literal meanings are nonsense, but which have special meanings in a particular language. For example, the English phrase "in a pickle" has nothing to do with pickles, but means to be in trouble. When translated into Hebrew it is meaningless.

Several Semitic idiomatic expressions appear in the NT, the following are only a few:

• "good eye" meaning "generous" and "bad eye" meaning "stingy" (Mt.6:22-23; Lk. 11:34)

---

[48] From Introduction to ***The Scriptures*** **1998** Copyright by the Institute for Scripture Research (ISR)

• "bind" meaning "prohibit" and "loose" meaning "permit" (Mt. 16:19; 18:18)
• Use of the word "word" to mean "matter" or "thing" (1Cor. 12:8)
"For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;"
• Use of the word "Heaven" as a euphemism for "God" (Mt. 5:3; 21:25, Lk. 15:18; Jn. 3:27)

Here are a couple of examples which highlight the issues that arise from the somewhat poor quality of the Greek translations from the Hebrew and/or Aramaic originals:
Mt. 26:6 = Mk. 14:3
And when Y'shua was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper,

Lepers were not permitted to live in the city (see Lev. 13:46). Since ancient Hebrew and Aramaic were written without vowels, there was no distinction between the Aramaic words GAR'BA (leper) and GARABA (jar maker or jar merchant). Since in this story a woman pours oil from a jar it seems that Simon was most probably a jar merchant or jar maker, and not a leper.

Acts 8:26
So he [Phillip] arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship. Acts 8:27 NKJV

The man in Acts 8:27 appears to be a proselyte to Judaism since he seems to be making the Torah-required pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16). The Torah, however, forbids a eunuch both from becoming a proselyte Jew, and from worshiping at the Temple (Deut. 23:1). This also raises the question of why one would become a eunuch (that is, be castrated) for the sake of the Kingdom of God. After all eunuchs are excluded from the assembly of Israel. (Deut 23:1).

The word for "eunuch" in the Aramaic manuscripts of both of these passages is מהימנא (transliterated as *m'haym-ne* (pl)), can mean "eunuch" but can also mean "believer" or "faithful one". This is much more likely to be the intended meaning here.

Mt. 19:24 = Mk. 10:25 = Lk. 18:25
...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.
The Hebrew word for "camel" is "גמל" (transliteration = gamel), The Aramaic word for 'rope' (gamla) is the same word except with an aleph at the end. i.e. "גמלא".

Thus it is quite likely that this phrase was originally in Hebrew or Aramaic and when translated an error was made.

The most conclusive evidence for Hebrew as the principal language behind not just the Synoptic Gospels, but the New Testament in its entirety, is the text itself. The New Testament is literally filled with Hebraic markers: Hebrew vocabulary, Hebrew syntax, Hebrew idioms, Hebrew thought patterns, and Hebrew theology.

Moulton and Howard have compiled an impressive 72-page-long list of Hebrew expressions and idioms found in the New Testament in their Grammar, Vol. 2, pgs. 413-485.

The late Professor David Flusser of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who was also a member of The Jerusalem School for the Study of the Synoptic Gospels, has emphatically stated, *"Of the hundreds of Semitic idioms in the Synoptic Gospels, most can be explained on the basis of Hebrew only, while there are no Semitisms which could only be Aramaic without also being good Hebrew."*

Joining Professor Flusser are such notable scholars as Pinchas Lapide (Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv), Frank Cross (Harvard University), William Sanford LaSor (Fuller Seminary), Harris Birkland, and J.T. Milik. Even Moshe Bar-Asher, the prominent Aramaic scholar at the Hebrew University, has stated that he believes the Synoptic Gospels go back to an original Hebrew--and not Aramaic--document.

Many NT scholars fluent in both Hebrew and Greek, confirm that the Greek of the Synoptic Gospels; the first fifteen chapters of the Book of Acts; the Book of Hebrews; and the Book of Revelation; as well as vast portions of the remaining portions of the NT text, is not Greek at all, but Hebrew in Greek dress.

Matt 5:17-18
"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a ***yod*** *or* ***a stroke*** *will pass from the Torah -- not until everything that must happen has happened".*

When Yeshua spoke of the permanency and unchanging nature of Torah in Matthew 5:17, he not only spoke in Hebrew but he spoke of Hebrew letters and pointing. While the terms have been translated into Greek and English, it takes very little digging to see that these terms derive from Hebrew as they represent the smallest letters and markings used in writing Hebrew.

Let us instead assume for a moment that the NT was indeed originally penned in Greek because the authors were Greek speakers and were writing the NT to address Greek speaking communities, especially outside of Israel.

Now with this assumption look at these 2 verses in John (remember as well, that John was most likely written as late as around 65-68 CE[49]).

Firstly John 1:41 (KJV)
"We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

This, at least, is the translation of the Greek into English (in 1611). Appreciating that 'Christ' is derived from the Greek term 'Christos' and 'Messias' or Messiah is a translation of the Hebrew term 'Mashiach', what jumps out at us as strange?

It would seem that someone writing a Greek document, would therefore be thinking in Greek. We might then expect him to use Greek terms and thus use the word 'Christos' as his primary term for describing Yeshua's role. As an afterthought, he might then mention what this term means in Hebrew.

From the available evidence only some 50 odd years ago, it was believed by most leading scholars, that the predominant language in Israel was Greek. That is the disciples all spoke Greek, including the author of the Gospel of John. So speaking Greek and especially living in Greece itself he sits down around 68 CE to write his Gospel and naturally writes in Greek.

Surely he would then have written in reflecting on Andrews encounter *"We have found the*' (in Greek) *Christos*". Writing IN Greek to a Greek speaking and perhaps predominately Greek-born audience (in this scenario), I doubt that he would even add the insertion 'that is, being interpreted the Messiah'. Someone else, then comes along to translate for the Jewish people who still speak that dying language Hebrew and adds "which being interpreted is, Mashiach (Messiah)".

Would this not be a reasonable and plausible scenario? The fact that we have the phrase the other way round at least suggests does it not, that the exact opposite scenario is more reasonable?

That is, given that the phrase is in reverse, it seems reasonable that Andrew and John, etc all spoke Hebrew and that John was speaking to a Hebrew audience in

[49] Most biblical scholars had dated John's writings to around 96 CE. This has generally been revised to the years prior to the great destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

Hebrew (and then someone added the 'which being interpreted is the Christ' when translating into Greek.

I thought this was fairly obvious and did not need any further or more simplistic explanation until I was told of an article titled '*The "Hebraic Roots" Regression to Moses: The Peril of Rewriting Scripture'*[50] by David Maas in the August 2011 edition of 'Focus on the Kingdom' (produced by Sir Anthony Buzzard).

In this article, David Maas using the same scripture to argue for the exact opposite conclusion!

He writes: "*Similarly, although "Messiah" transliterated into Greek letters is found twice in the Gospel of John (1:41, 4:25), its Greek equivalent "Christ"or Christos is used approximately 530 times. Furthermore, both John 1:41 and 4:25 translate "messiah" for that gospel's original Greek-speaking audience ("which is, being interpreted, Christ").*"

Just to be clear here that Mr. Maas is using this reference to argue that the NT was originally written in Greek, his article opens with: *"The push to use key Hebrew words and names instead of English terms (or Spanish, French, etc.), along with ideological and doctrinal factors,* ***has produced voices claiming the New Testament was originally penned in Hebrew****. This becomes a "slippery slope" by which the unwary slither into far more serious traps."*

The title of this article by itself may also suggest the writer has clearly adopted Replacement Theology, which is borne out by the whole tenor of the article.

So this lead me to consider how I might better explain this verse and it's implications regarding the original language used.

The Hebrew for "We have found the Messiah …" transliterated in English is "*Matzanu et HaMashiach*".

Assume for a moment, that you are the translator of this verse and you read this Hebrew sentence. You then translate it into another language (presumably Greek) as the equivalent of "We have found the …" and you come to this very special word. While it means 'anointed one', it is a very unique Hebrew word, so as the translator, you leave it in the text as much as possible (we see some variants of it), but you then go on to explain it's meaning in the language you are translating into. Thus you end up with something like "We have found the

[50] Article can be read here http://focusonthekingdom.org/1311.pdf. More on this article later.

Messiah, which being interpreted, is the Christ", which is just as our Bibles have it.

Perhaps you might argue that though the author of the Gospel of John was Hebrew; spoke and thought in Hebrew; remembered all the followers of Yeshua and Yeshua predominately speaking in Hebrew; but choose to write his account in Greek.

If he first then did write the whole Gospel in Greek, we would surely expect him to write in a way to help his non-Hebrew readers understand some very Hebrew concepts. For example the prologue of John is completely Hebraic. If an Hebrew author choose to record such a Hebraic concept as described in John 1:1, he would have surely composed it very differently in Greek, so that the incredible confusion that has arisen from this Hebraism would have been reduced.

The excerpts of a quote below from Professor Flusser (though a little out of context) shows the Hebraic nature of John 1:1-3:
*"The famous prologue to John's Gospel (1:3) states that "through him (the Word) everything came to be: no single thing was created without him". **The weight of this statement is well known, but it is less known that the verse repeats, even in its wording, a Jewish commonplace.***

*We read in the Book of Jubilees that God "has created everything by His word" (12:4), and so it is also said in Wisdom of Solomon 9:1. Even more similar to John's prologue is the wording of two sentences in the Dead Sea Scrolls: "**By His (God's) knowledge everything came to be, and everything which is happening — He establishes it by his design and without Him [nothing] is done**" (1QS XI: 11). "**By the wisdom of Thy knowledge Thou didst establish their destiny ere they came into being, and according [Thy will] everything came to be, and without Thee [nothing] is done**" (1QH 1:19-20).*

Another witness for the Jewish roots of Jn 1:3 is the benediction "that everything became to be through His word" (m. Ber. VI:2-3)." - '*Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*' by Flusser p267.

So Flusser helps us identify that John's prologue is Hebraic and was not significantly altered to be understandable by a Greek (pagan) audience. The evidence of how wrongly this prologue is understood by the Gentile world (and that includes most of Christianity), is surely evidence that, **if** the Almighty had inspired the Gospel of John to be first written in Greek, He would have helped John to express this concept very differently and avoid the incredible and on-going confusion that the prologue in particular has caused.

The same argument and conclusion can be reasonably made from the story of the Samaritan woman (she was not Greek either) at the well in John 4:25 *"I know that Messias is coming, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things"*

Clearly, no native Hebrew/Aramaic speaking women, even if she knew Greek would make such a statement. Remember, she is speaking to the Hebrew Yeshua. At least some of our NT versions place *'which is called Christ'* in brackets to somehow acknowledge she would not have said this. This at the very least shows she was speaking Hebrew or Aramaic. Again it appears we have a translator's addition here which is only really needed when the text is being translated from Hebrew to Greek.

Scholars believe that the Gospel of John was written around 68 CE. If written by a Hellenized Jew or a Greek writer some 35+ years after the resurrection; and written to a Greek audience, if would be most unlikely that Hebraic words and concepts such as Mashiach would have been included at all.

Look at Acts 26:14-15 "*We all fell to the ground; and then I heard a voice saying to me, in Hebrew, 'Sha'ul! Sha'ul! Why do you keep persecuting me? It's hard on you to be kicking against the ox-goads!' I said, 'Who are you, sir?' and the Lord answered, 'I am Yeshua, and you are persecuting me!"*

How empathic is this that Yeshua spoke Hebrew (even after his resurrection). He had not become some Greek or Gentile 'Christian'. He was, and IS, still an orthodox Jew.

Yeshua came to his People (Am Israel), his brethren. His disciples, the authors of the NT were also Jewish and primarily trying to continue his mission; that is, to bring the Good News of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43) to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to any from amongst the Gentiles who were willing to be grafted into the cultivated Olive Tree. **The mindset and language of these sons of Abraham was Hebrew; the primary language of the Land of Israel in the first century was Hebrew.**

It is also now clear that the original autographs of the NT were written in Hebrew and quoted from a Hebrew Tanakh (Torah, Writings and Prophets). While the NT authors may have been familiar with the Septuagint (at least the Apostle Paul as he was a Torah scholar), they clearly did not quote from it.

Chapter 4: The Redaction of the Septuagint:

In this chapter, I wish to highlight a few translation issues that point to a disturbing conclusion.

First though, a brief historical overview of how the Septuagint came into being may be helpful.

There is considerable debate about how the Septuagint came into being. The generally accepted view is that the Torah (the first 5 Books of Moses) was translated into Greek (in the 3rd century BCE) by Ptolemy III. King Ptolemy (in Alexandria, Egypt) apparently gathered seventy-two sages and placed them in seventy-two houses without telling them why he had brought them together. He went to each one of them and told him, "*translate for me [into Greek] the Torah of your master Moses."* [51]

This was the first translation in Jewish history. The Greeks were people who valued education and intellectual pursuits — something the Jews also valued and very much admired. Many of Jews also saw the Greek language as a beautiful language.

However, today many Jewish scholars and leaders believe that the translation of the Torah into the Greek language was a national disaster for the Jewish people.

In the hands of the non-Jewish world, the now accessible Hebrew Bible has often been used against the Jews, and has been deliberately mistranslated.

In fact, this event is also recorded as an awful tragedy in Megillat Taanit, composed during Mishnaic times, not more than a century or two after the fact[52].

There is also conflicting opinion on this.

There is no doubt that the LXX and 'Old Greek' translations have provided a valuable service for a great many Jews, especially outside of Israel (the Diaspora), but even for Hellenized Jews in Israel[53]. It could also be argued that the LXX has

---

[51] Talmud — Megillah 9b

[52] http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/bible_criticism/

[53] The Theodotus Synagogue, a 1st century CE synagogue in Jerusalem, had an inscription that has been found that read in part (in Greek) that the synagogue was constructed for the purpose of '… reading of the Torah and teaching of the commandments …'.| It is not clear whether the reading of the Torah also included a translation 'on-the-fly' into Greek, or if the LXX or some other Greek

been very helpful in the spread of the Gospel message into the Gentile world, even if that message has been distorted in some serious ways.

Some of the Jewish ambivalence to the LXX is seen in this excerpt from the Jewish Virtual Library quote on the LXX:
"… These findings alert scholars once again to the fact that the Septuagint, as a document of Hellenistic Judaism, is a repository of thought from that period. It is very difficult, often impossible, to determine whether distinctive elements of LXX presentation are the results of "creative activity" on the part of the translators themselves or accurately reflect their Vorlage, which in these cases differed from the MT.

Caution is strongly advised when making statements that characterize LXX thought in one way or another, since, as noted above, the LXX is not a unified document, and its translators did not adopt a standardized approach to their Hebrew text.

Moreover, it is inappropriate to describe the "world of the LXX or LXX thought" solely in terms of differences between it and our received Hebrew Text, for this would leave out their many points of near or total convergence.

It is then not surprising that the rabbis of the early common era had decidedly negative things to say about the LXX (see, for example, Tractate Soferim 1:8) as well as some positive statements about its value (as in Meg. 9 a–b); *see also the passages within rabbinic literature that cite a tradition according to which between 10 and 18 alterations were inserted into the Greek translation of the Pentateuch.*

It is not easy to organize these differing opinions chronologically or geographically – or in any other way. The rabbis, or at least some of them, were open to extra-Jewish (re)sources so long as they were kept subservient to what the rabbis understood as the core values of Judaism.

But, as has often been pointed out, a given language cannot be completely separated from the values of the society in which it is spoken. *Thus, whatever acceptance the LXX found among the rabbis can be aptly described as grudging…[54]."*

It is not known exactly when the other books of the Hebrew Bible (OT) were

translation was used by the Hellenistic Jews in this place of prayer and communal religious activity. As I outline in this book the important distinction here though is "Hellentistic' vs Hebraic.

54 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_02930.html

translated into Greek and became part of what is considered the Septuagint today, but it appears the first versions were produced before Second Temple times (that is, before the birth of Yeshua).

*"The grandson of Ben Sira (132 B.C.), in the prologue to his translation of his grandfather's work, speaks of the "Law, Prophets, and the rest of the books" as being already current in his day. A Greek Chronicles is mentioned by Eupolemus (middle of second century B.C.); Aristeas, the historian, quotes Job; a foot-note to the Greek Esther seems to show that that book was in circulation before the end of the second century B.C.; and the Septuagint Psalter is quoted in I Macc. vii. 17. It is therefore more than probable that the whole of the Bible was translated into Greek before the beginning of the Christian era." (*Swete, "An Introduction to the O. T. in Greek," ch. i.)

"The (Septuagint) translation, which shows at times a peculiar ignorance of Hebrew usage, was evidently made from a codex which differed widely in places from the text crystallized by the Masorah."[55]

It appears that the NT has been significantly altered in a number of key areas. Those areas are scriptures that are used by the church as support for a number of uniquely Christian doctrines; such as, doctrines of blood atonement; doctrines of exclusiveness; doctrines which seek to separate the Church from its Jewish/Hebraic heritage and doctrines that argue for the abolition of the Torah and the role of repentance in salvation.

These alterations appear to have been 'supported' by both the use of the Septuagint, and the alteration of the Septuagint, so that it conforms to the new 'translations' of the NT.

Thus, in this section I will introduce a few of these translation issues as well as some of the evidence for the redaction of the Septuagint

Translation Issues:

Luke 4:16-19

> *"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*

[55] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1035&letter=B#ixzz1W2XBQ03A

> ***'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'"***[56]

This passage was discussed in the introduction. To summarise, the phrase *"and release from darkness for the prisoners;…"* (quoting from Isaiah 61) has been replaced with "… *recovery of sight to the blind; …"*

Luke, as Flusser so ably demonstrates (see 'Jesus' by Prof. David Flusser, p 50), first wrote in Hebrew about an event in a Hebrew synagogue, where Yeshua read from a Hebrew scroll. The Septuagint would NOT have been used in these circumstances, and so the conclusion has to be that a deliberate redaction has been made of Luke's gospel, so that Luke appears to quote from the LXX.

Romans 3: 10-18:

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:
16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:
17 And the way of peace have they not known:
18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This passage is perhaps among the very best evidence that the use of the LXX in the NT demonstrates deliberate tampering of a most serious kind. The problem here though is difficult to spot for those of us who do not speak Greek and Hebrew.

I will endeavour to highlight and summarise the issue. For a much more in-depth review I recommend 'The Enigma of Romans 3:10-18'[57] by Frank Selch, which addresses this passage's problems in detail.
This passage is unusual to begin with in that it is a construct from several verses in the Tanakh. The problem is that these verses have been taken totally out of context.

---

[56] Yeshua read from Isaiah 61

[57] Most of my comments here come from Frank Selch's research and commentary. His article is available from www.theolivetreeconnection.com

The passage then becomes even more problematic, in that some of these verses appear to have then been joined together in Psalm 14 of the Septuagint. That is, it appears an editor or editors have altered the Septuagint (or at least some of the versions of it that we now have), so that it is now an exact copy of the NT passage.

Consider v10:
10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

This passage from the NT is supposed to be a quote from the Hebrew Scriptures, from the Tanakh. However, it is not a quote from the Tanakh. Nowhere does the Tanakh say that there is no one who is righteous.

The Tanakh does state that there is no one who does good:
Psalms 14: 1, 3-4
1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; ***There is no one who does good.***
*3 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt****; There is no one who does good, not even one.***
4 Do all the workers of wickedness not know, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord?
5 There they are in great dread; For God is with the righteous generation

Verse 1 doesn't just say though that there is no one who does good, that's only the last part of the verse. How does the verse start out? It is the fool who says there is no God – it is the fool who is wicked, and there is not one person who says this, who is good.

Look carefully at verse 4. This further emphasizes that those who do not do good are the wicked. In other words, the statement is not universal; there are righteous (non-wicked) who do good. We then see in Ps 14:5 that they are in fact many who are righteous.

The following are just some scriptures that attest to this:

Genesis 6:9
These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

Genesis 7:1
Then the Lord said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.

Exodus 23:7
Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.

Numbers 32:11-12
11 'None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully,
12 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully.'

1 Kings 14:8
and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you--yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight;

1 Kings 15:5
because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

2 Kings 23:25
Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

Psalms 97:10-12
10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name.
Psalms 106:3
How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness at all times!

Proverbs 13:5-6
5 A righteous man hates falsehood, but a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.
6 Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless, But wickedness subverts the sinner.

Job 1:1
There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

Jeremiah 20:12
Yet, O Lord of hosts, You who test the righteous, Who see the mind and the heart; let me see Your vengeance on them; For to You I have set forth my cause.

Psalms 32:11
Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

There is however a passage in the Tanakh that states that there is no one who does good. It is Ecclesiastes 7:20 "*Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins."*

Here we can see that people can be righteous even though there is no one who is always good. Righteousness is not about perfection, it's about a connection with God that brings a swift response of repentance upon the understanding that transgression has taken place.

Now, you may start to see some of the anomalies or contradictions evident in the NT, and even in the same epistle. For example we read in Romans 1:17, the Apostle Paul endorsing Habbakuk, and quoting Hab 2:4 *'…but the just [righteous] shall live by his faith[fullness]…'*. If we were to take Romans 3:10 as correctly quoting scripture, we would appear to have a serious contradiction here.

It could be possible that Ps 143:2 was the scripture being referred to in Romans 3:10: *'Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous.'* Frank Selch points out though that the Hebrew does not say *'in your sight'* but ***'before your face'***.

We can perhaps now recognize that in this context, that is, when compared with the righteous of the Almighty, no man's righteous comes close; it is cast into such a shadow as to make this a valid comparative statement. To repeat there are a great many scriptures that indicate that there are righteous amongst the living.

The next verse (v11 *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.)* is just as problematic.

Consider the cry of King David (Ps 27:8) *'When You said, "Seek My face", my heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."*, and (Ps 40:16) *'Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!".*

Also Isaiah writes, '*With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early…'* Isa 26:9 and *'Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord*…' Isa. 51:1.

Note also that v 12 states that there is not a single person who does good as well as yet in 2 Kings 22:2 we read: *'And he (Josiah) did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.'*

Consider also all those of faith mentioned on Hebrews 11; the parents of John the Baptists, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Anna the prophetess, Simon, the disciples and all their converts.

Clearly, this reference if truly from the Tanakh (possibly from Ps 14), and actually written by the Apostle Paul, must only refer to Gentiles, to unbelievers, not to the righteous men and women of faith. Yet, when we read this reference in its context in Romans 3, especially the context of the verses immediately following, we get a very different picture.

We get an argument that appears to argue against these men and women of faith and against the power of Torah to bring repentance, righteousness and salvation. The signs of corruption and deliberate distortion become increasingly evident.

Now we came to the most glaring deception, so blindingly powerful that many see it as in fact very strong evidence that the NT did quote from the LXX!

Research a few well known scholars who have written commentaries on Romans and you will likely find many stating that in Romans 3: 10-18 the Apostle Paul has quoted excerpts from a number of different places in the Tanakh (including Ps. 14:1-3; Ps 5:9; Ps. 10:7; Isa. 59:7,8; Ps. 36:1).

You might also find though some like the famous Adam Clarke (1762–1832)[58] indicating that Romans 3:13-18 is in fact a direct quote of Ps 14 in the Septuagint: *"This and all the following verses to the end of the 18th Romans 3:13-18 are found in the Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew text;* ***and it is most evident that it was from this version that the apostle quoted,*** *as the verses cannot be found in any other place with so near an approximation to the apostle's meaning and words."*

[58] Adam Clarke's commentary on the entire Bible took him 40 years to write!

Note that Adam Clarke states *'with so near an approximation'*, yet the Greek versions are not just close they are identical!

Quoting Frank Selch (The Enigma of Romans 3:10-18):
"The LXX came into being approx. 200 plus years before the Christian era. Is it at all feasible that Psalm 13 [Masoretic Psalm14] contained that inclusion which is there today? In all likelihood no, since the verses are a collection from other Psalms and wisdom writings and need not be there.

The following segment from Romans 3:13-18 is from the NKJV:

'Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.'

And this one is a copy of Psalm 14:3 [Ps.13 in the Greek text] from the 'English Translation of the Greek Septuagint Bible, The Translation of the Greek Old Testament Scriptures, Including the Apocrypha'; as compiled from the Translation by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton 1851

'Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit the poison of asps is under their lips whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known there is no fear of God before their eyes.'

Here is the Greek text of Romans 3:13-18
"ταφος ανεωγμενος ο λαρυγξ αυτων ταις γλωσσαις αυτων εδολιουσαν ιος ασπιδων υπο τα χειλη αυτων ων το στομα αρας και πικριας γεμει οξεις οι ποδες αυτων εκχεαι αιμα συντριμμα και ταλαιπωρια εν ταις οδοις αυτων και οδον ειρηνης ουκ εγνωσαν ουκ εστιν φοβος θεου απεναντι των οφθαλμων αυτων"

And here is the text of Psalm 14:3b [13] from the LXX
"… τάφος ἀνεῳγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν ταῖς γλώσσαις αὐτῶν
ἐδολιοῦσαν ἰὸς ἀσπίδων ὑπὸ τὰ χείλη αὐτῶν ὧν τὸ στόμα ἀρᾶς καὶ πικρίας γέ
μει ὀξεῖς οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐκχέαι αἷμα σύντριμμα καὶ ταλαιπωρία
ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέ
ναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν"

The two portions are identical!"

So, is this a slam dunk proof that the LXX was indeed used after all (as most Christian scholars have indeed argued for a great many years)?

NO!

Because even Adam Clarke went on to state: *"**The verses in question, however, are not found in the Alexandrian MS**. But they exist in the Vulgate, the AEthiopic, and the Arabic. **As the most ancient copies of the Septuagint do not contain these verses**, some contend that the apostle has quoted them from different parts of Scripture; and later transcribers of the Septuagint, finding that the 10th, 11th, and 12th, verses were quoted from the xivth Psalm, Ps 14:10-12 imagined that the rest were found originally there too, and so incorporated them in their copies, from the apostle's text."*[59,60]

Pause and consider carefully!

Adam Clarke acknowledges (and this was over 150 years ago!) that the earliest versions of the LXX (first compiled in Alexandria), do not contain this portion that is so perfectly quoted in Romans 3! That is, the Romans 3 quote we have today has been added by the translators at some stage. It is not a translation of the original; it is not inspired by any stretch of the imagination, but instead a great forgery (however well-intentioned the editors may have been in their redaction)!

Have others noted this before?

Yes, Douglas Moo's opinion (from his NICNT commentary, *'The Epistle To the Romans*', Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) writes: *"The inclusion of Romans 3:13-18 in several MSS of the LXX of Psalm 14 is a **striking example of the influence of Christian scribes on the transmission of the LXX**. (See S-H for a thorough discussion). (p. 203, fn. 28) [S-H refers to A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, by William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam (ICC. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902)]"*

Douglas Moo is stating that the Septuagint's rendering in Psalm 14:3 is a direct insertion copied back from Romans 3:13-18 by Christian editors and translators.

Clearly something very deliberate and most questionable is evident here. Further, very few, if any Hebrew manuscripts have this version of Ps 14. The Dead Sea

[59] http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=ro&chapter=003
[60] These 5 verses are also found in the Peshitta (Aramaic) version of Romans 3.

Scrolls portion 11QPs(c) contains Ps. 14:1-6 in Hebrew. Below is a translation in English of this Psalm:

Psalm 14:

1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God". They are corrupt, they commit vile wickedness; there is no one who does good.
2 YHWH looks down from heaven upon humankind to see if there are any who are wise, any who seek after God.
3 They have all gone astray; they are all alike corrupt; there is no one who does good – no, not even one.
4 Do they never learn, all those evildoers who devour my people as humans eat bread, and who do not call upon the YHWH?
5 Toward this place they will be in mighty dread, for God is with the company of the righteous.
6 You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but YHWH is their refuge.
- See p 515 'The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible' Martin Abegg Jr, Peter Flint & Eugene Ulrich 1999

Given the existence of this Hebrew version of Ps 14 at the time that the Apostle Paul first wrote Romans, and given the evidence I have referred to that indicates that Hebrew was both the main spoken language in Israel during the Second Temple period[61], and the language in which the Jewish scribes and the Jewish authors of the NT wrote; then this is much more likely the version that Paul would have quoted.

---

61 *"The spoken languages among the Jews of that period [at the time of Jesus] were Hebrew, Aramaic, and to an extent Greek. Until recently, it was believed by numerous scholars that the language spoken by Jesus' disciples was Aramaic. It is possible that Jesus did, from time to time, make use of the Aramaic language. But during that period Hebrew was both the daily language and the language of study. The Gospel of Mark contains a few Aramaic words, and this was what misled scholars.*
Today, after the discovery of the Hebrew Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and of the Bar Kochba Letters, and in light of more profound studies of the language of the Jewish Sages, it is accepted that most people were fluent in Hebrew. The Pentateuch was translated into Aramaic for the benefit of the lower strata of the population. The parables in the Rabbinic literature, on the other hand, were delivered in Hebrew in all periods. There is thus no ground for assuming that Jesus did not speak Hebrew; and when we are told (Acts 21:40) that Paul spoke Hebrew, we should take this piece of information at face value.
This question of the spoken language is especially important for understanding the doctrines of Jesus.
There are sayings of Jesus which can be rendered both in Hebrew and Aramaic; but there are some which can only be rendered into Hebrew, and none of them can be rendered only in Aramaic.
One can thus demonstrate the Hebrew origins of the Gospels by retranslating them into Hebrew.
It appears that the earliest documents concerning Jesus were written works, taken down by his disciples after his death. Their language was early Rabbinic Hebrew with strong undercurrents of Biblical Hebrew." - '*Jewish Sources in Early Christianity*', by David Flusser, Adama Books, pages 11-12

So, we might ask again at this point, why was this deliberate change made to the Septuagint and the NT, and what are the implications and ramifications of this deliberate tampering with versions of the LXX and it would appear by inference, the NT?

I will address this in the last section of this article, but to put it bluntly, it all comes back to Doctrine, to the deliberate attempt to write into the NT, the doctrines of men, rather than accept the doctrines and teachings (Torah) of the Almighty and His Messiah!

Hebrews 10:5-7:
In the middle of this quote from the Tanakh are the words "… *Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;" (v5).*

However, the correct words here are : *"Sacrifices and grain offerings you don't want; burnt offerings and sin offerings you don't demand. Instead, you have given me open ears*;" - *see* JPS Tanakh, 1917 edition.

Check this out in your favourite version of the Bible – in most, if not virtually all, you will find the corrupted version in Hebrews and something very similar to the Tanakh version (taken from the Masoretic Hebrew text) above in your 'Old Testament' section of the same Bible!

You might well ask, how come the same version of the Bible uses a quote of the OT in the NT which doesn't match with it's own OT version? Is this carelessness, a conspiracy or what?

Also where did the text '***but a body you prepared for me***' actually come from?

It appears that some versions of the Septuagint have this rendition. Here perhaps, you may start to see part of the problem that scholars like the late Professor David Flusser have so effectively illustrated.

To repeat, the NT and Septuagint we have today have both seen some serious redacting ('editorial licence'), and it appears that these changes have been made to support doctrinal positions of Christian theologians.

Consider Luke 11:20 "*But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."*

"In Hebrew the nomen regens [governing noun] would appear in the construct or with a suffix and hence would be anarthrous [without an article]. In the NT this

*Semitic construction makes its influence felt **especially where a Semitic original lies behind the Greek** (hence "translation-Semitisms"), but occasionally also elsewhere in Semitizing formulae ("Septuagintisms").*

Although scholars recognize the numerous Semitisms in Luke's gospel, explanations vary as to whether Lukan Semitisms are a result of the evangelist's imitation of Septuagintal Greek or whether the idioms attest to a Semitic undertext. In Exodus 31:18 the expression "finger of God" appears in connection with the inscription of the Torah upon stone tablets.

There, as in Luke 11:20, "finger" appears in the instrumental case, עבצאב מיהלא (be-etsba elohim, by the finger of God). Yet, in the Septuagint's translation of Exodus 31:18, "finger" is not anarthrous, but occurs in good Greek style, with the article—τῷ δακτύλ τοῦ θεοῦ (to daktylo tou theou, literally, "by the finger of the God")[62].

If the Semitism of Luke 11:20 is a result of Luke's imitation of the Septuagint's style, as most scholars claim, then how is it that Luke's idiom is more Hebraic than the Septuagint upon which he supposedly relies? The evidence suggests that this is not a 'Septuagintism' but, in Blass and Debrunner's words, a *"translation-Semitism."*

That is, Luke's text seems to rest upon a literal translation of a Hebrew source.

I would like to conclude this section with what is possibly the strongest and yet most basic and fundamental proof that the Septuagint was not an inspired version of the Tanakh (or even of the Pentateuch), and that, if we believe the NT to be inspired in its original version (autographs) it also could not have used the LXX as its base text of the Tanakh.

Certain words, being so unique to a culture and language, lose meaning on translation. Thus we have a question as to how to deal with translating a word that is unique in the language being translated from. Normally, the use of a 'loan' word or some other word close in meaning may suffice. What about when the word in question is the very special Name of the Creator.

This question and argument[63] is a result of the uniqueness of the name of the

---

62 '*Greek Grammar of the New Testament*', Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner – page 135

63 I am also indebted to Frank Selch for this incredible insight, which I believe HaShem blessed him with.

Almighty, the *tetragrammaton*, YHWH. It is also founded in the absolute holiness of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Name of God:

God is infinite. That does not mean that He is simply everywhere (in space) because the Almighty is out of space and time, as He created space and time. As the maker of this Universe we inhabit, He can be in the past, the present and the future, as He exists outside of ALL time.

As we though, are limited both in our physical nature and in a Universe limited in space and time, it is really impossible for us to grasp anything close to the full nature of who our Creator is. Our finite minds, in attempting to describe, or even just give a name to the Almighty, are faced with an inadequacy of language and thought.

The Almighty, also tells us He is Holy. That is, He is separate. No 'thing' is this created Universe is totally separated from every, or any other 'thing'. In fact, all our physical bodies contain matter created from the light that was present at the very beginning of creation!

We might wonder how the Almighty might try to share with us finite creatures some sense of His uniqueness; His Holiness and His 'beyond time' eternal nature.

It appears He has in fact given us a name that helps to identify Him in this way. That name is YHWH[64] (the Hebrews letters, Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh).

It is intriguing that He gave this name to Moses but that, even though He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He did not share this Name with them. We learn this from Exodus 6:2-3: *"God spoke to Moses; he said to him, "I am YHWH. I appeared to Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov as El Shaddai, although I did not make myself known to them by my name, YHWH."* (CJB)

This incredible name was given to Moses and the Jewish people when the Almighty 'separated' them unto Himself. He made them Holy. He made them a Holy Nation.

It seems to me, that part of His sharing with them His unique name, was to

---

[64] That name is really a combination of three Hebrew words: *Haya, Hoveh and Yeheyeh* – past, present, and future. The idea isn't just that God was, is, and always will be, but that He transcends time. In other words, God exists in the past, present and future -- simultaneously. - see an AISH article for more on this aspect: http://www.aish.com/sp/ph/69739762.html

remind them of their separation from the world (so that they could be a light[65] unto the world). This name, YHWH can not be translated into any other language on the planet. It has no simple meaning. While it includes meanings like Lord or Master, it goes way beyond such meanings.

Thus the translation of YHWH into the Greek word *'kurios*' or into English as Lord (whether in lowercase as Lord or capitalised as LORD) must inevitably lose some of its inspiration and power.

The use of the name YHWH should, in a strange way perhaps, also distance us from the Almighty to remind us of our limitations, which in turn should encourage a greater dependence on the infinite, eternal God Himself. This in turn helps lead us on the path of our ultimate task – to build the best relationship we can with our Holy God; a relationship which in turn requires us to become increasingly holy[66].

What does the Tanakh tell us about the reverence we should have for this unique name? In Deuteronomy 32:3 we learn: "*For I will proclaim the name of YHWH. Come, declare the greatness of our God!*

And in Deuteronomy 28:58 *"[You must] fear this glorious, awesome Name, YHWH your God".*

In Malachi we learn also of the respect and honour we must give this name: "*For the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the proud and evildoers will be stubble; the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says YHWH of Hosts, "and leave them neither root nor branch. 2* ***But to you who fear my name,*** *the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will break out leaping, like calves released from the stall. 3 You will trample the wicked, they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I take action," says YHWH of Hosts. 4 "Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, which I enjoined on him at Horev, laws and rulings for all Isra'el." (Mal 4:1-4).*

Also the high priest in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, wore a gold plate on his forehead - upon which was written the Name (YHWH) of God. The Talmud says that while wearing this plate, the high priest was required to continuously concentrate on the Name of God written there.

---

[65] The concept of separation (holiness) to enable a consequential sharing of the One God and Truth to the world is a most fascinating study. I have touched on this intriguing idea in a recent blog post – see http://globaltruthinternational.com/2012/10/25/abraham-the-father-of-the-faithful/

[66] The great Rabbis state that Holiness is separating ourselves from immorality.

So it seems that although God Himself is unknowable and un-nameable in any absolute sense (we can't pigeon-hole Him, or label and discard Him) the Tetragrammaton, YHWH is the highest declaration of His majesty, eternity and holiness in all creation. **It is therefore considered most sacred.**

So when this sacred name is replaced by '*kyrios*', (the Greek word for 'master' or 'lord' or 'sir'), in the Septuagint, it is replaced by a name that does not carry the same inspiration and authority.

It is replaced by a name that is used many times to refer to human 'masters', not just to the Almighty.

In a very similar way, when it is replaced in English by Lord (in the KJV by LORD – i.e. in uppercase), the same problem occurs. The name of the Almighty has lost something of its sacredness and holiness (separation).

As Frank Selch states so eloquently and emphatically in '*The Kyrios Question'* (Sept 2011)[67]:
"God is the Master of the human race, but the term Master is unfitting for Him because He is someone no human being can ever hope to emulate in full. The Eternal One also said, 'My glory I will not give to another…' (Isa.42:8; 48:11), which makes the Greek 'kyrios' an unfitting title for the Sovereign of the Universe, because it is a title that can be applied to virtually anyone as the Bible has demonstrated.

The term YHWH is unique, it is absolutely holy, because it belongs to One alone and He alone is the ***Asher Ehye Asher Ehyeh*** *(Exod. 3:14) Who defined Himself as YHWH for all eternity. That term also cannot be adequately translated into Greek or any other language.*

None of these titles that God set apart for Himself are meant to be translated, because once they are, they will lose their intrinsic and absolute holiness that is reserved for the Only ONE Who Is ONE!"

The clear implication here is that IF the New Testament when first written (that is, the original autographs), was inspired and inerrant, THEN the authors would not, and could not, possibly have quoted from a Greek translation such as the Septuagint, or from any other translation such as Aramaic or Latin.

---

[67] Also available from www.theolivetreeconnection.com

To do so would have been to lose the imprimatur of the King of the Universe and hence to lose His absolute inspiration and power.

As I believe in the inspiration of the NT autographs, I am convinced that they did NOT use the LXX as their Hebrew Scripture base text.

Addressing Some Counter Arguments:

Before discussing the implications of this understanding I would like to briefly address some of the arguments made in Mr David Maas' article *The "Hebraic Roots" Regression to Moses: The Peril of Rewriting Scripture'* published in *'Focus on the Kingdom' (*August 2011).

Firstly, Maas makes a big point of the lack of Hebrew terms in the Greek NT. Surely it is not at all surprising that a Greek translation uses Greek words for common concepts such as God, Master (Lord), and even the Messiah's name. All languages have appropriate words for most of these terms. The more telling problem here is the lack of appropriate words for YHWH (translated into '*kyrios'* – see discussion above) and Torah (translated into '*nomos'* i.e. law)[68].

David Maas also seems to think the quote below (Matt 27:46) is further evidence that the NT was originally written in Greek, yet this is a very troubling quote as *'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*' is neither an entirely Hebraic nor Aramaic phrase.

> Matthew 27:46 (KJV) "*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*
>
> Mark 15:34 (KJV) *"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

In fact, the whole narrative of this phrase and the reported reaction of some of the Judean bystanders is presented to us in such a fragmented and distorted manner as to bring into question the whole account. Rather than having any implied stamp of authority, a close investigation suggests that it is a Greek construction, at least in part. That is, it may be a made up story, composed by Greek rather than Hebrew or Aramaic authors, and therefore another editorial

[68] The words 'nomos' in Greek and 'law' in English fail totally to do justice as translations of the word 'Torah' in Hebrew. Please see *'Torah: Mosaic Law or Divine Instructions'* by Frank Selch for details on this very significant point.

'addition' to the original inspired writings.

The words 'Eli' (meaning 'my God') and 'lama' (why) could be legitimate transliterations of Hebrew but the rest is questionable.

The Septuagint translation (from Hebrew) of Judges 5:5 identifies 'Eloi' as a Hebrew transliteration:
*"The mountains were shaken before the face of the Lord Eloi, this Sina before the face of the Lord God of Israel" (Judges 5:5 '*The Septuagint with Apocrypha: English' by Sir Lancelot C.L. - 1851).

This is intriguing as 'Eloi' is not a legitimate transliteration of Hebrew. Greek does not possess the letter H in its alphabet, but indicates the sound with a diacritical mark[69], which is usually at the beginning of a word. Hebrew does have the letter H though.

In Judges 5:5 the term 'Elohei' is used toward the end of the verse in speaking of YHWH as the God of Israel. Because there are no vowels indicated, the word appears as: Elohi. This cannot be properly transliterated due to the absence of H in Greek, so the Greek form is given thus: *eloi*.

The literal translation of the verse, from Hebrew is, *'The mountains quaked before YHWH, this Sinai, before YHWH Elohei of Israel.*' Note in the LXX translation by Lancelot that 'Eloi' is used.

Thus the term 'eloi' in the LXX clearly stands for God - not 'my God' and yet it is used in Mark 15:34 as if it meant 'my God'.

Returning to Matthew 27, Yeshua is believed to be quoting from Psalm 22:1 here. The Hebrew text of the corresponding phrase in Psalms 22:1 reads (transliterated), '*Eli, Eli, lama azavtani'.*

So while 'Eli, Eli' is correct as a transliteration of 'my God, my God' and 'lama' is correct for the word 'why', the question is, does *'sabachthani'* have the same meaning as *'azavtani'?*

'Sabachtani' is not a Hebrew (or Aramiac) word, but 'shavaqta' (meaning 'to abandon, to desert, to leave behind') is. It seems possible then that 'sabachthani' is merely a corruption of the word. In transliterations the Hebrew 's' can become

[69] A mark that is placed on a letter to indicate that it has a different pronunciation than it would otherwise, or to indicate that the word has a different meaning than it would otherwise.

a ‘sh’ or the other way around and the ‘b’ often becomes a ‘v’.

As the closest Hebrew/Aramaic term to ‘*sabachtani’* is *‘z^{e}vaḥtani*’, a conjugated verb that derives from the root verb *‘zavaḥ*’, meaning [to] sacrifice/slaughter [a sacrificial animal], another possibility is that this word was intended. As this word is never used in the Hebrew Bible, it would seem unlikely. Also it would render this phrase as "My God, My God, why have you slaughtered me?", which seems most improbable.

The *Targum Yonathan*, an ancient interpretive translation (around 800 CE) of the Hebrew Bible into the Aramaic vernacular, has *‘Eli, Eli, m^{e}tul mah sh^{e}vaqtani*’ (essentially the same as Stern’s Complete Jewish Bible). The phrase *‘m^{e}tul mah*’ is interchangeable with the word *‘lama*’. The conjugated verb *‘sh^{e}vaqtani*’ derives from the Aramaic root verb *‘sh^{e}vaq*’, [to] leave/forsake.

As mentioned above, It also seems possible then that the Aramaic *‘sh^{e}vaqtani*’ could have become ‘*sabachtani’* in the process of transliteration. That is, the Greek comes to us via a Aramaic translation of a Hebrew original.

Of course, it is challenging to consider that Yeshua was quoting Psalm 22:1, as given his constant communion with his ‘Father and our Father’[70], we may not have expected him to feel forsaken. On the other hand, King David wrote these words in the Psalm, and he too had a very close relationship with the Almighty. In fact, King David is recalling here in Ps 22 that his God had listened and intervened on behalf of his ancestors and so, when feeling abandoned for a time, he cries out in pain.

A few years ago there was a shocking terrorist attack at a Yeshiva (House of Torah Study) in Jerusalem where some boys were murdered by an Islamic terrorist as they studied the Tanakh. The head of the Yeshiva was quoted at the memorial service for the victims, also calling out Ps 22:1.

Even the strongest and most devoted and faithful of men can feel abandoned by their Father at the darkest moments of their lives. Thus, I find it believable that even Yeshua could have quoted these words.

Also problematic though is the next verse: “*And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, This man is calling Elijah.”*

[70] John 20:17

In Hebrew, Elijah's name when transliterated becomes 'Eliyahu'. The shortened form is Eli. This is not the case for Aramaic or Greek. So this would seem to suggest that the phrase was in Hebrew. Given Yeshua's Galilean dialect and his being in great pain and anguish, his words may not have been very clear to the Judeans listening, and this may explain how they may have misunderstood what he was saying.

A bigger question, that still makes this verse problematic though is: 'Why would he say, 'Elijah, why have you forsaken me'?

So it appears we have considerable confusion and possibly editorial *'enhancements'*, and Greek constructions, etc. How does this confusion relate to the question of a Greek or Hebrew original?

I would suggest that if the original books of Mark and Matthew were in Hebrew, and the translators were not experts in Hebrew, and perhaps were even translating from Aramaic versions (that is, that the Hebrew autographs may have first been translated into Aramaic), then we might expect such a confused state of affairs to exist.

So again, this passage offers no support for a LXX original and worse it is another passage which suggests some deliberate distortions and editorial reconstructions have occurred.

Maas goes on to argue that Stephen (Acts 6:1-6) must have spoken some Greek. While he quite likely did, as many were multi-lingual[71], Maas shows a lack of depth in his understanding of Second Temple times here. He assumes that the group of 'Hellenized Jews' mentioned here, were Greek speaking. This is not necessarily so. Jews who were 'Hellenistic', were simply those who had adopted Greek practices and as a result discarded much of their Hebraic culture and even their Torah observance.

Some appreciation of the chronology of the early Christian period may help here. Scholars believe that the martyrdom of Stephen occurred in 32 or 35 CE[72].

It was not until some 10 years later (around 45 CE) that we have the events at Cornelius' house. These events marked the first time that Gentiles were

---

71 See footnote 21: *"The spoken languages among the Jews of that period [at the time of Jesus] were Hebrew, Aramaic, and to an extent Greek …"*

72 *'Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament'* (2009, 2nd Ed.) by H. Wayne House

becoming part of the community of faith without becoming Jewish. This was a considerable challenge to the Apostles[73].

Together, this is strong evidence that the Hellenized Jews[74] in Israel were not Greek and were most likely still speaking Hebrew as their main language.

So while there is evidence that many were able to speak Greek, there is actually little explicit evidence that they actually did so at all frequently. This is especially so for the more religious Israelites like the Pharisees and Yeshua's followers. As lovers of Torah, they celebrated Hanukah every year (John 10:22-23), a festival that remembered the overthrow of the Hellenistic King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and a return to Hebraic and Biblical practice. If these Hellenized Jews were also followers of Yeshua, they too would have been developing their appreciation of Torah and turning from their Greek ways[75].

Maas goes on to argue that the early church had no hesitation in using Greek and other non-Hebraic terms. The real question here is what does the evidence indicate and chronologically where does this evidence come from?

Well, they are clearly significant difficulties here in having accurate information but the earliest accepted NT manuscript fragment (P52 -a portion of John's Gospel) is dated around 117-138 CE[76].

There is now considerable evidence that the 'Christian Church' separated from its Jewish roots in a major way sometime after the destruction of the Temple (70 CE) and the time of the Council of Yavne (around 80 CE).

Because of the real paucity of original documentation from 61 CE to around 100 CE, it is difficult to be sure when the significant shift in the Gentile Churches

---

73 I discuss this at some length in my *'Circumcision: A Step of Obedience?"* article at www.circumcisedheart.info and in my book '*Defending The Apostle Paul: Weighing the Evidence*' – see http://www.amazon.com/dp/B009TLLK0U

74 That is, Jews who embraced the culture of Greece, but still lived in Israel, a Hebrew speaking land.

75 Something else that may help the reader see how the Hebraists viewed the pagan world around them is the very words chosen even as early as Genesis 1. Even as far back as Genesis we see the sun and moon described as 'lights' (greater and lessor) and the 'sea' in the plural 'seas' (in Hebrew) because the normal words for these objects were the exact same words for the pagan 'gods' of the sun, moon and sea. These simple examples, and many others, indicate that the author of Genesis was very careful to remove pagan elements from his writing of the Torah. See the brilliant work of Prof. Gary Rendsburg for details on this. I think the original authors of the NT would have all followed the lead of both Genesis and Ya'acov's epistle and been extremely Hebraic in their writing approach.

76 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rylands_Library_Papyrus_P52

doctrinal position began (as evidenced by the writings of Clement[77]) but it was clearly well entrenched by 120-140 CE.

Therefore, any writings of 'Church Fathers' and others, if written after 100 – 140 CE would understandably be in Greek, as the church had become Hellenized by this time. Even the Didache (a Greek document), which may have been written as early as 100 CE was largely based on Hebrew originals and sources. A Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls document which scholars have named 'The Two Ways' has been uncovered from which the Didache has copied/translated without substantial changes (see Didache 3:1-6 for example)[78].

David Maas argues that the Didache (written in Greek) quotes passages from the 'Greek' NT. While the NT autographs were written before the Didache, the 'Greek' Didache is, In a number of places quoting from Hebrew sources and is therefore clearly a translation (at least in part). Therefore it offers no support whatsoever to the contention that the NT was first written in Greek.

In fact, when we add the *Didache* to the apocryphal books *1 Maccabees, Ben Sira, Judith, Tobi*t as well as *Jubilees*, and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (which, as discussed earlier, were all thought to be originally Greek documents as that was all that had been found), we have a lot of Hebrew documents thought to have been written in Greek. That is, scholars have found that most Hebrew documents written in Israel in the inter-testamental period and at least up to 100 CE, were written in Hebrew. The NT is also a Hebrew document, based on Hebrew sources, written initially for a Hebrew audience. Likewise, it makes sense that it was also written in Hebrew, not originally in Greek.

To reiterate Flusser, **'… the Greek gospels which have come down to us represent a third or fourth stage in the *written* transmission of accounts of the life of Yeshua.'**

Maas then indicates that *"all surviving ancient manuscripts of the NT or part thereof are in Greek"*. This is true, but hopefully when you reflect upon all the many thousands of these manuscripts or fragments being different from each

---

[77] This dramatic shift was well entrenched by the time Clement wrote: *"If Christ the Lord who saved us, being first spirit, then became flesh, and so called us, in like manner also shall we in this flesh receive our reward."* (2nd Clement 9.5). This belief in pre-existence is Hellenistic not Hebraic. Clemet wrote sometime between 100-140 CE.

[78] '*Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*' (1988) by David Flusser p 487, 499 *"There is no doubt that the tractate of the Two Ways betrays literary affinities with the Essene Manual of Discipline. So e.g., immediately after Didache 3:1-6 which we have already treated above, a short passage follows (Did. 3:l-8a) which is mainly a Greek translation of a Hebrew list derived from 1QS 4:3."*

other (see Chapter 3) and the evidence that I have presented of deliberate distortions and the disturbing anti-Semitic actions of the translators, is it not at all surprising that we have no Hebrew originals? The 'Church' has clearly had a vested interest in there being none to find.

Sadly, it seems most of today's Christian apologists also have the same vested interest. The great majority certainly display a 'Replacement Theology' perspective, as well as a strongly Hellenistic rather than Hebraic spirit.

It is also possible that the Hebrew versions were so popular in the early days of the movement that they were simply worn out from overuse. Remember, *'lack of evidence is not evidence of lack'*.

There is much more that could be said about the Maas article but I will finish here with just two points regarding his inferences.

He argues that *"… In light of Jesus' command to preach the Gospel to all the nations, writing or translating the church's core documents into Hebrew would make little sense."*!

Yeshua came to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, a people who spoke Hebrew. The Gentiles who joined, or were grafted into this 'cultivated Olive Tree' were, at least in the early days of the 'church', 'God-fearers', that is Gentiles who attended the Jewish synagogues where Hebrew was read and spoken.

The most foundational 'Church' document is the Tanakh, that is the Scripture that the Apostle Paul referred to in 2 Timothy 3:15-17

*"**From infancy**, you have known the **holy Scriptures** which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. Every **Scripture** is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Given that Paul's letters were most likely written sometime between 50 – 60 CE, and most of the rest NT between 60 -70 CE or later, it is clear that the Apostle Paul was not referring to the NT.

This 'core' document, the Tanakh, was originally written in Hebrew. Given all that has now been learned about these Hebrew disciples of a Hebrew Messiah, anointed by a Hebrew God, the God of Israel, also writing the NT in Hebrew seems to make a lot of sense!

It is disappointing to see a scholar like Maas resort to the fallacious 'Ad Hominem' approach when he describes those like me, who argue for Hebrew autographs for the NT as having a 'Satanic agenda'. He argues that if our position, in rejecting the NT as having been inspired in Greek, is accepted then *'… believers will have almost nothing to stand on …".*

What about being like the Bereans?! What about the Tanakh that Yeshua did not come to destroy but to complete?! What about Yeshua himself?!

In fact, in acknowledging the contradictions and falsehoods that clearly exist in the NT documents as we have them today, we can come to a greater appreciation and understanding of the incredible truths that the NT does illuminate for us.

Chapter 5: The Doctrinal Implications:

I have tried to present the case here for the New Testament to primarily, if not totally, have Hebrew as its original language of composition. I have not in any way been exhaustive and dealt with every single book of the NT, although I believe the arguments presented here, though primarily focussing on the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistles of Paul, can fairly be applied to most, if not all of the NT.

Added to this, I have tried to highlight some of the many very serious issues regarding deliberate distortions of the original text. For example, I recommend you reconsider Romans 3:10-18. What doctrine is being falsely promoted here? If this doctrine is not true, what is? What understanding does the Tanakh instead promote? I leave this issue to your prayerful study and reflection.

In introducing the implications of these arguments I had earlier in this article spoken of some uniquely Christian doctrines; such as, doctrines of blood atonement and doctrines of exclusiveness.

Some of these doctrines, including 'Replacement Theology' seek, even if not intentionally, to separate the Church from its Jewish/Hebraic heritage. Often coupled with them are doctrines that argue for the abolition of the Torah and for a reduced role for repentance in the process of salvation.

Rather than go into any detail on these doctrines that may need revisiting, I wish to make just a couple of points and leave the rest to the believers own personal journey of seeking and discovering truth.

Firstly, a very valid and fundamental question is, what can we believe and what remains when we remove the distortions that can be identified?

My answer is a great deal! Firstly, the bedrock of our faith is surely to have the 'faith of Yeshua'[79], which was the faith of Abraham, and that is faith(fullness) or trust, in the God of Israel who is so clearly introduced to us through the Tanakh. Nothing written here in anyway reduces the centrality; the foundation; that is the Hebrew Scriptures, that Yeshua and the Apostle Paul knew and loved.

Secondly, there is very little in the way of questions or controversy over the words of Yeshua. Most significantly, Yeshua when asked what was required to inherit the Kingdom, answered *'obey the commandments'*. He also said that his

[79] See my article 'The Faith of Jesus' at http://www.circumcisedheart.info

brothers and sisters were those who '*do the will of the Father*'. Both John the Baptist and Yeshua said '*Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand*'.

Thus, repentance and obedience seem to be central to faithfulness. That is, if we are to put our trust in the Almighty as Yeshua and Abraham did, then we are called to turn back to Him and to live lives of obedience and submission to Him.

To conclude, below is a paraphrase of a quote from my article 'The Resurrection and Jewish Skepticism'[80]:

The use of the Septuagint, combined with the distortions that it's use appears to have facilitated, *" .. has led to an almost maniacal and unbelievable degree of anti-Semitism in the world and especially within many circles inside Christianity (the religion that purports to follow a Jewish Messiah).*

Further, this anti-Semitism lead mainstream Christianity to loose itself from its Hebraic roots …

The Hellenistic adoption and overthrow of Christianity has also led to a great many other beliefs that contradict the Tanakh such as the immortality of the soul. …

While the very poor witness of Christendom may not be well known to the world at large, to the Jewish world which knows its Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, and knows it in the original Hebrew language, the witness they see is not good.

They see a Christian world, which has in many ways distorted 'their' Scriptures as it has mistranslated them, or misused them in the New Testament and associated writings.

They see a witness which has much 'bad fruit' and so quite correctly and perhaps justifiably, reply to Christendom to look in the mirror as they quote Matthew 7:16-20, as well as Luke 13:6-9 and then John 15:2-16.

A most significant portion of John 15 is verse 10: ***"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."***

From a Biblical and Jewish perspective, Christianity has little idea of what Jesus meant here, or of how to live this truth 24/7."

80 Also at http://www.circumcisedheart.info

The Creator and King of the Universe[81] has revealed Himself through nature and through the Holy Bible. The Hebrew Scriptures are the lowest common denominator for both Judaism and Christianity, and the most fundamental and foundational written revelation of the Almighty to the world.

When the incredible and unique revelation of the resurrection of Yeshua, is added to this foundation, and properly understood and integrated, the result is a much more holistic and balanced worldview than most could possibly imagine.

The great and awesome Day of YHWH approaches. The incredible revelation of Isaiah 49 beckons![82] It is time to get our house in order; to be united in purpose and truth with our Jewish brothers so that we can speak the love and comfort of HaShem into this lost and hurting world.

81 '*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha- olam' – Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe!*

82 See *'Isaiah 49 – a Commentary*' at circumcisedheart.info

Chapter 6: Responding to further questions and criticisms

Hebrews 1:10

One of the objections that I have received to the original publishing of some of this material above was that Hebrews 1:10 is problematic unless the LXX version of Ps 102:25 is used (where Hebrews quotes from Ps 102).

Ps 110:3 was also raised as another example of a verse that was considered more appropriate in the LXX when it's Messianic nature was considered.

To best appreciate the argument regarding the LXX version of Ps 102 within the context of Hebrews 1, I would recommend reading Appendix 3 of Sir Anthony Buzzard's excellent book 'Jesus was Not a Trinitarian'.

Hebrews 1:8-14 reads as below:

"But of the Son he says, *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." (quoting Ps 45:6-7)*

And

"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." (Quoting Ps 102:25-27)

And to which of the angels has he ever said, *"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (quoting Ps 110:1)* Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?"

In this segment of Hebrews 1 we see three significant Messianic references. The phrase 'But of the Son he says' clearly indicates that the author of Hebrews is referring to the Tanakh (to Scripture) and when we look for these three references we see the author is referring to verses from Psalms 45, 102 & 110, which he argues declare the role of Yeshua as the Son of God and Messianic King.

In quoting these verses, it is important to appreciate that the writer in typical Hebraic style is not just alluding to the verses quoted, though they carry the most significant information but to the immediate context of those verses (and in the case of Psalm 110 especially, most likely the whole Psalm).

When the originals readers and listeners heard these quotes from a Psalm, they would have been drawn to reflect on the whole Psalm (For example, you can see Yeshua expects his listeners to know the whole of Psalm 8 when he quotes only half of Ps 8:2 – see Matt 21:16.).

It is also important to appreciate that in the first instance, none of these Psalms were necessarily seen as Messianic but were written for a specific occasion.

For example, Psalm 45 was written in the first instance for the marriage of a King of Israel (most likely Jehu). It was only later added to, and seen as a Messianic prophecy.

Below are some excerpts from commentary on Ps 45 and Ps 102 in *'A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Book Of Psalms'* By Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D., D.Litt. Professor Of Theological Encyclopædia And Symbolics Union Theological Seminary, New York And Emilie Grace Briggs, B.D. (1906):
"Ps. 45 is a song celebrating the marriage of Jehu. The king is the fairest of men (v.3a. b). He is a warrior who rides forth in his chariot and pierces the heart of his enemies with his arrows (v.4–6). He embodies all precious ointments in himself. He and his queen at his right hand are royally arrayed (v.8c–10). She is urged to forget her people, and in her beauty be satisfied with her godlike lord and the homage of the people (v.11–13)…

Glosses set forth the perpetuity of the throne of God and His sceptre of righteousness (v.7–8a), and wish the king a goodly posterity of kings (v.17–18a). …

Messianic significance was given to the Ps. because of v.7–8a, which, when applied to the king, ascribes to him godlike qualities, such as the Messiah alone was supposed to possess. But this gloss was later than the Ps., and its Messianic interpretation later still."

Similarly for Psalm 102. Quoting Briggs:
"Ps. 102 is composite: (A) A prayer of afflicted Israel, beseeching Yahweh to answer in a day of distress (v.2–3); the peril is so great that he is about to perish (v.4–6); he is desolate and reproached by enemies (v.7–9). It is his greatest grief that he has been cast off by his God (v.10–12). (*B*) **expresses confidence that the time has come when the everlasting King will have compassion on Zion and build her up from her ruins, and that all nations will see His glory and revere Him** (v.13–18).

The story will be told to all generations of His interposition for the salvation of His people, that His praise may be forever celebrated in Jerusalem, where all nations will eventually gather to serve Him (v.19–23. 29).

Glosses reassert the seriousness of the situation (v.24–25*a*), and contrast the everlasting creator with the perishable creature (25*b*–28)… Zion has been destroyed by the enemy; her buildings are in ruins, mere stones and dust; and yet these are precious to the servants of Yahweh, because they are the remains of the holy city of the divine presence and worship.

(In verse 16 - *the nations the kings of earth – we see*) **the restoration of Zion will have universal significance to the nations and especially to their kings; and the result of it will be that they *will revere Thy name Thy glory*], (and) take part in the worship of the God of Israel**…

Two different glossators made insertions; the former v.24–25*a* from Is. 38:10, the so-called song of Hezekiah: *He hath brought down my strength in the way; He hath shortened my days. I say: O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days*]. These two pentameter lines are more in accord with the plaintive tone of the original Ps. than with the calm assurance of the later Maccabean Ps. in which it inserted. It was probably designed to assimilate them.

The later glossator inserted the octastich v.25*b*–28, doubtless a fragment of a choice Ps. which has been lost."

When we then consider the actual text quoted, which perhaps to the casual reader may appear to attribute God-like qualities to the Son, we can be in no doubt that the verses in Hebrews are describing both the attributes of the Messiah and some aspects of the coming Messianic Age.

Thus, the reference to the 'foundation of the earth' is not informing us that the Messiah somehow 'pre-existed' his birth and took the job of creation off the Almighty, but that he is in a sense responsible for the new creation, the new Universe where he is the 'first fruits'; the new 'Adam'.

Thus the insertion of the word Lord ('kurie'/kyrios in the LXX) in Ps 102:25 is an unnecessary addition and does not confer any preference or priority to the LXX.

As for Psalm 110:3, to argue here for the LXX over the Hebrew is clearly unwise for two main reasons.

Firstly, as explained above, the Messianic context means that the distinction between the two versions (as underlined below) is really insignificant.

Ps 110:3 (LXX): *"With thee is dominion in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints: **I have begotten thee from the womb** before the morning."*

Tanakh (JPS): *"Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy warfare; **In adornments of holiness, from the womb of the dawn**, Thine is the dew of thy youth."*

While the LXX version above may seem to give more Messianic detail, the whole Psalm, in either reading is strongly Messianic regardless. So again, any preference for the LXX here is really superficial.

The second reason is much more significant and that is the problem of the two Lords in Ps 110:1. The Hebrew here, clearly distinguishes between the Almighty and His Lord, whereas the Greek does not (for example, Brenton's translation of the LXX has *'The Lord said to my Lord, …').*

Thus, these two examples really do not confer any priority to the LXX over the Hebrew.

Below are some more comments in response to some issues and questions raised by those who believe the Greek NT is the original and inspired version:

Some of these LXX supporters argue that the NT authors were *"not simply parroting Old Testament passages."*

If we had no evidence to the contrary then this would be a reasonable assumption and probably a valid statement. However, it needs to be recognized that this is an assumption based on the supposition that the NT has we have it, despite its many varied translations, is an accurate transmission of the original authors intentions.

Thus, any argument that starts with its conclusion as a pre-supposition is invalid. Such as argument would also need to provide evidence that this statement or understanding is the best possible understanding of the circumstances and facts. While the evidence may once have appeared to support this assumption, today there is a great deal of evidence for alternative understandings, such as the one I am arguing for.

In this article I believe, I have already presented a great deal of evidence to show that the statement above by LXX supporters is not a valid conclusion from the best evidence available today. Below I will offer some further evidence.

LXX Supporter:
*"Regarding NT usage of the Septuagint (LXX), and sticking with examples from Hebrews; it seems some do not appreciate or comprehend that the author of Hebrews (and other NT authors) was not simply parroting Old Testament passages. Rather he used them to support whatever theological point(s) he was presenting in a given passage and selected which OT verse(s) to use accordingly. Thus, for example, in Hebrews 10:5 the author quoted the LXX version of Psalm 40:6-8 ("but a **body** you prepared for me") rather than the Hebrew or MT ("you pierced ears for me"). This was partly due to a theological point the author wished to make in verse 10 ("By which will we have been made holy through the offering of the **body** of Jesus Christ once for all"). Not unrelated to this selection of the Greek version of Psalm 40:6-8 was that biblical Hebrew had no word that precisely corresponded to the Greek sōma or "body.""*

My response:
This is one of the most clear cut examples of LXX supporters error.

Consider the immediate context of Hebrews 10:5-7 here:
Therefore when he comes into the world, he says "Sacrifice and offering you didn't desire, but you prepared a body for me; You had no pleasure in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God.'" (ESV)

When we look at the context we see the argument that sacrifices alone do not bring salvation (this of course is clear in a great many passages from Lev 17 to Psalm 51, etc.), and yet the very insertion from the LXX being argued for here is arguing for this very thing! The LXX version is arguing that the Almighty did not want a sacrifice but He prepared one anyway!

To put it most simply this LXX version states here that "*God does not want 'A' but He prepared 'A'*" (The 'body' here being a reference to the sacrifice of Yeshua)!

Instead consider the alternative, the MT version of Psalm 40 which has 'my ears you have opened'. This verse and phrase is understood to be one of the most crucial by Judaism and yet LXX supporters believe it warrants redacting!

Judaism understands the incredible importance of this verse[83]. Listening to God ('lishmoa') is one of the most important aspects of our lives and our relationship with HaShem. He is speaking to us every second of the day. The challenge is to listen. While this is clear in the Sh'ma which begins with 'Hear O'Israel' it is most powerfully expressed in Ps 40:7 where God simply states: ***"I don't need your fat, I don't need your sacrifices, what I need is your listening ear."***

Now put this crucial truth back into Hebrews and we have the author of Hebrews informing us that Yeshua quoted this Psalm and added some explanation to it.

Essentially Yeshua said: *"My Father doesn't want my fat, my Father doesn't need my sacrifices, what He needs is my listening ear." So I say: 'Behold, I have come (in the Tanach it is written of me) to do your will, O God.'"(- that is, I am listening Father and as a consequence I will obey!)*

This vital truth revealed in Ps 40 is accepted and adopted by Yeshua, yet many think that he rejected Torah by changing it, even when he said he would not change one yod or stroke! (Matt 5:17-18)

It is true that subsequent verses of Hebrews appear to change the context to suggest that a single sacrifice can bring salvation to all, but the sum total of the Tanach and the NT illustrate that this is not so.

This is a complex and nuanced topic that to deal with in any depth would, I think, distract from the objective of this book.

I would like to highlight in passing though, that there is a sense in which one person can bring atonement to others.

In ***'The Way of God'*** by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, (translated by the great Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan), we read:
*"The greatest of all tzaddikim is the "**completed tzaddik**"[84].*
Such a person is a perfected human who has completely overcome the power of temptation. This makes them truly perfect – sinless – and therefore "one" with God.

---

83 A good introduction is found in Moshe Avraham Kempinski's 'The Heart of a People' on p30-33.

84 *"The Hebrew term "tzaddik" (tzah-deek) is roughly translated as a "righteous person"; however, "righteous" doesn't really capture the depth of meaning. It is used to refer to those who stand before G-d as being much holier than their contemporaries. … The tzaddik is a person who possesses an elevated soul – a soul of superior purity that is only slightly tainted by the stain of sin or not tainted at all." – see this 'Vicarious Atonement' article at TorahOfMessiah.org for some detail on this - http://torahofmessiah.org/is-atonement-a-christian-or-jewish-concept-part-1/*

… By virtue of the power of a tzaddik to transfer or share merit, it is possible for a tzaddik to bring about protection for others or atonement for their sins.

… "Beyond that, the merit and power of these tzaddikim is also increased because of such suffering, and this gives them even greater ability to rectify the damage of others. They can therefore not only rectify their own generation, but can also correct all the spiritual damage done from the beginning, from the time of the very first sinners."

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto is stating that the perfect tzaddik can atone all the way back to Adam! This may sound similar to what another great Rabbi stated some 2000 years ago:

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (CJB)
"18 And it is all from God, who through the Messiah has reconciled us to himself and has given us the work of that reconciliation,
19 which is that God in the Messiah was reconciling mankind to himself, not counting their sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

And we also read something very similar in 1 John.

1 John 2:2 (CJB)
"2 Also, he is the kapparah ("means of atonement") for our sins — and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world."

I recently came across a most informative blog post on this issue by a Dr Eric Jobe (also referred to in other sections of this book). Here is a little of what he wrote in confirming my argument after some extensive textual research that he undertook:
"The issue concerns the following variant:

Ps 40:7 (6 ET) zeḇaḥ ūminḥā lōʾ ḥāpaṣtā ***ʾoznayim kārīṯa*** lī
*'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire. (My) **ears** you have **bored** for me.'*

*Hebrews 10:5 θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας. **σῶμα** δὲ **κατηρτίσω** μοι.*
*'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a **body** you **prepared** for me.'*

*LXX (*per *Rahlfs & Göttingen) θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας. **ὠτία** δὲ **κατηρτίσω** μοι.*
*'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but **ears** you **prepared** for me.'*

… further research indicated that manuscript G of the Old Latin and the Gallican Latin Psalter read aures *suggesting that ὠτία "ears" was in fact the original LXX reading. Additionally, the Greek translations of Aquilla, Symmachus, Theodotion, Quinta, and Origen's transliteration of the Hebrew confirm that "ears" was the original reading in Hebrew.*

Furthermore, a reading of ὠτία or the classical ὦτα "ears" is found in several patristic sources, including Irenaeus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Diodorus of Tarsus.

All of this lead Rahlfs (and the Göttingen editors thereafter) to conclude that ὠτία "ears" must have been the original LXX, this in spite of the fact that not one manuscript contains it.

*… **This is an excellent example of a significant variant in the LXX, where the Hebrew is undoubtedly original (as confirmed by the Syriac Peshitta, the numerous other Greek versions, as well as attempts to correct the LXX)**, …"*[85]

LXX Supporter:
"Underlying much of this discussion is a fundamental difference in how one interprets the NT. In the NT the primary interpretive key for understanding all that God has done in the past is Jesus Christ, especially in light of his death and resurrection. In Jesus God's "mystery" previously hidden is now revealed. These things "were written down for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." Related to this is the theme of fulfillment. God's past revelation was partial, incomplete, promissory, revealed in types and shadows; but the substance, the fulfillment has now come in the person of Jesus Christ (e.g., Hebrews 1:1-2, 8:5, 10:1, John 1:14-18, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Colossians 2:17, 1Peter 1:10-122). "The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came to be through Jesus Christ." The authors of the NT read the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus Christ, not vice versa, though it appears that some today are attempting to interpret Jesus through the lens of the Torah."

My response:
This brings me to what is perhaps the greatest error that LXX Supporters are making and that really astounds me. This comment, whether intended or not displays a Trinitarian mindset!

---

85 http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/departinghoreb/psalm-406-and-hebrews-105-the-curious-history-of-a-textual-variant/

To say that the Tanakh and NT needs to be read through the lens (or 'primary interpretative key') of 'Jesus Christ', is not only back to front, it is making Yeshua the Messiah out to be God Almighty Himself!

This is not what Yeshua said.

Every time people tried to lift him up and point to him as the ultimate he pointed to his Father, to HaShem. In many places he states that he only speaks and does what the Father tells him (in fulfillment of Deut 18). He always took the focus off himself and pointed to God. As the Almighty's perfect agent, this was always his intention.

In my opinion, he would be appalled that anyone who purports to be his followers would try to make him out to be the Ultimate, to be God. He is certainly God's ultimate messenger but when challenged he always said 'It is written' (referring to the Tanach as the ultimate Word of God). The Apostle Paul did the same when he stated in 2 Tim 3:16 that "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"*. Paul was also clearly referring to the Tanakh.

LXX Supporter:
"Likewise in Hebrews 1:7, in order to emphasize the point that angels are servants and therefore inferior to the Son, the author quoted Psalm 104:4 from the LXX where the subjects and predicates were reversed. Thus the LXX reads, "Who makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire," whereas the M.T. reads, "who makes the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.""

My Response:
Again, the Greek leads to confusion. The Hebrew makes it clear that 'messengers' of God are being referred to. In this context, the wind and fire (for example with Elijah on Mt Carmel) can be 'messengers' of God, as can be human beings and the 'host of heaven'.

But the reference in Ps 104 is clearly to the wind and fire as the sentences both before and after are referring to creation, to nature and not to man. The LXX can be understood to mean the same thing, but again, the change appears to be a deliberate attempt to distort the message or to misapply it.

The use of the Hebrew or Masoretic text of Ps 104:4 would not really have reduced the impact and truth with regards the authority of the Son.

LXX Supporter:
"*Those who claim the NT was originally composed in Hebrew need to explain how a Hebrew original could produce a document like the Epistle to the Hebrews (and others), a letter that displays the author's great skill not only in Greek but also proficiency in the ancient art of rhetoric, beginning with the letter's first sentence in 1:1-4. There the author lays out key themes of the letter using literary devices like alliteration (e.g., **polu**merōs kai **polu**tropōs **p**alai ho theos lalésa tois **p**atrasin en tois **p**rophétais), opens with compound adverbs for which there are no equivalents in Hebrew (polumerōs, polutropōs – "many parts," "many ways"), presents key themes through a series of subordinate clauses (whereas Hebrew is highly paratactical [parataxis]), uses several compound substantives (other than in proper names Hebrew does not lend itself easily to the formation of compound substantives, verbs and so on), etc. Put another way, if the Epistle to the Hebrews was originally composed in Hebrew what we have today is not simply a translation into Greek but a major if not complete rewrite of the original."*

My Response:
As for the fancy Greek alliteration referred to, I am not a Greek reader, let alone a scholar of Greek, so I will take your word for the presence of such alliteration.

I don't see this though as any more than the effort of some skilled translators and commentators (many Rabbi's argue that all translations are commentary – they are referring to the Tanakh, though this statement applies even more to the NT), and I don't question that implication that what we now have with respect to Hebrews appears to be a major rewrite.

LXX Supporter:
"Jesus warned against pouring new wine into old wine-skins. Attempts to domesticate the Christ of scripture by pouring the new wine of the Spirit into the old wine-skins of Second Temple Judaism are doomed to fail. If they do not burst the old skins the sweet wine of the Spirit will be turned into the vinegar of the death-dealing letter of the Law (2 Corinthians 3:6). Likewise Jesus spoke of the scribe "instructed in the kingdom of the heavens, who is like a householder that produced from his treasure things new and old." There is both continuity and discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New."

My Response re new wineskins:
Again, this is an incorrect application of this saying/parable of Yeshua. Sadly, this is possibly another expected response by scholars who have failed to recognize their 'Replacement Theology' mindset.

This traditional interpretation of the parable about the wine and the wineskins, (Luke 5:37-39), was first proposed by the seriously anti-Semitic Marcion in his successful efforts to separate Christianity from Judaism[86]. Perhaps a reread of Luke 5:39 might at least raise enough of a question to invite a reconsideration on this?

This quote of Yeshua is in fact best interpreted as stating that it is better that the disciples feast when Jesus is with them than that they mourn when he is not, and as an invitation to the Pharisees to join them[87].

The Gentile Luke:
Here is another argument against my thesis regarding Luke:
I am convinced that Dr Luke's two tomes would nearly certainly have been penned in Greek.

After all, he states he writes to "the most excellent Theophilus" whom we believe was a reasonably high Roman official. The description of "most excellent" is used by Luke to refer to Roman officials (cp Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25).

Of course, the name Theophilus was apparently not uncommon in both Jewish and Gentile circles. He may well have been of Hebrew extraction, yes. Luke would almost certainly have known Hebrew to some degree. But being himself a Gentile, and the companion of Paul, and probably even Paul's scribe for many epistles, I think on balance the likelihood tips in favour of him writing in Greek."

My response:
Despite Luke's Gentile background, Prof. Flusser makes a very strong case in his books for Luke and the Book of Acts to have been written in Hebrew.

The Book of Acts is an action document. It describes the actions of the disciples and Apostles after the resurrection. It speaks about many specific Jewish events and Holy Days. It informs us of the travels and ministry of the Jewish followers of Yeshua and how they reached out to Gentiles, primarily through Jewish agencies and institutions.

---

86 I would recommend a reading of Frank Selch's book on Replacement Theology – available from Amazon.com

87 See my article 'The Wineskins Parable' - http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Wineskins.pdf. I would also recommend reading 'The Old is Better: Parables of Patched Garment and Wineskins as Elaboration of a Chreia in Luke 5:33-39 about Feasting with Jesus.' By Anders Eriksson - http://www.ars-rhetorica.net/Queen/VolumeSpecialIssue2/Articles/Eriksson.pdf

So while it, perhaps more than any other book describes how we (all the faithful) should be living, it is primarily addressed to and through the Jews.

And yes, while Theophilus is generally thought to be a Greek name, as it has the meaning of a 'friend of God', Theophilus may well have been a Jewish convert like we believe Luke was.

Or alternatively, he may have been Theophilus ben Ananus who was High Priest in Jerusalem in A.D. 37-41. He was the son of Annas and the brother–in-law of Caiaphus.

Theophilus could even refer to a later High Priest named Mattathias ben Theophilus, who served in Jerusalem in A.D. 65-66. So the addressing of this 'letter' to one Theophilus does not really offer any convincing evidence that it would necessarily have been written in Greek. Rather, given that most scholars accept a date of composition of around 57-62 CE, and this was clearly still in the early years of Gentile inclusion in the community of the followers of Yeshua (remembering that the Gentile outreach only really started in earnest around 45 CE with the Cornelius House event), and given the very Jewish event markers throughout the book, a Hebraic or perhaps Aramaic autograph still seems a more plausible reality (especially when combined with all the other evidence provided earlier in this book).

The Future:

May I suggest we all consider the future. We read in Zephaniah 3:9 that *"For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon Adonai, to serve Him with one consent."*

What will this language be? Greek? No. It will most likely be Hebrew (it could be a totally new language though there appears no strong evidence for this). The Almighty's Name is Hebrew; when He wrote with His own hand it was in Hebrew; the Tanakh was written almost totally in Hebrew (and there are very good reasons for the few portions which were written in Aramaic); when Yeshua spoke from His right hand in Heaven he spoke in Hebrew. The Almighty's Hebrew Name is even written into the hills of Shiloh where the Tabernacle stood for 369 years.

I believe I have given some very good reasons as to why the NT was almost certainly written in Hebrew. This consistency with its past and the future is rational and reasonable. The latest archeological supports this contention.

LXX Supporter:

"At the end of the day a key problem remains: whether there ever was a Hebrew original of the NT, no copies of its text exist. Any attempt to reconstruct the "original" Hebrew text will be based on conjecture. Attempts to recover it by translating the Greek NT "back" into Hebrew are fraught with problems. "

My Response:

It is true that at this time we know of no original copies of the autographs in Hebrew (or Aramaic). While there are a number of possible reasons for this it is important to weigh the importance of this omission.

There are also no copies of the 'original' Greek autographs either. While we have fragments perhaps from as early as 125 CE , we also have the Syrian Peshitta from sometime earlier than 160- 180 CE, and the Khabouris Manuscript (Aramaic) is quite possibly just as early (estimated at around 165 CE).

When it comes to the real issue here of what language the quotations of the Tanakh were originally from we have very good evidence, even buried in the later Greek translations as I have previously outlined.

Above it is argued that *"… Attempts to recover it by translating the Greek NT "back" into Hebrew are fraught with problems*.". This is simply not so and has been most amply demonstrated by the late Professor David Flusser and many others. I would highly recommend reading some of Flusser's books, especially his book 'Jesus'.

LXX Supporter:

"You make a lot of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the community at Qumran and how this brings convincing evidence for the priority of the Hebrew. One would think it rather obvious that the Qumran community, in having rejected the Messiah and in seeking to promote the traditional faith of Israel would indeed give priority to the Hebrew Scriptures. Did not this sectarian group view itself as the true custodians of Israel? It would be rather surprising if they did not give us this evidence, would it not?

You also fail to mention that at Qumran a second nearly complete Isaiah scroll has been found which actually contains many textual variants from the complete Great Isaiah Scroll, and that other fragmentary Hebrew MSS contain texts that appear closer to the Hebrew text underlying the LXX, as well as some that are closer to the text of the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch. I think you should exercise much more caution before drawing such broad brush strokes from such sectarian, fragmentary and partial evidence."

My Response:
May I suggest an excellent introduction to the DSS's by Frank Moore Cross *'The Text behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible'* or even better the book *'Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls'* edited by Hershel Shanks.

While all the evidence is not yet in from these great finds, there has been an awful lot learned already. I will try and summarise some of this in terms of how it impacts our discussion and the question above regarding variant readings of Isaiah.

Firstly, when speaking of the DSS we are not just talking about the Qumran caves (Essenes) but most critically also the Wadi Murabba'at; the Nabal Hever and the Nabal Se'elim finds. Also critical are the finds from the Wadi ed-Daliyeh, north of Jericho (1962) and from Masada (63-64). The DSS have given scholars an enormous amount of information about the early transmission of biblical books; about the fixation of the text (canon) and about the procedures for how the canon of the Tanakh came into being. Prior to these finds there had been little detailed information about how the Rabbinical Recession (Masoretic Text - MT) as used in Jerome's day had come into being.

What has emerged is that there are really three distinct major groups of texts. Using Cross's naming these are the 'Palestinian' group (mostly from the Essenes/Qumran), the Egyptian group (LXX, Greek versions of Samuel; Kings, a short Hebrew version of Jeremiah, etc) and the 'Babylonian' group.

It is the Babylonian group that appears to have been the work of Hillel and his son and disciples. This text group canonized the Tanakh some time between the 2 revolts of 70 and 135 CE and it is from this group that the Rabbinic Recession has derived.

This group is very conservative, 'pristine' and shows little scribal editing, revision or modernizing. Most of the documents come from the southern caves and at Masada. This is where the authorative Pharisaic text (the proto-Masoretic text type) came from; the text that Yeshua would have used as he was in all likelihood a Pharisee or very sympathetic to their Biblical understanding (again, see Flusser for extensive evidence of this).

*'In fact, most of the biblical manuscripts at Qumran indicate that the proto-Masoretic text type in fact predominated. … **It is likely that this text type was the most common because it was the most ancient**.'*[88]

88 'Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls' – Shanks p48

The Essenes (Qumran) with their clear Hellenistic influences have provided a lot of helpful texts and information, and the variants such as the Isaiah variants, are generally attributable to their work.

When all these finds are put together, they form a far from 'partial and fragmentary' picture, but instead provide great evidence for the authority of the MT.

I hope this short summary can help address this concern about the Isaiah variants. In conclusion, I find these arguments lacking in evidence and factual clarity.

Given that the hour appears late, we may all soon see where the truth lies when our Jewish Messiah returns to his brethren and to all those grafted into the cultivated Olive Tree.

> *Jeremiah 16: 14-15, "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them. For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.*
>
> *Jeremiah 16: 19-21: O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit. Can man make for himself gods? Such are not gods! Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the LORD.*

LXX Supporter:
"… As we continue our investigation into the career of Nimrod, we will find that the Septuagint (lxx) version of the Old Testament, despite its idiosyncrasies, is actually indispensable to our research and reveals many mysteries that have been (purposefully?) written out of the Masoretic text."
– Peter Goodgame in *'The Second Coming of the Antichrist'*[89]

My Response:
In presenting this conclusion, Goodgame quotes extensively from an article by the Young Earth Creationist (YEC), Barry Setterfield who argues that the LXX dates

89 http://www.redmoonrising.com/Antichristbook.pdf

and ages in the Genesis 5 and 11 chronologies are much more reliable (if you read the article by Setterfield and the quotes you may note that Setterfield does not understand what the word *'vorlage'* actually means).

Prof WH Green[90] did a great analysis of these chronologies and stated in part:
As is well known, the texts of the Septuagint and of the Samaritan Pentateuch vary systematically from the Hebrew in both the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. … Some have been disposed in this state of the case to adopt the chronology drawn from the Septuagint, as affording here the needed relief. But the superior accuracy of the Hebrew text in this instance, as well as generally elsewhere, can be incontrovertibly established. ***This resource [the LXX], then, is a broken reed.***

… A simple glance at these numbers is sufficient to show that the Hebrew is the original, from which the others [the LXX and the Samaritan Pentatuch] diverge on the one side or the other, according to the principle which they have severally adopted.

It likewise creates a strong presumption that the object contemplated in these changes was to make the lives more symmetrical, rather than to effect an alteration in the chronology."

To further address this misunderstanding, I strongly recommend reading Dr Eric Jobe's great article which I will extensively quote from here:
"To begin with, let's look at what the so-called Masoretic text actually is.

To speak about the Masoretic text, we are referring to a particularly important point in the transmission history of the Hebrew Bible. For centuries, the Hebrew Bible had been continuously hand-copied by Jewish scribes with the utmost meticulousness and care requiring professionalism which is beyond imagination. It ultimately fell to specially trained scribal schools to do this monumental task, and one of these schools was known as the Masoretes or the בעל המסורה baʿălē ham-massōrā, *"the masters of transmission." In fact, the noun* המסורת massōrā, *from which we get the word Masorete, means something like "transmission" or even "tradition."*

Perhaps the most important thing to realize is that these men were operating within a very strict scribal tradition, perhaps the strictest tradition the world has ever seen.

The Masoretes themselves were comprised of scribes from the 6th-10th centuries

[90] http://circumcisedheart.info/Christian%20site/Are%20There%20Gaps%20in%20the%20Biblical%20Genealogies.doc

CE, which culminated in two family lineages, the ben Asher family and the ben Naphtali family, who produced more or less standardized Hebrew texts. While the received Masoretic text in use today does not follow either one or the other completely, they nevertheless comprised the foundation of what would become the standard Hebrew Bible.

What made this standardization possible were two things:
(1) The Masoretes invented a system of vocalization, punctuation, and cantillation marks for the consonantal Hebrew text. Like Arabic, Hebrew has always been written without vowels, so that the earliest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, those found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (more on that later), are without vowels. This inevitably leads to ambiguities and uncertainties when reading the text, as a particular consonantal word can be read in a variety of ways depending on where one might place the vowels. The Masoretes invented a system of vocalization, known today as the Tiberian system of vocalization, which followed with extreme exactitude the pronunciation of Hebrew that they had received in their tradition.

This system of vocalization was incredibly precise, noting, for example the difference between a short vowel /a/, a long vowel /a/, and the half short vowel /ă/, and the half short vowel /ă/. Vowels were indicated using a system of dots, bars, and other marks placed around the consonants known as niqqūd *"pointing."*

In addition, this system of pointing indicated an elaborate scheme of punctuation as well as a system for noting cantillation for chanting the text in the synagogue.

*(2) The Masoretes kept meticulous notes about the Hebrew text in the margins of the manuscripts. There are two of these margins, the large and the small, known respectively as the*Masorah Magna *and the* Masorah Parva. *These margins noted, for example the number of times a particular word occurred* in the entire Hebrew Bible. *For example, if a word occurred only once in the Hebrew Bible, the Masoretes would place a circle over the word and note in the margin* ל֒*, which is an Aramaic abbreviation for* תיא אל *or* תיל lā ʾīṯ *or* lēṯ *meaning "there is not (any more of this word)."*

Also, the Masoretes even kept track of the number of words and letters in a particular book. At the end of a book or a large section, they would note, for example, הששו מישמחו תואמ הנומשו ךלא העבשו העשת הרות לש תוביתה סוכס *"The sum of the words in the Torah is 97,856," or* תואמ העברא הרות לש תויתואה סוכס *"The sum of the letters in the Torah is 400,945." This system of accounting assured that not "one jot or tiddle" would be left out.*

So the Masoretes were only one link in the chain of a long tradition of the

transmission of the Hebrew Bible. They themselves did not change the consonantal text, but only noted it and described it with the kind of precision that we would normally associate with computers.

As such, the so-called Masoretic Text existed long before the Masoretes, going back as far as the Dead Sea Scrolls, a text we will call the Proto-Masoretic Text.

Multiple Recensions:
The Dead Sea Scrolls serve for us as a snapshot in time of the Hebrew Bible. From the myriad of biblical manuscripts discovered among the Scrolls in the caves surrounding Khirbet Qumran, we find that there was not just one type of Hebrew Bible in circulation from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE, but there were in fact several.

This is a basic fact that we have to deal with – there is not just one *Hebrew Bible, nor is there just* one *Greek Bible. There were several of each, all circulating at the same time, and they competed with one another among various Jewish sects.*

The Proto-Masoretic text was just one of these recensions *of the Hebrew Bible, and the Hebrew text that became the basis for the Greek Septuagint was another. Let's explore this idea a little further.*

We might have the rather simplistic idea that each book of the Hebrew Bible came in to existence at one time, and that each book existed as a complete whole from the time of its composition. Unfortunately, this is just not the case, for we have ample evidence that biblical books circulated in more or less a state of flux. For example, we have copies of the Psalter from Cave 11 at Qumran that show a very different order than either the Masoretic or Septuagint Psalters and include non-canonical psalms, the so called Psalms 152-155, which were only known previously from the Syriac tradition. The Book of Jeremiah was written down at various times.

A core section of the book, chapters 1-25, comprising the early prophetic oracles of Jeremiah, was composed then destroyed (Jer. 36). Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, re-wrote that section as well as additional material, including the Oracles against the Nations, which is variously placed at the end of the book in the Masoretic text, but after chapter 25 in the Septuagint. The Septuagint edition is also about 1/8 shorter, indicating that some of the Jeremiah material had not been included in that recension. The multiplicity in versions of a particular book show that the state of the book was in flux, but it is difficult to determine which is earlier or "more original."

One might think that the Proto-Septuagint version of Jeremiah was an earlier or more original text, but this is not necessarily the case.

The Masoretic "additions" could have circulated independently for some time concurrent with the Proto-Septuagint text.

In other words, these additions could be just as ancient as the Proto-Septuagint text itself, but because of the lack of manuscript evidence, we cannot know for sure. In fact, it becomes apparent that the very notion of an "original" text does not exist, because it is impossible to point to any particular point in the development of a book and say that it is "original."

There were other recensions in addition to the Proto-Masoretic and Proto-Septuagint texts, such as the Proto-Samaritan Pentateuch, and a text unique to the cache of manuscripts found in the caves surrounding Qumran.

Emanuel Tov summarizes the contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls biblical manuscripts with the following percentage breakdown:
Qumran-specific texts – 20%; Proto-Masoretic texts – 35%; Proto-Samaritan texts – 5%;
Proto-Septuagint texts – 5%; Non-Aligned texts – 35%

This breakdown notes texts that specifically show some variation toward one or another recension. If there is no distinction, a text falls into the non-aligned category.

As you can see, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Proto-Masoretic text was by far the most popular aligned text, accounting for some 35% of manuscripts. Proto-Septuagint texts account for only 5%.

It's apparent from this picture that, at least in Palestine [Israel], the Proto-Masoretic text was gaining superiority, even among sectarian groups, and eventually it won out over the others within the post-70 CE Jewish community.

…. While the Masoretic text itself represents the culmination of a tradition of textual transmission in the Middle Ages, the text itself is much older, going back to the time of the Second Temple. In this respect, ***it is very likely that Our Lord[91] would have known and used the Proto-Masoretic text.***

91 He is referring to Yeshua

*(3) The Masoretic text was meticulously kept, literally down to the letter**. Along with the antiquity of the Proto-Masoretic text, it is wrong to claim that the Jews changed the text of their Bible in order to obscure certain Messianic prophecies. Such an accusation is libelous, since there is absolutely no evidence for it.***

In fact, as I will demonstrate in a subsequent post, there are instances where the Septuagint itself obscures Messianic prophecy!

Most of the distinctive readings found in the Masoretic text were introduced long before the Masoretes took stylus to parchment, even being found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. … The preference for the Septuagint in the Orthodox Church cannot be said to be on account of the poor state of the Masoretic text or that the Septuagint is always or even the majority of the time an earlier or more original text. This simply cannot be demonstrated from the facts.

… The LXX/OG never satisfied Palestinian Jews, who were all too aware of its differences in comparison to the Hebrew text, most notably the proto-Masoretic text, which had become the most popular and commonly used text in Palestine.

***As we know from manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls around Khirbet Qumran and other locations in the Judaean desert, the LXX/OG began to be corrected toward a text similar to the proto-MT almost immediately.** In particular, the Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever shows an OG text systematically corrected toward a Hebrew text."*[92]

- Dr Eric Jobe Ph.D. (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), University of Chicago.

The Foundational Tanakh:

The Tanakh can not be contradicted by the New Testament. Expanded, explained, revealed, enriched but not contradicted.

If we allow contradictions, then the Almighty is subject to change though He said '*I change not*' (Malachi 3:6), and He is then a liar and no different to Allah, the moon god, the god of Islam!

Thus if there is some text in the NT that contradicts the Tanakh, or at least, our interpretation of it, is contradictory, then we need to either reassess our interpretation or identify this text as a corruption (if we agree that the original autographs of the NT were in perfect accord with the Tanakh).

92 https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/departinghoreb/masoretic-hebrew-vs-septuagint-part-1/

I submit that the common understanding and interpretation of Hebrews 10:5 is contradictory to the Tanakh, as it implies that sacrifices alone can bring atonement (as opposed to a sacrifice being a loving act of a repentant and obedient heart) and further that the sacrifice of Yeshua's body of the cross has brought atonement and salvation for all who call upon his name.

I also contend that it is a prior acceptance of the 'blood atonement sacrifice' doctrine that leads many to misread and misinterpret Hebrews 10:5.

I also contend that, even the LXX version of Ps 40:7 quoted here (Ps 39:7 in the LXX) may be being interpreted incorrectly.

That is, while I believe the Hebrew version would have originally been used here, even the LXX version, if read with a doctrinally valid mindset, is possibly still acceptable and true to the Tanakh (though some of what is then implied is not).

Firstly, to further put my case here I would like to accentuate the role or lack thereof, of the LXX in the times and lives of the NT authors.

Firstly, it is important to recognize that Yeshua, and his disciples and apostles were:

1) not Essenes (though John the Baptist may once have been one and Yeshua was clearly very aware of their existence and teachings) – Yeshua certainly rejected their (Hellenistic) asceticism, as did the Apostle Paul;
2) essentially Pharisaic in their doctrines. That is, they accepted the veracity and authority of the Tanakh for teaching, training and good works (2 Tim 3:16).

In this regard I have previously commented on the recent scholarship and revelation that we have gained from the DSS's (and not just the Qumran Cave scrolls).

To further highlight the implications I wish to re-enforce here, we read in *'The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English'* (2004) and translated by Geza Vermes:

> - *"most scrolls are written in Hebrew, a smaller portion in Aramaic and only a few attest the ancient Greek or LXX version of the Bible"* (p 10/11)

- *"… Hebrew scriptural manuscripts … are remarkable for their general conformity …" – compared to the fluidity of the translations into Greek, Latin or Syriac.* – [even] *'extreme fluidity'.* (p 11)

That is, from these amazing finds and a great deal of study, we now know that **only** amongst the Essenes scrolls do we find any Greek or LXX scrolls and even then only small fragments.

Only amongst the Essenes do we find significant changes, both editorial and perhaps unintentional. Amongst all the other 'DSS' finds that date to the first century CE and earlier, we find a strong conformity to the earliest Hebrew manuscripts.

The evidence then is that Yeshua and the NT authors would not have trusted the Greek, that is the Septuagint (LXX)!

Therefore, even if some of the NT books as we have them today, were originally penned in Greek, it still seems most unlikely that the authors would have utilised the LXX at all widely, if at all.

Given this information, let us consider the understanding of Ps 40:7-9 in its original context in the Hebrew Scriptures, before trying to understand and interpret its use in Hebrews 10.

Firstly, we need to note from the original context that this Psalm was written by an author (most likely King David) who 'confesses his sin and pleads for an end the God's disciplinary dealings with him' (see FF Bruce[93])

Ps 40:6-12 (KJV): "*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire**; mine ears hast thou opened**: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not*

93 'New International Bible Commentary', 1986 (edited by FF Bruce). Psalm 40 commentary by John W Baigent.

able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me."

Thus, in the sense that the NT authors now make this a Messianic Psalm, we clearly don't read into it that Yeshua sinned. In this sense, I would agree that the Tanakh has, at times in the NT been used to bring new understanding, but never to abolish Torah, or previously introduced everlasting covenants.

The '***The International Critical Commentary**: A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Book Of Psalms'*[94] interestingly translates this portion of the Psalm thus:

***"PEACE offering and grain offering hast Thou no delight in; then had I the covenant**; Whole burnt offering with sin hast Thou not asked; then didst Thou command me. Lo, I am come, in the book roll it is prescribed to me.*

Thy will I delight in, and Thy Law is within me. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; behold my lips."

Some of their very detailed commentary is worth quoting:
"Sin vitiated all sacrifices; sacrifices were of value only as expressive of righteousness. EVs. and most scholars, ancient and modern, think of sin offering here rather than sin. This is tempting in order to complete the enumeration of the great classes of offerings; but the sin offering is not known in the Psalter elsewhere; it is not known to the literature upon which this Ps. depends, especially in this verse; the Hebrew word used here nowhere else has that meaning; and even with the sin offering the list of offerings would be incomplete without the Asham already used Is. 5310.—Hast Thou no delight in]. Protasis of interrogative clause in order to the apodosis of the last clause of v.

*This is based on Ho. 66: "**For I delight in kindness and not in peace offering; and in the knowledge of God rather than whole burnt offerings;**" cf. Is. 111 Ps. 5118, and especially 1 S. 1522: **"Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and peace offerings as in obeying the voice of Yahweh?"**—Hast Thou not asked].*

*This is based on Je. 722–23, "For I spake not unto your fathers nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt**, concerning burnt offerings or peace offerings; but this thing I command them, saying: Hearken unto my voice,"** cf. Ps. 50:8–10 Mi. 66–8.*

---

94 By Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D., D.Litt. Professor Of Theological Encyclopædia And Symbolics Union Theological Seminary, New York And Emilie Grace Briggs, B.D.

This is essentially true so far as its antith. is concerned, but it needs qualification, for not only the code of D, Dt. 12, 16, upon which this Ps. relies, but also the code of E, Ex. 23:14–19, which antedates Hosea and Micah, prescribes just these sacrifices as an essential part of the ritual of worship from the earliest times. At the same time, all these sacrifices are primitive, and antedate all Hebrew Law, and are common to the worship of Israel and all his neighbours; so that they are not as sacrifices in any way distinctive of the religion of Yahweh, or to be regarded as for the first time commanded in His Law.

They are incorporated in His Law and given a meaning, and that meaning is His command, rather than the sacrifices themselves. This is the unanimous consensus of the prophets from Samuel onwards. ***These questions as to sacrifices as such, as external ritual ceremonies, not being required, are in order to the statement in the apodosis[95] of what Yahweh did require.*** *—Then didst Thou command me]. … "**ears didst Thou bore me**." This strange statement is variously explained. …*

The reference is rather to the creative power of God, who dug out the ears and made them organs of hearing, in order that His people might hear and obey Him, cf. Ex. 411 Mt. 139. The emendation that I have proposed gives fine parall., and is especially appropriate to the book of the covenant in the subsequent context.— Lo, I am come], ***calling attention to prompt obedience****.—in the book roll], the Deuteronomic Code as written on the roll, cf. Je. 362. 4.—it is prescribed to me], as RVm., Bä., Dr., Kirk., al., rather than "written of me," concerning me, of* ***G****,* ***J****, EVs.— 9. Thy will I delight in], is in emphatic antith. to the offerings of v.7. The psalmist delights in what Yahweh delights in, and not in what He does not delight in.*

The will of Yahweh is expressed in the Law, which is, as the previous context indicates, recorded in the book roll. A scribe has made it more emphatic by prefixing, "To do," which, however, makes the line overfull. It is an unnecessary gloss.

The Law of Yahweh was written in the book roll; but more than that, the psalmist says, "it is within me"], literally in the midst of my inwards, v. 2215; the intestines being the seat of the emotions, affections, and passions, according to the Heb. conception; and so, "within my heart,"

[95] i.e the clause expressing the consequence

In this interesting commentary Briggs agrees that the phrase in question "***mine ears hast thou opened"*** both indicates that the Almighty has made the Psalmist able to hear and willing to hear.

Baigent[96] agrees. He states: *"Verse 6: This is not a repudiation of sacrifice as such, but a recognition that doing God's will is more important than ritual observances … 'my ears … opened' i.e you have made me obedient'."*

What I see in these commentaries as well though, is that '*a body they hast prepared*' (i.e. the LXX rendition, **if** this is what it originally was) can mean simply that we all have body's with ears to hear.

That is, even the LXX version, if it also is not to be contradictory in implying a sacrifice, is stating the same thing – a call to obedience. And thus in Heb 10, this is the intention. The focus then is on the LIFE of Yeshua being in total obedience, not on his death.

God has always wanted a total; that is with the whole body; absolute loyal obedience to His will.

This is what Yeshua gave with his life to the very point of offering it up for his friends just as he had said, '***no greater love*** …'.

Turning now to Hebrews 10 though, is this understanding consistent, and what about the further commentary in Heb 10: 8-14 that seems fairly emphatic that the sacrifice of the cross '*offered for all time a single sacrifice for sin*'?

I would argue for two main reasons that this section is corrupted and not original.

These reasons (explained below) being

a) the context and,
b) the false doctrine of complete atonement through a single sacrifice.

The context:

Hebrews as a book speaks of a new priesthood NOT a new covenant. Frank has very ably illustrated this in his article, '*The Covenant in Hebrews 8 & 9*'[97]. Look

[96] New International Bible Commentary', 1986 (edited by FF Bruce). Psalm 40 commentary by John W Baigent.

[97] The Covenant in Hebrews 8 & 9'
http://theolivetreeconnection.com/Articles/The%20Covenant%20in%20Hebrews%208%20&%209.pdf

even closer at the context of Chapter 10. It starts off speaking about the failure of the sacrificial system, that is the Levitical priesthood, to bring salvation and introduces the quote from Ps 40:7-9 which supports this comment.

In verses 15 onwards the author of Hebrews then speaks of obedience of the heart being the way forward and how the new Priesthood of Yeshua enables this (again, I try to explain this in my '*Yeshua the High Priest'*[98] article).

The doctrine:

Just as an overview[99] the concept of 'original sin' is seriously flawed as is also a number of doctrines that this leads to, including the doctrine that a blood sacrifice is critical and indispensable for the cleansing of sin.

Neither the Tanakh, nor any common Jewish position, has ever argued that the shedding of blood is the only and necessary ingredient for repentance and forgiveness of sin.

In fact, in the Tanakh we learn that only after repentance and remedying of wrong, can a free will offering for sin be presented on the altar. There is no question that Hebrews 9:22 *"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. "(ESV*) in a corruption (perhaps from a misreading, misunderstanding or twisting of the words of Lev 17:11) in some way.

For a start, Malachi 3:7 and Zecariah 3:4-5 clearly show the error of this statement. In fact, in the case of 'intentional sin' even a blood sacrifice is not enough!

Lev 5:11 also declares that a grain offering (i.e. no blood at all!) can bring atonement.

So, I would suggest that the presupposition that the blood sacrifice of Yeshua was a necessary event for the atonement of humanity leads many to misread and misinterpret this quotation of the Tanakh.

---

98 see www.circumcisedheart.info or click on http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Yeshua%20the%20High%20Priest.pdf

99 A good place to look for a little more depth would be Section II: Salvation & Atonement of *'The Teacher and the Preacher*' by Moshe Avraham Kempinski

Other Minor Issues:
A common argument (as already noted in footnote 28) is that there are some Aramaic phrases, especially in Mark that appear to suggest Aramaic rather than Hebrew was being spoken by Yeshua and the people of Israel at the time.

A recent reader raised the issue of Mark 5:41 where Yeshua apparently speaks in Aramaic and this has been left un-translated as 'Talitha cumi' which many understand to be an Aramaic phrase meaning 'maid arise'.

In Hebrew though 'Kumi' or 'cumi' (קוּמִי – see Isaiah 60:1) is the interrogative for "arise" or "get up" and is the feminine.

The word 'Talitha' is not necessarily Aramaic but simply the girl's name. So Yeshua may well have just said 'Talitha, arise' or "Taalít, Talitha, takumi!" meaning 'Get up, Talitha, arise!'.

LXX Supporter:
I recently (April 2016) received an email from a friend and Christian theologian/author who sees Barry Setterfield[100]'s Chronology[101] article as a very good defence of the standard LXX position that I am disputing with this book I have quoted sections at length from the article and then responded to each section.

To appreciate the context, this article was presented to me in an email which included the following quote:

"... Setterfield concludes such anti-Yeshua sentiment was a major reason why the Jews at the Council of Jamnia repudiated the LXX and the "Vorlage" it was based on. They had vested interests, surely? ... it is hard to dismiss the apparently solid evidence that the preferred Bible of the first Century Christians was the LXX, as they considered it a reliable translation from the "Vorlage" of 440BC."

My Response (with Setterfield's quotes as well):
We cannot know for certain whether the 'prior version' (Vorlage) of the Hebrew text of the Torah used by the LXX authors was different to the 'prior version' used by the Samaritan Pentateuch and MT, but it seems very unlikely that the MT used the , exact same version or 'vorlage'.

[100] Barry Setterfield is a well-known Young Earth Creationist (YEC), who argues for a short Biblical chronology and sees more support for this position in the LXX rather than the MT.
[101] http://www.setterfield.org/ccchron/barrychron.html

Based on the work of DSS scholars like Cross, Shanks and Rendsburg, I think the evidence is quite good that the proto-MT or to use Cross's term, the 'Rabbinic Recession' would have been much closer to that used by Ezra & Nehemiah (I have already detailed this in other sections of this book).

As I state elsewhere as well, Hershel Shanks (in *'Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls'* -p48) writes, in comparing the LXX with the Samaritan version, and others that: *'In fact, most of the biblical manuscripts at Qumran indicate that the proto-Masoretic text type in fact predominated. ... **It is likely that this text type was the most common because it was the most ancient**."*

That is, most DSS scholars contend that the evidence demonstrates that the proto-MT of the Dead Sea Scrolls is based on a Hebrew version of the Torah that is older than the version used for the LXX translation.

Another part of Setterfield's argument (most of it is quoted below) is that there was a Council of Jamnia (Yavneh) Rabbi's (post 70 CE), and led by Rabbi Akiva, that determined the Canon of the Tanakh, and then also redacted (edited it) the Tanakh because of their rejection of Yeshua, so as to somehow obscure references that helped identify Yeshua as the eschatological Messiah. The problem though is that this argument, even if it had any merit in itself, relates to a time after the majority of the NT had already been written, and therefore it can have no real bearing on the central contention of this book.

To quote a little of what I have already presented elsewhere: *"... we have a lot of Hebrew documents thought to have been first written in Greek. That is, scholars have found that most Hebrew documents written in Israel in the inter-testamental period and at least up to 100 CE, were written in Hebrew. **The NT is also a Hebrew document, based on Hebrew sources, written initially for a Hebrew audience. Likewise, it makes sense that it was also written in Hebrew, not originally in Greek."***

All the evidence is that Hebrew was used in the Temple and Synagogues during the first century CE, both in reading the Tanakh (in Hebrew) and in the writings of Jewish authors. The NT was composed by Jewish authors during this time, before 70 CE and before the alleged Yavneh Council.

Also there is no strong evidence that the Tanakh was 'canonized' in Yavneh (Jamnia) sometime around 80- 90 CE anyway. In fact, the evidence (including the NT) is that the canonization of the Tanakh was well and truly in place long before the time of Yeshua.

Robert C Newman has an excellent article on this titled 'THE COUNCIL OF JAMNIA AND THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON'. Here is part of his conclusion:

"… The city of Jamnia had both a rabbinical school (Beth ha-Midrash) and court (Beth Din, Sanhedrin) during the period A.D. 70-135, if not earlier. There is no conclusive evidence for any other rabbinical convocations there.

The extent of the sacred Scriptures was one of many topics discussed at Jamnia, probably both in the school and in the court, and probably more than once. However, this subject was also discussed by the rabbis at least once a generation earlier and also several times long after the Jamnia period.

No books are mentioned in these discussions except those now considered canonical. None of these are treated as candidates for admission to the canon, but rather the rabbis seem to be testing a status quo which has existed beyond memory. None of the discussions hint at recent vintage of the works under consideration or deny them traditional authorship. Instead it appears that the rabbis are troubled by purely internal problems, such as theology, apparent contradictions, or seemingly unsuitable content.

The books discussed are not all in the present third division of the Hebrew Bible known as the Writings, Kethubim, or Hagiographa, and therefore it does not appear that the distinction between the second and third division has anything to do with the history of the Old Testament canon. In fact, it is not clear that the present threefold division goes back into the first century A.D. At the least, such an arrangement faced strong competition from other groupings in this period. The suggestion of Wilson and others for a later origin of this grouping seems to fit the available evidence better than that of a three-stage canonization.

The decisions of the rabbis in the canonical discussions at Jamnia and elsewhere doubtless had some influence in what became orthodox Judaism, for these discussions, together with thousands on a vast array of other subjects, eventually became a part of the Babylonian Talmud and other early rabbinical literature. But no text of any specific decision has come down to us (nor, apparently, even to Akiba and his students).

***Rather, it appears that a general consensus already existed regarding the extent of the category called Scripture,** so that even the author of 4 Ezra, though desiring to add one of his own, was obliged to recognize this consensus in his distinction between public and hidden Scripture."* [102]

What need then did the NT authors therefore have to quote from the LXX rather than the acknowledged superior proto-MT (before any alleged redactions), and why in Greek, especially when addressing an audience in Israel where the lingua-franca was Hebrew and where the Hebrew language

102 http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR013/13jamnia.html

best conveyed the meaning of biblical terminology, such as the name of HaShem, and the proper meaning of 'chesed'[103] and many other Hebrew idioms (Hebraisms) terms and concepts?

The reference to Yavneh (an important Rabbinic Yeshiva from 70 CE to 132 CE), a time after the autographs of the NT had been composed (including Revelation - around 68 CE- in my opinion, but not necessarily after the Greek version of Matthew – circa 70-80 CE, had been created).

So, as all of the NT books were composed before 70 CE, this argument is simply not relevant.

It was around the time of Jamnia/Yavneh, that the Gentile Church rejected its Hebrew/Jewish roots and went off on its own pagan/Gnostic/Hellenistic path. This has been well-documented by scholars like Alfred von Harnack in his *'The History of Dogma'*; Prof. Norman H. Snaith in his *"Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament"*; Emil Schurer in *'The Jewish People in the Times of Jesus Christ'*, and Prof Bart Ehrman in his *'Lost Christianities'*. Whatever remained of its Jewish foundations was still very much from Hebrew sources.

I think any argument that Akiva and the Yavneh Beit Din (Sanhedrin/Council) redacted the Tanakh is unworthy of serious consideration, especially when there is absolutely no evidence that they did, and such an argument is based on pre-suppositions that don't really stand up to scrutiny.

Addressing Setterfield's article specifically[104]:

Setterfield: *"(2). THREE MAIN VERSIONS FROM ONE ORIGINAL TEXT: (a). The Original And The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP)*

From the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (about 440 BC) until the Council of Jamnia (around 100 AD) there existed a 'Vorlage Text' of the Old Testament in paleo-Hebrew. This Vorlage was essentially the original complete Old Testament text. With time the Vorlage gave rise to three 'recensions'. The first of these was the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), again in paleo-Hebrew, about 408 BC. Tobiah the Ammonite allegedly took a copy of the Law with him when he was cast out of the Temple by Nehemiah (see Nehemiah13:4-9 and Ezra 4:1-4) and set up the

[103] See my article 'Amazing Grace' article at circumcisedheart.info

[104] http://www.setterfield.org/ccchron/barrychron.html

rival system of worship in Samaria. This was essentially a copy of the Vorlage Pentateuch. For the Samaritans in Israel today, this comprises their Scriptures."

This is a seriously flawed understanding. There is much evidence that the LXX was based on a different Hebrew version (vorlage), than the one that the MT is based on. And the evidence of DSS scholars as I have already outlined is that the MT 'vorlage' was a more ancient version and possibly more 'faithful' to the Ezra/Nehemiah version. As we don't have the Ezra version we can't be sure, but the evidence in terms of how the text was preserved and transcribed certainly gives credence to the proto-MT Hebrew version being the more 'faithful' text.

Setterfield: *"(b). The Septuagint Greek (LXX] Translation*
The second recension was the Septuagint Greek (LXX) which was translated from the Vorlage Text about 250 BC by 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria. This version became necessary because of the number of Greek-speaking Jews that were resident in Egypt under the favourable Ptolemaic Dynasty. It has been noted by most authorities that the LXX translation of the Vorlage Hexateuch (Genesis to Joshua) was particularly carefully done because of its revered position in the canon. The Eastern Christian Church still considers the LXX to be the authoritative OT text today."

While the facts here are essentially correct, Setterfield adds his own unfounded conjecture about the quality of the translation process (Rabbinic scholars instead have highlighted many problems with this translation), and also implicitly argues for a version containing more than just the Books of Moses. Also, of what validity (except to a Hellenist), is the fact that the Eastern Christian Church considers the LXX to be authoritative?

Setterfield: *"(c). The Council Of Jamnia And The Masoretic Text (MT)*
Finally the Masoretic Hebrew (MT) was re-written in square 'modern' Hebrew characters at the Council of Jamnia around 100 AD with the vowel points added around 900 AD. In 'Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts', p.49 (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London), Sir Frederick Kenyon commented that this dual procedure could easily be 'one considerable source of corruption' in the MT. But let us put this all in its proper context."

There is no evidence that *'the Council of Jamnia around 100 AD*' re-wrote the paleo-Hebrew script into '*square 'modern' Hebrew characters'*. Rather, the latest DSS evidence (as explained by Emmanuel Tov in his '*Collected Essays'* is that the 'square script' and 'paleo script' were used concurrently for centuries prior to 100 CE, and that the 'paleo' most reflects the MT.

So this I think totally eliminates Setterfield's '*source of corruption'* argument.

Setterfield: *"(d). The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Council of Jamnia*
A very important article, that impinges on the question of the best manuscript to use for dating, was written by Siegfried H. Horn, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. It appeared in 'Ministry' for November 1987, pages 4-8, and was entitled 'The Old Testament Text in Antiquity.' He pointed out that the biblical Dead Sea scroll material can be clearly divided into two groups. In the first group, there are 170 manuscripts from the 11 Qumran caves and fragments from Masada. Professor Horn states that 'Paleographical studies show that the earliest Qumran scrolls were produced in the third century BC, and that the latest was in the first half of the first century AD The biblical text material from Masada predates the capture of that mountain fortress in AD 73, so all of the Qumran and Masada manuscripts were produced before the end of the first century AD'' The second group of manuscripts comprise scrolls from the desert caves in the Wadi Murabba'at, the Nahal Hever, and the Nahal Se'elim. The records show that this group were hidden there shortly after 100 AD."
Importantly, these two groups of scrolls show two distinct text types. Those pre-dating 70 AD have a text that agrees with both the LXX and the OT quotations used by Josephus, Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament (NT). In fact, as Professor Horn states, 'I am quite sure that Matthew quoted from a Hebrew text that agreed with the Vorlage that the Greek translators [of the LXX] used.' These Hebrew and Greek texts existed and were quoted prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD. As Professor Horn also points out, that the first group of scrolls 'can be considered to represent the text type for the Hebrew Bible that was circulating during the ministry of Jesus and the apostles.'
Indeed, in 1953, in the Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, No. 132, pp.15-26, Frank Cross showed that this first group of manuscripts agreed more with the LXX than with the MT."

This argument is not at all well accepted by the DSS scholars that I have already referred to. Further, the Cross quote is either taken totally out of context, or was a very early (most of his work is post 1960) understanding that he later rejected. As I discuss elsewhere, Frank Moore Cross identifies [3] basic streams and argues that it is the 'Babylonian' or Rabbinic Recession (proto-MT) that is the most stable and reliable (it was the Jews sent into exile in Babylon who maintained, both during their exile and on their return, the tradition of accurate Bible transcription).

There is also good evidence of a significant declining emphasis (or suppression of) the LXX in the Hasmonean Period (150-30 BCE), and at the same time, an increasing use of Aramaic, and especially Hebrew, in this era of

'Maccabean Nationalism'[105] – see *'The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls'* By James VanderKam and Peter Flint.

This book by VanderKam and Flint also quotes an analysis by Emmanuel Tov where he selects 121 of the 930 DSS documents as most representative of Biblical texts, and argues that only 4 (3.3%) represent the LXX and 3 the Samaritan Pentateuch, with around ½ of those remaining being clearly aligned with the MT.

So in summary, the quotes of Professor Horn are either taken out of context or are simply in error, perhaps as a result of further DSS research and scholarship.

Setterfield: *"By contrast, that second group of scrolls which post-date 100 AD unquestioningly have a text virtually identical with the Masoretic Text (MT) in our present OT. What happened to change the text type? Remember, the original Hebrew (Vorlage) version existed from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah and was extant down to at least 70 AD. By contrast, the Masoretic Hebrew can be traced directly to 100 AD. The dividing line between text types in the Dead Sea scrolls also occurs about 100 AD. What happened at that time?"*

There is simply no scholarly support for this argument that there was a significant textual change around 100 CE. As already outlined above both the 'paleo' and 'square' script types had been used concurrently for centuries, and it is the MT that, in the opinion of the leading DSS scholars I have quoted, most resembles the version from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Setterfield: *"(e). The Action Taken By The Council of Jamnia*
As Professor Horn points out, the answer is the Council of Jamnia that convened around 100 AD. He states that 'A unified text suddenly became the standard at the end of the first century and [the fact] that not one copy of a divergent text survived (except the Dead Sea scrolls that had already been hidden when Jamnia convened), indicate clearly that the Council of Jamnia must have taken actions in this matter.'
Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph was this Council's undisputed leader, though its Chairman was Yohannan ben Zakkai. In his later years, Akiba endorsed the rebellion of Bar Kokba against Rome, and supported him with his wealth, even endorsing him as the Messiah. Akiba was eventually captured and taken to Rome where he was executed in 137 AD at the age of 82.
The Council of Jamnia rejected the original Hebrew versions and the LXX based upon them. Professor Horn stated that '...the Jews rejected it (the pre-70 AD Hebrew version) and LXX since... it had become the Bible of the Christians.'

[105] *Or what I call the Hebraic Jewish perspective.*

Indeed, as textual expert Sir Frederick Kenyon writes (op. cit. p.56): 'In the second century of our Era, this repudiation took form in the production of a rival version.' Professor Horn, Sir Frederick Kenyon and other textual scholars all agree that this 'rival version' was the Masoretic Text (MT) which, with some variations, has been used as the basis of most OT translations since the end of the fourth century AD."

This is just Hellenistic fantasy. There is no archaeological evidence to support this claim and in fact the DSS and Cairo Genizah finds give a picture totally at odds with this view. This false picture is also betrayed by the total lack of evidence that the Rabbis under Akiva and ben Zakkai saw any significant threat from a 'Bible of the Christians'[106].

Setterfield: *"(f). The Masoretic Text And The New Greek Versions*
The Council of Jamnia therefore produced this unified text of the Old Testament and ensured that all divergent texts were destroyed. This unified version, the MT, underwent a two-fold process. First, a change from paleo-Hebrew script of the Vorlage to square 'modern' characters. Second, the vowels were added to the text about 900 AD on the basis of the traditions held by the Masoretes school. For this latter reason it became known as the Masoretic text. As stated above, Sir Frederick Kenyon (op. cit., p.49) concluded that this dual process was ''one considerable source of corruption.'
Sir Frederick then went on to point out that the standardised Masoretic Text spawned 3 Greek versions, namely that of Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus. In this regard, Professor Horn also makes an interesting comment about events immediately following the Council of Jamnia. He states: Moreover, the fact that Aquila, one of Akiba's pupils, soon thereafter produced a new Greek translation that slavishly translated the Hebrew unified text for the use of the Diaspora Jews, gives credence to the idea that Akiba must have been a key influence in the standardization of the Hebrew text.'
The next act in the drama occurred around 200 AD when Origen produced his Hexapla or sixfold version of the Old Testament. This version contained the above 3 Greek versions in parallel, plus the MT in Hebrew, the MT in Greek, and then the LXX as revised by Origen. Note that, except for the LXX, all 5 other versions in Origen's Hexapla were simply variations on the Masoretic text. Furthermore, as Sir Frederick noted on p. 58, '...Origen's efforts were not directed towards the recovery of the original form of the Septuagint LXX, but at

---

106 It appears that there is really little *evidence that Rabbi Akiva, et al, saw 'The Way' as a major threat. Flusser argues that the famous 'Birkat haMinim' Benediction/Curse (which may be one of the reasons while some would argue this point), was not directed at followers of Yeshua at all. Also see the work of Pieter W. van der Horst who argues that:* ***"It is certain that minim in Tannaitic times are always Jews... It is certain that notsrim was not a part of the earliest version(s) of our berakhah."*** *(The Birkat ha-minim in Recent Research", in The Expository Times, 1994, p.367).*

bringing it into harmony with the Masoretic Hebrew Text then current, and to do this he introduced alterations into it with utmost freedom.' This indeed is a serious matter, particularly as all the other versions were simply variations on the MT. Fortunately, in the year 617 AD, Bishop Paulus of Tella in Mesopotamia made a Syriac translation that detailed all Origen's alterations. As a consequence, the form of the original LXX has been preserved for us, and is today still in existence."

The activities of these Hellenists are even more irrelevant to the argument that the alleged Yavneh/Jamnia conspiracy.

Setterfield: *"(3). WHAT WAS IN THE VORLAGE TEXT? (a). The Testimony Of The SP And The LXX*
The Vorlage Text is quoted in scrolls from Qumran and Masada written prior to Jamnia. After that Council, the Jews used the new MT exclusively and destroyed all other versions. But Christ, the Apostles, and Josephus all quote from the Vorlage, and its LXX translation, as did the Church Fathers."

There was no 'Vorlage' that all 3 'recessions' used as I have already detailed. And the 'Church Father's' were almost all Gentiles who clearly knew very little Hebrew as well. Instead they were Gnostics and pagans who introduced serious heresy and lead the 'church' further away from its Jewish and Torah-centric roots towards an anti-Torah position that is possibly the greatest foundational error in Hellenistic Christianity today.

Setterfield: *"... (d). Paul's Non-existent Quotation!*
Some differences can have major implications such as Paul's quote in Hebrews 1:6 of Deuteronomy 32:43 from the Vorlage. There he argues that Messiah had to be Divine. Paul writes: "But again, when He brings the first begotten into the world, He says 'And let all the angels of God worship him'." On checking that Deuteronomy passage in the AV or NKJV, we find that Paul's important quotation on Messiah's Divinity is simply not there! It is omitted on the MT, but is still recorded in the LXX just as Paul quotes it. In fact the MT omits another significant part of that verse as the LXX goes on to say of Messiah: 'And let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him.' The LXX thus seems to be at least a more complete translation of the Vorlage Pentateuch.

Interestingly, Uriel Ben Mordechai in translating the earliest Greek manuscript we have of Hebrews (Papyri 46), argues that verse 1:6 is quoting Ps 97:7 and not Deuteronomy at all.

This example is worthy of further study and comment than I provide here, but on the grounds of consistency and contextual relevance, given that all the

other references here are to the Psalms, it seems more reasonable that verse 6 is also a reference to a Psalm as well.

Here's Uriel ben Mordechai's 'The Kohein from Yehudah'[107] version of verses 5-8:

"5 For to which of the angels did He [i.e. G-d] *ever ever say,* [quote: **Mizmor 2:7]** *"You are my son; today I have become your Father"? Again,* [quote: Divrei Ha'Yamim Alef 22:10] *"I will be his Father and he will be My son."*
6 In addition, when the preeminent one [i.e. he who is renowned, chosen or selected] *is brought into the world, he* [the Psalmist] *says,* [quote: **Mizmor 97:7**] *"Let all judges* [lit. "elohim,", i.e. angels or others assigned a divine status]*, render honor* [i.e. bow down only] *to HaShem."*
7 Indeed, when speaking of angels, it [the **Mizmor, quoting from 104:4**] *says, "...He* [i.e. G-d] *commissions the winds to be His* [i.e. G-d's] *messengers* [or angels]*; the blazing fire, to be His* [i.e. G-d's] *servants."*
8 But with regard to the son [the **Mizmor at 45:7-8** clarifies]*, "*[ONLY] *Your Throne , O G-d, will last forever and ever;* [but] *an upright Scepter* [i.e. a son of G-d, e.g. Mashiach] *is a* [mark of a] *Scepter of Your* [i.e. G-d's] *Kingdom."*

Note that all verses quote from Psalms (Mizmor), as well as verse 5 quoting from 1 Chronicles 22:10. The context certainly fits better with Psalms and Psalm 45 especially suits the context and proper understanding that the throne is God's (and NOT that the Messiah is God, which is a totally un-Biblical doctrine).

This is made very clear in the 'Mechon Mamre' version of Ps 45:7-8: "Thy throne given of God is for ever and ever; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."[108]

I would suggest that, consistent with my general argument, when the Hellenists came to translate the Hebrew of 'Hebrews 1', and recognizing that the author was quoting the Tanakh in verse 6, but without being experts in the Hebrew Tanakh, they looked through their LXX (and they may well have only had the Torah and some minor prophets to refer to in Greek) and found something similar (though contextually of limited relevance) in the LXX version of Deut 32:43. Thus, they used this Deuteronomy quote in their translations and we have been stuck with it ever since.

---

[107] Available from http://above-and-beyond-ltd.com/store/books/if.html

[108] *http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt2645.htm*

In going back to P46 (circa 170 CE), Uriel Ben Mordechai has found that the Greek of this the earliest extant Greek translation appears more compatible with Ps 97:7 rather than the LXX of Deut 32:43.

So rather than evidence for the LXX being quoted here in the autograph, I suspect this is even more evidence for a Hebrew original for the 'Letter to the Hebrews'.

Yet it amazes me that many can so easily ignore the cognitive dissonance that they should experience when told that the *'Letter to the Hebrews'* was composed in, ... wait for it, ... Greek!

Who would have thought?!

A Jewish author (most likely Rav Sha'ul, a Pharisee and son of a Pharisee, a Rabbi of the Yeshiva (school) of Gamaliel 1 who would have rejected the Greek LXX, even more than he rejected the Aramaic) would prefer to write his letter to his fellow Hebrews/Jews in a foreign language, and especially at a time not far removed from the Hasmonean period of Maccabean Nationalism, as mentioned earlier.

I hope the reader can appreciate the serious lack of rationality in this argument.

Setterfield: *"(e). Interesting Verifications of LXX Statements*
However, there are several down to earth archaeological verifications that the LXX was quoting Vorlage truth. One illustration must suffice. In the perfect fullness of time, with his earthly assignment completed, Joshua died and was buried 'in Timnath-Serah which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash' (Joshua 24:30). The LXX adds a significant remark: 'There they put with him into the tomb in which they buried him, the knives of stone with which he circumcised the Children of Israel in Gilgal.'
Ten miles north-west of Bethel lies Kef'r Ishu'a, the 'Village of Joshua'. Professor Werner Keller in 'The Bible As History' on page 163 reports that the neighbouring hillside does indeed contain some rock tombs. In 1870, in one of the sepulchres on the north side of the hill, a large number of stone knives were found..." <end quote>

I'm not sure how Setterfield sees this conjecture as significant evidence for his argument for LXX primacy, especially as when you look at scholarly opinion, just of Joshua 24 alone, you find many explaing that the LXX's claim that the covenant was renewed at Shilo rather than Shechem is a clear error, and even

arguing that the LXX version has been redacted (a common occurrence it would seem as I document a little in other places as well).

So in conclusion, I find little merit in Setterfield's arguments here, but rather just more support for the primacy of Hebrew as the written language of choice for the NT authors.

To further appreciate the issues with this argument it is worth noting that the Gospel was first preached to the Jews, by Hebraic Jews (though some Hellenistic Jews also heeded the call). I detail elsewhere (see especially my references to the research of Prof Mark Nanos), why even when the Gospel went out into the Diaspora and to the Gentiles, it was still a Hebraic message, conveyed by Hebraic Jews, mostly to God-fearers attending Hebraic Jewish synagogues.

LXX Supporter & Christian author:
"… the LXX was known and loved by the First Century Church.".

If this statement is referring to the first 4 decades after the Resurrection and not the last 3 decades of the first century CE (a time when Alfred von Harnack tells us that we know little about), then there is still no evidence to support this claim, but much evidence to refute it. Anyone trying to argue for this premise, at least in the context of this book and its contention cannot quote the NT quoting the LXX, as this would be an example of the logical fallacies of 'begging the question' and circular logic.

Yes, the Apostle Paul was clearly proficient in Greek (and probably Luke as well), but it seems a huge, and flawed pre-supposition to assume that they would have 'loved' the LXX!

Why? Why when all that we know of their heritage (perhaps excluding Luke here), is that it was based on great teachers like Gamaliel – there are already a couple of references earlier on in this book that detail the Rabbi's and Pharisee's rejection of 'foreign languages', including even Aramaic?

As further evidence against the argument that '*the LXX was known and loved*' in the first century, two scrolls were found under the floor of the Zealot synagogue at Masada (MasDeut (1043/1-4) and MasEzek(1-43-2220). (see p172-173 '*Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran: Collected Essays*' by Emanuel Tov).

With respect to these two scrolls, Tov writes: ***"The text of the two scrolls is identical to that of the medieval MT, and much closer to the medieval text***

than the proto-Masoretic Qumran scrolls. This feature pertains also to the other five biblical scrolls found elsewhere at the three different locations at Masada."

He goes on to explain how these scrolls would have been copied from a 'master copy' held in the Temple in Jerusalem, and how all synagogues throughout Israel took their scrolls to Jerusalem (presumably after new transcriptions had been made so that they could be 'corrected' against the 'master copy').

These scrolls were used for public reading as well as for instruction (see b. Pesah 112a where we read that Rabbi Akiva urges his student Rabbi Simeon that *"…when you teach your son, teach him from a corrected scroll').*

The scroll that Yeshua read from would most likely have been one of these '*corrected scrolls'* and it appears highly likely from the evidence, as Tov points out, that this scroll would have been virtually identical to the MT!

Tov also states that (p184): *"… **there is no direct archeological data for the use of specific copies of Greek Scripture in synagogues in Israel or in the diaspora.** It is likely that the Greek translation of the Torah was used in Egypt in the third and second centuries BCE, but this assumption cannot be proven."*

He does go on to state that *"there is ample literary evidence for the notion that Scripture was read in Greek in religious gatherings of Greek-speaking communities from the first century BCE onwards*".

If I understand the totality of his statements here, he is generally referring to the 'on the fly' aural translation of the Hebrew into Greek as per the evidence that this was also done with Aramaic (see early discussion).

So, how can any scholar present the argument that the first followers of Yeshua loved the LXX, without any evidence for such a proposal, and with much evidence against it?

I think instead this just shows how strong a person's pre-suppositions can be, when they have spent years reading the NT and assuming (as informed by their Christian theologians) that the quotes of the Tanakh are from the LXX.

Chapter 7: Conclusion:

Did the authors of the New Testament originally write their 'books' in Greek and quote from the Greek version of the Pentateuch (that is, the Septuagint) as well as other Greek versions of the remaining 'books' of the Tanakh?

While the evidence is fragmentary and therefore not conclusive, it would certainly appear most unlikely.

These inspired Jewish men were most clearly Hebraists, not Hellenists; they read and quoted their beloved Tanakh in Hebrew. The Jews and strangers within the Land of Israel also read and spoke the Tanakh in Hebrew in the Temple and most of the synagogues in Israel.

The Jews in the Diaspora and the God-fearing Gentiles joining their Jewish communities would also have been mostly hearing Moses preached in Hebrew in the Synagogues and Jewish homes they visited (with some exceptions such as in Alexandria).

But even more significantly, the message, the truth of the Bible is a Hebraic truth NOT a Greek truth or Greek/Hellenistic approach to living.

So regardless of the full truth of this question of the language used in the original autographs of the NT, we need to be greatly impacted by the vital and foundational task to learn how to read our English language versions with Hebraic eyes!

When we approach the Almighty and His Messiah with a Hebraic understanding, we will find a depth and breadth of Truth beyond measure, and we will truly be saved from our selves; we will be greatly empowered to turn both our hearts, our good inclination and our evil inclinations[109] toward God; that is, to fully repent and be saved!

Paul F Herring
October 2012 – Latest update April 2016
www.circumcisedheart.info

Micah's injunction:
"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does YHWH require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" – Micah 6:8

[109] http://aubreyandpaul.podomatic.com/player/web/2012-10-21T14_30_55-07_00

Reader Update:
A reader has argued that this book does not support, or maintain the high authority of the New Testament.

I believe the reader is mistaken. Given the great many 'corruptions' to use Isaac Newton's term, or redactions and interpolations that have been made, I argue that restoring the text as close as possible to its original state, both in textual accuracy and in foundational language and perspective embodied therein, is a worthwhile and most important goal. This is what I have tried to work toward, and this goal I believe if successful, actually increases the authority ad trustworthiness of the NT.

If you are not aware of the 'corruptions' in the NT as we have it today, I recommend `Corruption', by Bart Ehrman (1993), which documents the many examples in which 'orthodox' copyists adjusted the original readings of the New Testament to reflect the developing Hellenistic and Trinitarian theology.

The same reader and reviewer of the Amazon edition also queried the contention about the original language(s) used. To repeat, I think it worthwhile to reflect that even in Isaac Newton's time there was a very strong appreciation that at least some of the NT had originally been written in Hebrew. For example, Isaac Newton writes: "*The great charity of the first Christians is manifest by the communion of the converted Jews & Gentiles. The converted Jews or Churches of the circumcision were by the unconverted Jews called the sect of the Nazarenes (Act. 2.5) & they were all zealous of the law (Act. 21.20 & Gal.2.12,13) & when the dispersion of the Churches of the circumcision by the wars of the Romans was at hand,* ***Matthew wrote his Gospel in hebrew for their use*** *& therefore the Nazarenes are not to be recconed among the hereticks."* – 'Isaac Newton, Socinianism and "the one supreme god' by Stephen Snobelen (p 259).

Part of the argument against the autographs being in Hebrew was the incorrect understanding that Hebrew was not a common language of the time.

In fact, there is so much evidence now, for example, from the epigraphic record of inscriptions and coins from the Second Temple Period, that establishes most emphatically that Hebrew was an actively used language in the land (existing alongside Aramaic and Greek).

One of the clearest statements from the evidence of the DSS is:
"Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the dominant view of the Semitic languages of Palestine in this period was essentially as follows: Hebrew had died; it was no longer learned at mother's knee. It was known only by the educated classes through study, just as educated medieval Europeans knew Latin.

Rabbinic Hebrew ... was considered a sort of scholarly invention - artificial, not the language of life put to the page. The spoken language of the Jews had in fact become Aramaic ...

The discovery of the scrolls swept these linguistic notions into the trash bin ... the vast majority of the scrolls were Hebrew texts.

Hebrew was manifestly the principal literary language for the Jews of this period.

The new discoveries underlined the still living , breathing, even supple character of that language ... prov[ing] that late Second-Temple Jews used various dialects of Hebrew..." - Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edmund Cook, The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation (1996) p 8, 9.