

How We Got The Bible

Understanding the Process
& History of the
Canonization of the Bible
Part VIII

The Psalms

Psalms

- ✓ Collection of 150 poems/songs used as the hymnal in the 2nd Temple (*Tehillim*)
- ✓ Written over several generations
- ✓ Various authors, not all written by David: Sons of Korah, Asaph, Heman, Solomon, Moses, etc
- ✓ Have their own history of preservation and canonization within Israel, believed to be compiled by priests by 515BC

Psalms

- ✓ Divided into five sections (~5 books of the Torah), each ending with a doxology

I. 1 – 41 41:13

II. 42 – 72 72:19

III. 73 – 89 89:52

IV. 90 – 106 106:48

V. 107 – 150

Psalms

- ✓ 117 of 150 have *superscripts*
 - a. Personal names (23)
 - b. Contextual info (54)
 - c. Liturgical info (22)
 - d. Genre (90)

Psalms

- ✓ Several Collections within the Psalter
 - Davidic: 3-41, 51-72
 - Korah: 42-45
 - Ascent: 120-134
 - Hallel: 113-118; 146-150

Genres of Psalms

- Lament: Individual (38) & Communal (74)
 - ✓ Description of trouble, plea unto God, declaration of trust in God, vow to praise God
- Thanksgiving / Deliverance (56,57)
 - ✓ Expression of gratitude, description of trouble, testimony of God's deliverance, exhortation for other to praise

Genres of Psalms

➤ Praise (100)

- ✓ Exhortation to praise, invitation to praise, reason to praise
- ✓ Enthronement – reign of God (24)
- ✓ Zion – the Holy City (122)
- ✓ Royalty (72) – about the King or Monarchy
- ✓ Wisdom (37) – reflection on righteousness

The Biblical Manuscripts

The Biblical Manuscripts

➤ The oldest/original manuscripts were written in Hebrew

								
Tet (T)	Chet (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V/O/U)	He (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Bet (B/V)	Alef (Silent)
								
Samech (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	Yod (Y)
								
Tav (T/S)	Shin (Sh/S)	Resh (R)	Qof (Q)	Tzade (Tz)	Tzade (Tz)	Fe (F)	Pe (P/F)	Ayin (Silent)

The Biblical Manuscripts

- Written on papyrus (paper made from papyrus reeds grown around the Nile River) or Vellum (mammal skin)
- Hand written or copied by scribes with a stylus and inkwell
- Collected/printed on scrolls or codices
- Because writing was much more time consuming and expensive, and due to high levels of illiteracy, scrolls were owned by synagogues and religious communities

Luke 4:16-20

The “Scroll” was handed to him

- ✓ It was the property of the community
- ✓ It was an individual scroll – scrolls present a challenge to the ordering of the books of the Hebrew Bible

History of the OT Canon

- The most dominant proposition about the canonization of the Old Testament posits that the list of books belonging to the canon of Hebrew Scripture was definitively fixed at the *Council of Jamnia*
- Jamnia = Yavneh-yam near the Mediterranean coast, near present day Tel-Aviv

History of the OT Canon

- After the destruction of the Temple in 70AD, Jamnia became the center of a Rabbinic Restoration movement that sought to reconstruct Judaism on the basis of biblical interpretation and the solidification of religious traditions in the absence of the Temple and Jewish sovereignty

History of the OT Canon

- Many scholars doubt and debate whether the canon was definitively defined in Jamnia because
 - There was no single meeting or “council” of Jewish scholars in Jamnia
 - Traditions were debated in Jamnia without any indication that the decisions were accepted as normative for all of Judaism

History of the OT Canon

- One such debate at Jamnia was over which books “made the hands unclean” because only sacred scriptures made the hands unclean
- Five books were debated:
 - ✓ Ecclesiastes – its negativism
 - ✓ Song of Songs – its eroticism
 - ✓ Ezekiel – its contradiction of Torah
 - ✓ Proverbs – its internal contradictions
 - ✓ Esther – its omission of God

History of the OT Canon

- There is evidence, however, that the shape of the Hebrew Bible was set as early as 200BC
 - The book of Sirach/Ecclesiasticus written around 200BC mentions the three-fold division of books: law, prophets, and others
 - One of the controversies that led to the Maccabean revolt in 160BC was an attempt to destroy sacred scriptures that were to be preserved in Jerusalem

History of the OT Canon

- Pre-Jamnia evidence for the solidification of the Hebrew Bible:
 - Writing in 93AD, Josephus compares the myriad of Greek the wisdom literature to the 22 books of Hebrew Scripture (Josephus' canon joined Ruth to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah)
 - The apocryphal book 4 Ezra, written 95-105AD, distinguishes between the 24 books to be read by all and the 70 reserved for the wise – differentiating between canonical and apocryphal

History of the OT Canon

In summary, the process of canonization of the Hebrew Bible/OT appears to have been gradual whether than formal, beginning with the Torah and extending to the Prophets and Writings by or in the 2nd century BC with a distinction between canonical and apocryphal books emerging in the 1st century AD