

A Brief Explanation of the Origins of Scripture

Rev. Dr. Peter D. Matthews



Figure 1 - Dead Sea Scrolls on display at Qumran Caves. © 2010 Lerner Vadim, Shutterstock.com

Most people probably do not realize that prior to Jesus Christ and Hillel the Elder (the origins of Rabbinic Judaism), the Bible as we know it did not exist. Judaism was nothing more than a few scrolls of “the Law” (the Torah scrolls) and “*the Law of the Prophets*”, and were only ever in the hands of the Temple priests and scribes, who taught the Law of Moses orally (in Hebrew: Kabbalah “*oral tradition*”). The “Law” started with two sapphire stone tablets on Mount Sinai that were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant (a gold-covered timber chest with lid described in the Book of Exodus), however this artefact has been lost since the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587BC and took away the vessels of the Temple,¹ though the rabbinic work of Tosefta explains its real hiding place where it can be found for the Third Temple.² Since that time, the books of *Genesis* encompassing Creation through to the Abrahamic covenant and Moses, and *Exodus* from the Egyptians, God’s speeches to Moses in *Leviticus*, *Numbers* records the census and their journey ready for the crossing the Jordan into the promised land, and in *Deuteronomy* the speeches of Moses to the Israelites form the “Torah”.

These scrolls of the “Torah” and other bible codices were housed in the Temple of Jerusalem prior to the Capture of Jerusalem where the Christian Crusaders overcame the Saracen on 15 July 1099AD. The Crusader force was led by Godfred of Bouillon and his brothers (Eustace and Daldwin of Bouogne), Raymond of Toulouse (Saint-Gilles), Bohemond of Taranto, and Robert of Flanders with a collective infantry of around 30,000 Crusaders, consisting of 5,000 Knights, 25,000 infantry, including a large number of senior clerics in the Church.³ Raymond of Toulouse (Saint-Gilles) looted two hundred and thirty bible codices including the אַרְם צוֹבָא (Aleppo

¹ 1 Esdras 1:54, Septuagint - Greek version of the biblical Book of Ezra.

² Rabbi Shim'on bar Yochai and Rabbi Michael Berg, *The Zohar: Volume 12* (Kabbalah Centre International Inc., 2003), Tosefta, I will elaborate in Sonnets Vol 3.

³ Murray, Alan V. (1992), The army of Godfrey of Bouillon, 1096-1099 : Structure and dynamics of a contingent on the First Crusade, *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, pp. 301-29.

https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_1992_num_70_2_3824

Codex), one hundred other volumes, and eight Torah scrolls,⁴ which he deported and held ransom from the southern Italian region of Apulia.⁵ The Aleppo Codex is recognized by the Jewish people as the oldest and most accurate manuscript of the entire Tanakh (Old Testament), which is dated circa 930AD.⁶ The Jewish community of Fustat and Ascalon paid the ransom at the extremely high price of 700 dinars plus communal property, medical treatment and potions, and practically whatever they demanded over a period of months during negotiations.⁷ This was quite a sum of money because twenty-five dinars was around a year's income for a lower middle class family, so 700 dinars was the yearly income for an entire Jewish ghetto.⁸ These precious *books of Divinity* remain in Aleppo to this very day, although during riots of 1947, up to forty percent of the codex was lost.⁹

One would think the Jews would have writings far beyond 930AD, but we must remember that many wars have all but destroyed many lineages and documents, especially destruction of the Second Temple, World War I and especially World War II. The Jewish scribe, Samuel ben Jacob, completed the later *Leningrad Codex* (previously call *Cairo Codex*, dated circa 1008AD although disputed as early as 938AD),¹⁰ which was purchased by Imperial Public Library in Saint Petersburg in 1863, now called the National Library of Russia.¹¹ One must comprehend the history of Rome to appreciate why the Russians bought this famous codex. Some scholars today claim Moscow are the successors of ancient Rome, after the fall of Constantinople, known today as the *Third Rome*.¹² Travis Aavoe wrote that Russia sees itself as the Third Rome — “*a redeemer and vindicator of Christian civilization, and a bastion of the true faith beset by enemies — be these enemies Islam, Enlightenment-era revolution, or consumerist liberalism*”.¹³ Personally, I view these words as a Zealot risen from antiquity, rather than a brother in Christ, who failed to read, “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Mark 12:21).

Most Christian scholars will also refer to the *Septuagint*, which is a 3rd century BC Greek translation of the Hebrew Tanakh (Old Testament), which most scholars believe was commissioned by King Ptolemy of Egypt to be included in the library of Alexandria. According to Philo, about a million Jews were living in Egypt, where most of them spoke Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic, therefore needed a Greek translation of the Bible.¹⁴ The *Septuagint* comprised of the following books:

⁴ Rustow, Marina (2014), *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, Cornell University Press, ISBN 9780801455308, pp. 343-4.

⁵ Goitein, S.D. (1952), *Contemporary Letters on the Capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders*, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 3, pp. 162-177.

⁶ Ofer, Yosef (Undated), *The Aleppo Codex*, The Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem.
<http://aleppocodex.org/links/6.html>

⁷ Rustow, Marina (2014), *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, Cornell University Press, ISBN 9780801455308, pp. 343-4.

⁸ Meri, Josef, W. (2006) *Medieval Islamic Civilisation: An Encyclopedia*, <https://epdf.tips/medieval-islamic-civilization-an-encyclopedia.html>

⁹ ‘Learn the Secrets of the Leningrad Codex’, *Tyndale House* (blog), 6 September 2019,
<https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/learn-the-secrets-of-the-leningrad-codex/>.

¹⁰ Kim Phillips, ‘A New Codex From the Scribe Behind the Leningrad Codex: L17’, *Tyndale Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (2017): 4.

¹¹ ‘Learn the Secrets of the Leningrad Codex’.

¹² Travis Aaroe, ‘A Roman Russia’, *Edinburgh University's History, Classics, and Archeology Magazine: Retrospect Journal*, 16 October 2017, <https://retrospectjournal.com/2017/10/16/a-roman-russia/>.

¹³ Aaroe.

¹⁴ Livius.org, *Septuagint*. <https://www.livius.org/sources/about/septuagint/>

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Law:	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
History:	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Kings I (I Samuel), Kings II (II Samuel), Kings III (I Kings), Kings IV (2 Kings), Chronicles I, Chronicles II, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esth�er, with additions (The Prayer of Azarias, the Song of the Three Children, Susanna and Bel and the Dragon), Maccabees I, Maccabees II, Maccabees III.
Wisdom:	Psalms, Psalm 151, Prayer of Manasseh, Job, Song of Solomon, Wisdom or Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, Psalms of Solomon.
Minor	
Prophets:	Hosea, Amos, Micah, Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi.
Major	
Prophets:	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Lamentations, Letter of Jeremiah, Daniel with Additions (The Prayer of Azarias, the Song of the Three Children, Susanna and Bel and the Dragon), Maccabees IV.

As you can see, many of the books of the Old Testament are there, but there are also a number of others. Firstly, let me state that the Old Testament is relevant today despite many Christians believing it is not relevant. *“The Law”* given by Moses (the Torah scrolls) and *“the Law of the Prophets”* in Judaism are mentioned in Matthew 7:12, Luke 16:16 and Romans 3:21 in Christianity.¹⁵ Jesus himself appeared to the disciples after he had risen from the dead and declared the following in Luke 24:44:

“When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.”¹⁶

Jesus did not come to throw out the Old Testament as many Christians believe, but to **fulfil** these ancient prophecies in the Old Testament. We must remember that Jesus was born Jewish. In the time of Jesus, there were four groups of Jewish people: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots. While some scholars suggest there are five groups of people to include Scribes, I suggest this is false, because all of the distinct people groups have scribes engaged in the occupation of a scribe in writing parchments, decorative marriage contracts (ketubot), various artworks, and micrography — they are not a people group.

The Sadducees were the conservative, wealthy majority of the Sanhedrin, who did not believe in resurrection, free-will, angels and demons, and instead believed in living luxuriously while the rest of the people were struggling to survive – these are the Liberals of today, a progressive people focussed on social justice and common good, while they line their own pockets. The Pharisees were the legalists who would argue over the rules and regulations. They were allegedly devoted to the Torah, believed in redemption, free-will, angels and demons, fasting and prayer, yet in Matthew 23, Jesus condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy and perjury, using the imagery of whitewashed tombs — beautiful on the outside, but full of dead men's bones.¹⁷ In our postmodern world, scribes still exist in Israel carrying out the same function they did centuries ago. The Zealots were regarding extremist fighters, who were politically motivated and revolted against Rome, particularly in Galilee, even to the point of having a Sicarii splinter group of assassins who led their last stand at Masada where many of them perished in 73AD. I personally compare them to the modern-day military arm of Israel, where they attempted to defend the nation of Israel.

¹⁵ Abegg, Martin Jr., Flint, Peter, Ulrich, Eugene (1999), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, Harper Collins, p7.

¹⁶ Luke 24:44 NLT

¹⁷ Matthew 23.

The Essenes of Qumran and Nazareth were a community of farmers, craftsmen, doctors (healers), pharmacologists (herbalists), teachers of righteousness, law, theology, and mysticism (specifically Kabbalah), who preferred more of a communal living. One only has to read the *'Songs of the Sage'* (4Q510 [4QShir]) to know the Qumran Essenes were Kabbalists.¹⁸ As to location of the Essenes, Josephus recorded how they were *"not in one city"* but they were *"in large numbers in every town"*.¹⁹ They believed in baptism in water, worship three times a day, and wine with bread on Sabbath, just as Jesus taught. Many of these Essene communities believed in the Priesthood of *Yeshua*, who we now know as Jesus. The Jewish Essenes recognized that Christ was not murdered by his own people, but He surrendered to the Father (Mark 14:36), in fulfilment of numerous Old Testament promises in Scripture. The Qumran sect had their own books of the Bible that were discovered in 1946-1956, which we now call the *'Dead Sea Scrolls'*. *The Dead Sea Scrolls* are now regarded as the earliest books of the Bible that are in existence, some centuries before most of the Jewish codices and scrolls mentioned above. Here is a list of the books of the Bible and other documents found amongst the Qumran caves, noting there are a few new ones you are not familiar with:

Rules:	Rules of the Community, Copies of the Genizah, Damascus Document, Serek Damascus Document, 5Q Rule (5Q13).
Halakhic Texts:	Halkhac Letters, Juridical text, Ordinances, Halakhah, Purification rules, Decrees.
Eschatological:	Ordiances, War Scrolls, Blessings, Words of Michael, New Jerusalem, Florilegium, Testimonia, Amariac Apoccalypse, Four Kingdoms, Melchisedech.
Biblical:	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Jubilees, Great Isaiah Scroll, Book of Isiah, Testament of Levi, Apocryphon of David, Exhortation based upon the Flood, Apocryphon of Joseph, Biblical Chronology, 1 Enoch, Book of Giants, Book of Noah, Book of the Patriachs, Hur & Miriam, Pseudo-Moses, Pseudo-Joshua, Pseudo-Samuel, Pseudo-Jeremiah, Pseudo-Ezekiel, Pseudo-Daniel, Aramiac Proto Esther, Tobit (Aramiac & Hebrew), Psalms, Testament of Judah, Hymns, Hymns Against Demons, Wisdom Poems, Kings, Amos, Lamentations, Malachi, Song of Songs, Mysteries, Liturgy, Benediction, Allegory of the Vine, Curses.
Liturgical:	Daily Prayers, Words of the Luminaries, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, Blessings & Curses, Other Books of Ritual including: Grace After Meals, Baptism, Marriage, Purification.
Astromonical and Calendars:	Astronomical Enoch, Calendars & Priestly Rotas, Horoscopes, The Copper Scroll.

This is because bible scholars were not aware that some of these books of the Bible at the time of printing our modern Bibles, and others have been excluded merely because of arguments between scholars over the last 50 years or so since discovery. Archaeologists have confirmed the *'Dead Sea Scrolls'* are authentic scrolls believed to have been written by Jewish Essenes and stored in the Qumran caves between 150 BC and 70 AD based upon C-14 radiocarbon testing.²⁰ Some of

¹⁸ Martinez, Florentino Garcia (1994), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, Brill Academic Publishing, ISBN 9789004100480, pp. 371-6.

¹⁹ Kottek, Samuel (2011), *The Essenes and Medicine: A Comparative Study with reference to Sncient Jewish Lore*, *Clio Medica* 18 (1/4), 1983, pp. 81-99.

²⁰ Berkowitz, Adam Eliyahu (2017), *Dead Sea Scrolls Written by Celibate Jewish Essene Monks, Qumran Skeletons Confirm*, *Breaking Israel News*. <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/98172/qumran-skeletons-confirm-dead-sea-scrolls-written-celibate-jewish-essene-sect/>

these scrolls have not be found intact, therefore parts of the scrolls are missing, so we are left wondering what the rest of the text might have meant. Others are completely intact and are authoritative texts of Scripture and should be considered as part of the Bible in the future.

I have spent many years studying the *Dead Sea Scrolls*. Interestingly, some of the imageries found in the *Dead Sea Scrolls* are also found in the Shakespearean works in the 16th century. How could William Shakespeare have the depth of wisdom to etch these ancient books into the plays when they were not even in circulation? The answer is he didn't. The Spanish-Venetian authors of the Shakespearean works were Jewish Essenes of Hebrew Babylonian descent from the region of Bashan, not far from where the Qumran scrolls originated. This suggests that some of the material did make its way with the Bassano family and Nasi family from Israel to Babylon, then across to Europe before England.²¹ Many members of the Italian Bassano family became famous Rabbis, Master Kabbalists, and teachers of the ancient Arts. For more information, see my academic work of *The Bassanos: Jewish Guardians of the Ancient Arts*.²²

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²¹ Dr Peter D Matthews, *A Comprehensive Commentary of SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS (Tome 1 of 3)*, vol. 1, 3 vols (Stanthorpe, Australia: Bassano Publishing House, 2020); Dr Peter D Matthews, *A Comprehensive Commentary of SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS (Tome 2 of 3)*, vol. 2, 3 vols (Stanthorpe, Australia: Bassano Publishing House, 2022).

²² Dr Peter D Matthews, 'The Bassanos: Jewish Guardians of the Ancient Arts', 2003, <http://petermatthews.com.au/the-bassanos-jewish-guardians-of-the-ancient-arts/>.