

Free - Take One



# Shaqah

שפדאן

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”  
Colossians 2:8*

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Last time we continued our introduction to the Book of I Samuel and were talking very specifically about why the Book of Samuel is divided into a first and second book in the Christian arrangement of the Bible which is not true of the Hebrew arrangement. The main accomplishment of last segment was the fact we shifted to talking more about the actual first more official translation of the Hebrew Bible into another language and, of course, that language was Greek. Last part took considerable time connecting and discussing the importance of this first major translation work to the facts we've been covering over the last several segments. This was done due to a fact we will want to keep in mind for this time which is that in discussing all we have up to last segment we've reached past the actual time the first major translation came into existence and continued to talk about the need and why such a translation was going to be done at some point. In talking about that there is one point maybe not so specified in last segment which is simply the idea that just because that first translation was produced it didn't mean just everyone who could benefit from it and desired to have it even knew that fact. This has a lot to do with why we reached past the time of the first major translation and continued to talk about the struggle among the Jewish religious leaders about if it was or was not a good thing to translate God's Word from Hebrew into any other language. All this relates directly to what we came down to last time, which was beginning our look at the production of the Greek translation we know as the Septuagint which was produced for the library being formed in Alexandria Egypt!

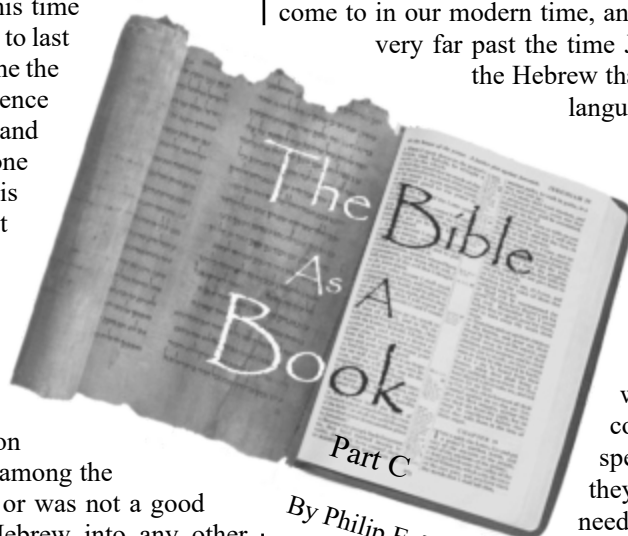
Thus, this time we want to look at a few details about how the Septuagint was actually produced or at least the stories and beliefs of the how. That said, we want to eventually get to how this relates to the splitting of a book such as Samuel into two parts. Depending on who you talk to, the story of the Septuagint's production is anywhere from hard facts to wild fantasy maybe even written at a later date. The truth likely lays somewhere in between those two extremes but I would add to that, it leans in the direction of the hard facts argument. Why would I say that? There are many technical details as to why but

the simple answer is just to point out what a high quality translation it was/is! We took the time toward the end of last segment to talk about the argument some people have as to if Jesus and His apostles were or were not quoting directly from the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew Bible. In that discussion we came down to the fact that while it was true more and more of the common everyday Jewish population was not staying sharp on their knowledge of Hebrew, there were people who still knew Hebrew well and Hebrew was still a living spoken, written and read language overall. This is to point out very specifically the time of The Messiah was nothing like we've come to in our modern time, and in many ways it came to not very far past the time Jesus walked this earth. Today

the Hebrew that exists is Hebrew, but like all languages it is in many ways far removed from the Hebrew the Bible was originally written and generally maintained in.

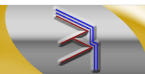
This simply means it would be far easier for someone like the apostles and Jesus Himself who knew both Hebrew and the common Greek of the day to speak any portion of Scripture they wanted to in Greek without needing some official translation to of. There is another argument which

is actually a bit of, a meant to be negative argument, against the Septuagint that further supports the idea Jesus and the apostles were doing something like that and not quoting directly from the Septuagint in spite of how similar the words are at times. That fact is that the Septuagint is dated pretty well by its use of “early Koine Greek.” Now what that means is that the writing contains syntactical or idiomatic features from the Semitic language family. The largest of these being the Aramaic many are so fond of claiming was the actual language Jesus and his apostles mostly spoke and used, along with Hebrew itself and, of course, Arabic. These, shall we say, inclusions within the text to translate various parts of the Hebrew into Greek came about very much so by process of language drift or the general way languages slowly change over time; often creating totally



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new branches of a language to the point those branches are in and of themselves considered their own language. This kind of branching effect is how we end up with language families for the most part. The basic of it is that an existing language enters an area where people mostly speak some other language. Each group will often attempt to communicate with each other using what they learn of the other's language but there is more often than not a dominate language in this exchange. The dominate language will be the one mostly spoken and it is usually the language more native to the area, but not always. Most people will learn the dominate language, but for those who did not speak it as their native language there is almost always this thing you hear people say today when trying to speak English and another language is their native language. You will often hear such people stop mid sentence or thought and say something like, "How is it you say in English?" They aren't really asking so much as using the time asking creates to think of the right words.

Sometimes this works and sometimes it does not, but more often than not they end up using a mixture of English and some words or phrasing they would use in their native language hoping those who know the language they're trying to speak in will get the jest, at the very least, of what they are trying to say. When you are hearing a person speak who comes upon this issue it might seem like a simple one time thing or just the idea, they'll get the right words at some point as their knowledge of our language increases. In the bigger picture that is often not what happens! What happens is that the people speaking the language the person is attempting to speak do end up understanding due to context, not so much the specific understanding of the other language's words. The words will also very often take on a bit of a different sound than when they are used as a native speaker of that language would speak them. In the end of the entire process you find certain mixing of words or phrases from the less dominate language simply come to be accepted into the dominate language. Eventually you don't have people asking, "How you say this?" as much as you simply hear what becomes a commonly used substitute for bringing the thought into the dominate language. This process is how you end up with languages like English being very different on some levels when you are talking about British English versus American English versus Australian English. It's all legitimate English but because the influence of other languages around it is different from place to place, the phrasing comes out different. Add to this the fact language all on its own will drift for any number of reasons even without the influence of another language, and you can really see the gaps begin to widen.

This kind of evolution in languages is lessened as our modern languages grow weaker and with the increasing pressures of modern life causing more effort to be put into having a common language we might all understand because we really end up only expressing surface kinds of ideas instead of deep thoughts and meaning. This is what I so often talk about when speaking of Bible translation and understanding of the Bible's words. How do you take writing that's originally produced in a strong language such as Hebrew or Greek and bring them into the pedestrian languages of today, of which there is no better example than English? That's the big question mark and the answer is that you can't in a deep and totally full

way! It's one of the reasons we need The Holy Ghost more than ever to really grasp the full depth of the Word of God. However, let's get back to the point at hand about languages taking on phrases and even idioms from another language it's influenced by. Such occurrences happen because of the shifting of people and/or languages at specific times. This means if you study writings in a certain language from before the secondary language(s) began to influence the one your reading, one will find anything from subtle to drastic differences when comparing it to writing in that language from a later time after there was a secondary language influencing and pressing upon it. When such patterns are eventually recognized, and in some cases specifically documented, the date of certain writings become more apparent. Known patterns of people moving into an area and/or a language beginning to be more influential for any number of reasons outside its normal native region become easy to see. Especially with certain writings giving dates for when they were written, we end up with a bit of a time stamp as to when other writings with the same, shall we say, "style" came about in spite of containing no date within those writings.

That might all sound complex but it's the basics of why we say the Septuagint shows the influence of Semitic languages or what is simply known as Koine Greek. It dates the Septuagint's translated words to the time period we have been discussing where Hebrew was giving way to Greek for the people in the chosen nation. As it relates to our topic of hard facts vs total fiction, when talking about the stories of how the Septuagint was translated it gives us a picture that suggests at least parts of the idealistic version of the story aren't completely accurate. At the very least, we can say that if the story is true through and through, the Septuagint we know today is not a full surviving copy of that original translation. The shorthand of this is that some of the books of the Septuagint are very much so Koine Greek while other books (Daniel and Proverbs seem to stand as examples of this) are more of a pure Greek. So considering the time stamp idea linguistic phrasing gives us, this means some books were translated at earlier times than others and the story tells us the work of at least the Torah was done all at once. As I said, this could simply mean we don't have the original copies of each of the books which the story is talking about, but there are other possible explanations. One such possibility is that certain books held more interest to people outside the chosen nation or just those in scholarly groups in general and those books were translated earlier than others. By the time the Septuagint was put together there may have already been very acceptable copies of some books of the Hebrew Bible that were already in Greek. Such translations might have simply been included within the Septuagint or so greatly influenced the "new translation" the story speaks of that there is considerable lack of Semiticisms within their words.

Things like this are why I say, the fact there are indications the original story isn't totally true doesn't mean the story is totally false. If you study the history of translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into European languages and eventually the English that we use when talking about the King James Version, you will find many twists and turns just like this. Sometimes translations were done in part and sometimes they were done as a whole but even those times a whole translation was made of say the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) or the New

# Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we continued looking at the time Isaac goes to Beersheba to worship God and how God spoke to him there. We also began our look at the Philistine king coming all the way out to this place to meet with Isaac once again. Specifically we looked at the fact a man comes with the king who's name is Ahuzzath and is only described as being a "friend" of the king. This brought us to discuss how much small facts like this show us how the Bible's words focus on the things we really need instead of going into details that would distract from the main storyline. However, we talked about how such things also indicate there was something more complex about who this man was that we probably wouldn't understand today, and the reason for that has everything to do with the fact we aren't "evolving" as we would like to believe. This man held a position of importance within the leadership of the Philistine people that makes him more than just an advisor because if that's what he was, the Bible simply would have called him such. Instead the indication is that he held a position in the leadership structure we wouldn't so directly relate to in our more organized yet simplistic understanding about how to set up governing structures. All that brought us to Genesis chapter 26 verse 26, and we'll begin in that verse this time.

It's true that verse 26 is in so many ways one of those simple opening words to a larger story kind of verse, but there can be so much meat in even one of these verses which is what took us into the conversation we had last segment. However, in all that, there is one fact given to us in verse 26 we did not cover, and that's the fact the Philistine king didn't just bring this man who's described as a "friend" but he also brought the chief captain of his military. This fact all by itself is nothing new. Very often it would seem normal that some high ranking military leader would accompany the king when he was conducting business of a, shall we say, diplomatic nature. At the same time this makes the inclusion of this friend of the king that much more interesting considering if we go back up to chapters such as chapter 21 and look at Abimelech coming to Abraham, we see the chief of the military came with him but there is no mention of anyone else. Again, there is some reason this "friend" of the king is named at all and at the same time isn't just called an advisor as Abimelech comes to Isaac at Beersheba. The chief of the military we clearly see as protocol, but Abimelech brought this third man for a specific reason we may never know the clear reason for.

All that said, one fact specific to this military chief is that he is said to bear the name Phichol. This is the same name of the military chief who came with Abimelech when he met with Abraham many years earlier. Is it possible he was a young man at that time and now is an older man? That is a possibility but the likelihood of this man being the same individual is not high. Even more so than believing we are talking about the same individual through all the years when talking about

Abimelech interacting with the chosen nation's forefathers, there's reason to doubt this Phichol is the same man considering military leaders needed to be strong. One wouldn't think a man would continue to hold the position until he was old and more feeble, especially as an escort for the king. This also begs the question, is the Phichol name really a name as much as a title of the position for one who was the head of the Philistine army. If Abimelech is really more of a title, and there is little reason to believe it isn't one at least within the ruling dynasty at that time, then perhaps there's a strong argument to be made about the name Phichol also being a title more than just a name. Now, one might argue or point out that unlike the king, Phichol is specified as being the chief of the Philistine's military in basically all the places we see him come into the scene, but that takes us back to the conversation last time about the man described as a friend. When talking about that I covered the fact we are probably told he is a friend because his title and thus position within the Philistine government isn't something we would relate to so well considering how we think of government structures today. The contrast to that is that we can intuitively understand due to the story that "Abimelech" refers to the main Philistine leader, but it's not so intuitive that Phichol was the chief of the military so that fact specified. No matter how differently the military of the Philistines might have been organized, we still relate to the idea there is a chief, captain, or something of that sort within the military, so it's simple to point out and move on without further explanation.

As we move on to verse 27 we see Isaac make a very valid point. Isaac asks these Philistine representatives why they came out to him after all the things that happened while he was among them and due to those things they had specifically told Isaac to leave. As I mentioned before, where Isaac was at this point was quite a ways east of where the Philistines made their home along the Mediterranean coast. To us today this distance wouldn't have seemed so far, but in those times the distance might as well have been a world away. Point being, the king himself had made the effort to come all this way instead of just sending representatives to speak to Isaac and/or ask him to come to the king. Again, this is a point we might not think that much about, but if someone holds a title such as king it means all the things we think of for even say, mid-eval times in Europe. Kings do not go to people, they summons people to them! Unless, the person they want to speak to is of high importance and that's the point we want to be very aware of in this situation. Isaac was important enough and the matter the king wanted to handle was of enough importance, that the king made the journey to Isaac who was a man who did not carry a title such as a king in any way. That said, keep in mind what we've covered more than once. Isaac and his father before him were the heads of a household that in spite of not consisting of a large core family, it consisted of a large number of servants who worked for them. The reason both Abraham and Isaac employed so many servants was, of course, due to the vast

number of their herds and possessions in general.

This truth had made Abraham a powerful man in the region which showed when Lot was taken captive by invading armies from the East who had overpowered several of the kings ruling in the area of the promised land where Lot lived. Abraham simply gathered his servants and went after the eastern kings as they were returning home with their loot, and there is no indication Abraham had any thing resembling a hard fought battle in recovering everything these kings had taken. (Gen. 14) There should be little doubt in the mind of the Bible student that Isaac by the point we are talking about now had even greater possessions and an even larger number of servants in his house than his father had, had at the time Abraham defeated the eastern kings. Thus, Isaac didn't need a title such as "king" for people in the region to respect him as one of the most powerful men of their world! This issue of Isaac not holding a title, yet being respected and recognized as the powerful man he was also speaks to what we took just about all of last segment talking about in that this Ahuzzath is described as just a friend. In the light of this conversation one has to stop to consider the possibility that Ahuzzath was in some ways the same thing Isaac had been to the Philistine king before anger caused the Philistine king to send him "away." Keeping it short just remember how nations rose. Often times family groups ended up becoming so large they recognized an elder member of the family as a chief or some such title/position. Such groups might grow larger and larger until the group as a whole is no longer considered just one family. This is when a group really becomes a "tribe."

When looking at the development of such groups around the world, history shows us such groups in closer proximity to each other had a pretty simple choice. Depending on the availability of resources these groups might end up in bloody battles/wars with each other. They could/can also choose to cooperate with each other and if the circumstances are right, they could just ignore each other. All depends on a whole lot of factors, but in the end of it all some groups would disappear which usually meant they were totally killed off or absorbed into another group whether willingly or unwillingly. This led to the group they were absorbed by to grow larger. This could be the size of the land they controlled as well as the number of people they consisted of. It also meant that more and more the people within the group were related not so much by blood, as in being all part of one family, but by the fact they were all of the same group. This, along with voluntary cooperation with each other at times, is how tribes become nationalities, and it was this process the king of the Philistines was interested in when Isaac lived among them. He no doubt would have loved to have absorbed Isaac's house into the Philistine people and in turn greatly increased the Philistine king's power as well as the Philistine's power as a whole. This truth is the largest part of why God used the incident with Isaac's mother Sarah to keep this from happening in any way, shape, or form to Abraham and again, used a fairly similar incident with Rebekah to keep it from happening to Isaac.

As Isaac saw the king and his companions approaching he surely knew the loss of that connection to him

and his house was at least part of what had brought the king out to him. Thus, in a lot of ways Isaac was asking how the king had, as we might say today, "the nerve" to show his face to Isaac much less come all this way to do it! This is why Isaac did not greet the king as an honored guest in any way. Isaac actually used the word "hate" to describe how he thought the Philistine king felt toward him. Obviously hate is just the word that comes through the time and translations to our eyes today, but I wouldn't be surprised if Isaac's actual word meant something a lot deeper than our word "hate." Isaac wanted the king to know he did not take responsibility for having left the Philistines. Yes, the incident with Rebekah had been a problem based on Isaac doing the same thing his father had done in telling the Philistines she was his sister instead of flat out describing Rebekah as his wife. However, none of that meant the Philistine king had to throw Isaac out. Especially since what happened with Rebekah was not comparable to what had happened with Sarah in that the king had not attempted to take Rebekah as his wife and suffer the consequences from God that came with that as the king who took Sarah had! In the situation concerning Rebekah, the Philistines witnessed Isaac and her interacting with each other when they thought no one was watching and realizing that Rebekah had to be Isaac's wife because a man wouldn't interact with his sister the way Isaac was with Rebekah. The king had called Isaac in to rebuke him for not telling them Rebekah was his wife on the basis he was scared to death at the thought he or one of his people might have tried to take her as their wife!

As we talked about in covering that story, it would seem the Philistine king Isaac was involved with had knowledge of the earlier incident with Sarah and knew very well the kind of wrath from God that could come down on him and his people for doing such a thing! In any case, it was totally the decision of the king to tell Isaac to pack up his stuff and leave rather than simply confront Isaac about it and come to some kind of livable forgiveness and/or trust that would allow Isaac and the Philistines to continue being together. This adds weight to the fact Isaac says the king hates him. In Isaac's thinking the king had that option and clearly chose Isaac leaving as the better route to take. So again, we are back to the truth Isaac had a lot of negative feelings and questions about the king at least changing his mind enough to want to see Isaac again. Isaac was also likely upset about the fact the king had come all this way specifically because those were the words the king had spoken to Isaac. The king had said the land was before Isaac. In other words, there is plenty of room for us to go our separate ways and never have to deal with one another again. As Isaac went out from the Philistines he continued to have trouble with them as well as the people of the region at large wanting to deprive him of the wells Isaac and his men had both newly dug as well as those he opened back up which Abraham had originally established. Isaac had made no fuss over this truth and in no way attempted to go to war with the Philistines; a war I might add I believe he would have had no trouble winning so completely it might have been at Isaac's point in history the Philistines vanished from the world instead of many centuries later!

Now Isaac had gone, not just south and then east but

# What About God's Chosen People?

## Part LXXIV

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

*"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."*

As we continue our look at the history that shows us how the Roman Empire came to be looked at as a Christian empire, we continued last time talking about the dilemma the leaders of the empire had found themselves in when it came to maintaining an importance to even being an empire. Thus, we continued to talk about why the Roman government saw the growing number of Christians as a threat to the empire, but almost more importantly why they would begin persecution of the Christians within as a way to galvanize the citizens in a cause they felt was common. Last time we also took a look at how much this was something Christians should have seen coming because the chosen nation had been through it many times, but we also discussed the differences in excuses that would be used against the Christians compared to those usually used against the chosen nation. All this related to the overall topic of how important the things of this world and life are to people who only live for this world and life in spite of not being the true things of eternal importance people can only find through a walk with God!

Of course, the real ending of last segment came down to talking about the specific excuse the Romans would use to encourage people of the empire to go along with, if not participate in, the persecution of Christians. That excuse was the idea that no matter if one was talking about a Jew or non-Jewish Christian, people who accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour were turning away from the customs of their forefathers! This was true for the Jew because the Jewish religious establishment did not accept Jesus as The Messiah which means a Jew turning to Jesus was a Jew rejecting the one central authority the Jews had as a people at that time. This was true for non-Jews who accepted Jesus as The Messiah because one of the main reasons to turn to God was/is to repent or turn from the ways of the world at large! As we talked about last time this was making the growing number of Christians within the empire a group going in their own direction like no other people had. It was easy to say such people were a threat because the very existence of the Roman Empire was suppose to speak to the power of what man can accomplish if we all pull together!

We have by this point not gone far from talking about the history of Rome because these subjects of why they took the actions they took are an integral part of, and reason to do, a study such as this. However, due to the fact such things are a deep conversation of how and why things come about it feels like it's been a considerable time since we last looked at the more direct historical facts. I would like not to spend a considerable amount of time refreshing those facts because I believe what we've covered in the last few segments is the more

important meat beneath the skin of those facts. Anyone can study facts in a book but a small refresh is probably needed. The important information is that a man named Diocletian had ascended to the throne of the Roman Empire and ended up naming Maximian Caesar and later Augustus which made him co-emperor with Diocletian. These two men basically split the empire into two pieces for administration purposes which is what we've been discussing when talking about how decentralization was showing itself to be a good thing. There was even further decentralization we see in the empire when both these men chose Caesars to serve under them. Diocletian chose a man named Galerius as his Caesar and Maximian named Constantius Caesar under him. In spite of all the titles and technicalities of who was above who, this formed a Tetrarchy which means "rule of four" and each of these four men would rule over their particular division of the empire. This means the empire was actually divided, at least administratively, into four pieces as we enter the third century A.D.

Due to all we have been talking about, it would be these four men who would preside over the empire's last and certainly most severe persecutions of the growing number of Christians within its borders. Because he was the man who had originally ascended to the throne and as such considered the formal head of the Tetrarchy, history would remember this as the "Diocletianic Persecution." In spite of the name all four men would put their signatures on a series of edicts that would bring about this persecution across all four divisions of the empire. It is at this time we see the Romans making a move that was very much the same kind of thing(s) the Greeks did which brought about the Jewish uprising against them and gave us the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) mentioned in the Gospel of John. (John 10:22) The first edicts to be signed into Roman law basically stripped Christians of their legal rights. This is that idea we covered last time about how it was easy to point to both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians and accuse them of disrupting society by turning from the customs of their forefathers which to the secular eye, or imagination, appeared to be the reason the great Roman Empire came to exist in the first place. Now, this is where we come to a very important note which is another one of those, can't stress it enough things. The edicts did not point blank make it illegal to be a Christian!

Some would argue that is incorrect and maybe in the end of all of the edicts signed it was true it was "illegal." However, the first edicts signed in 303 A.D. did not attempt to outlaw being a Christian, they attempted only to outlaw a critical part of what made being a Christian a true thing instead of a religion! This is the nutshell of what we have been driving toward over the last several segments, and if you're still wondering why this point is so important in light of the fact it would seem to many to be nothing but a technicality, keep in

mind the only reason it seems like “only a technicality” is due to our comfort with what the religion of Christianity is today! Among the non-Catholic Christian churches today it's common to think of having the freedom to choose how you go about living your life as a Christian, but in far too many ways people are trapped by the doctrines of their church. I've talked about it many times but what it comes down to is that you don't really see it until God shows you something you didn't know but that goes against that doctrine. People find themselves debating, some times for a short period and some times for years, whether they should follow what God has shown them or just stick to what the church teaches. It's sad because it never should be a debate, but it's very hard to stand up and live a certain way or travel the path a certain belief will take you when it feels you're kicking against what's familiar, comfortable, and believed by the masses. What's really sad is that most people find themselves going with the excuse that God won't mind if they just stay where they are instead of making a change.

This is the kind of pressure the religion of Christianity brings to the individual and because organizations have to define themselves with something, and usually something that justifies their existence by being different in some way, shape, or form from what other organizations teach, organizations become the defenders of their defining doctrines. As a whole, the religion defends even more basic beliefs and even more so practices which is why the Protestant apple didn't fall far from the Catholic tree. In the human mind it seems perfectly logical that this is the correct way to go about things, but when an individual is faced with the choice of going against said doctrine to believe what God has shown them that individual will begin to see the danger of religious belief. Thus, I say again, the Roman government didn't really outlaw being a Christian, but the caveat that came with was that your doctrine had to align with what the government would allow! Now, we've talked a lot about how Christians were a threat to the Roman Empire because they held something real, something that took them away from caring about the humanistic things the empire stood for, and that's what the empire was trying to change. Here now we see the history begin that shows us how the religion of Christianity evolved and why I use the Catholic way of thinking to talk about the religion very often. Out of all the denominations, churches, etc., Catholicism stands as the clearest example of doctrine that was meant to be exactly what the Roman government was demanding at the beginnings of the third century.

Now, I often talk about Catholic doctrine as being something devised to please the masses, and that's certainly true. It was men, some of whom undeniably had “good intentions,” devising ways to Christianize things that were normal to pagan practices. It's where so many of the things that are clear violations of even commonly understood Biblical commandments came from within the church. At the time of their solidification within church doctrine they were a perfect way to give pagans something they could be comfortable with even if they accepted Christianity. However, in spite of how much that is true, it is also true that the groundwork, the foundation for the thinking, did not really come from just men who wanted to please the people and get them through the front doors of the church. That occurred over time and is still in

process today, but the foundation was laid in these edicts the Roman government was putting out which said Christians had to respect and comply with traditional religious practices! Now, I'm not saying a whole lot of those who were true Christians started to turn to overlay “traditional religious practices” with Biblical sounding ideas, but we do see in this the pressure being applied to those who would call themselves Christians to, shall we say, bring Christianity into the mainstream. This is highly relevant to seeing how the religion of Christianity was formed. Jews had often had this kind of pressure put on them. As we've discussed, at the time of the Greeks this kind of pressure is what led to the resistance, uprising, and eventual taking back of the temple which in turn led to the miracle of the temple menorah oil lasting for eight days and in doing so developing the celebration of Hanukkah.

When those events took place the Greeks had not outlawed being Jewish because, of course, being a Jew was/is a nationality thing not just a choice those of the blood born nation make on their own. All that being true, the Greeks did attempt to outlaw all the things that culturally made Jews, Jewish! The Torah was banned from being read and copied, much less studied. Circumcision was banned and sacrificing to The One True God was banned as well. Just those handful of things were meant to bring Jewish culture to a halt in a way that would eventually cause Jews to stop being recognized as a specific people with a specific culture of their own. What led to the events celebrated at Hanukkah was that the Greeks had also taken over the temple and demanded “traditional religious practices” of the Greeks be what took place there. The sacrifices to God were halted and a statue of Zeus was erected on the alter. This was the true “...abomination that maketh desolate.” Daniel 11:31 It was a foreshadow of later events that happened to the Jews very specifically, and would spread out to a more worldwide kind of thing that effects all the people who serve The One True God. If the visions of Daniel and John seem hard to understand it's because we don't see that point I just made. We don't see how God put His chosen nation among men to show all true believers the reality of how the world responds to the the things of God!

The chosen nation serves as a lightning rod, so to speak, and any true believer can expect to see the same kinds of persecutions come to them as has been put on the chosen nation through the centuries. The persecution will not always be the exact same and they won't always be so obviously physical as they were against the Jews at various times through history, but the underlying thought patterns which cause such persecutions to come is always with us in this world. There will always be people who want to wipe from this earth the things of God. As individuals they may or may not have the resources and/or political position to carry out their thoughts, but individuals such as Hitler show us what can happen when they do. While we see Hitler as this epitome of evil I always try to remind people that the Holocaust was not carried out by one man nor could it have been! This speaks volumes to the subject we are discussing here because that's the point. It really only takes one person to be in the right position of power to get the ball rolling. Once it's rolling there are countless individuals who will come alongside them in what they want to do. These other individuals range everywhere from those sold out to the idea, all the way to

those who feel they have no choice but to go along with what they're told. Of course, there are all degrees in-between those two extremes as well, but the baseline reason this can happen at all has everything to do with the fact the world hates the things of God. (Rom. 8:5-8) The moments where we see events like the Greeks or the Nazis caused in order to go against the chosen nation are truly only the tip of the iceberg kind of events. Such things will always rise to the surface when the opportunity presents itself. However, the far more dangerous underlying bulk of what supports such events is always with us!

Thus, in the time of the Romans that we are looking at here it should have come as no surprise to Christians this kind of persecution would come. That can be said with certainty when speaking of those Christians who were part of the chosen nation. They had experienced it, felt it, and/or, at the very least, heard stories about it all their lives. On the other hand, it's also true for those who were not part of the chosen nation because most of them had seen Jewish people face harassment for being who they were if not all out oppression within their communities. Some non-Jewish Christians may have even been a part of that persecution at some point and time, but no matter how directly Christians had regular contact with Jewish people during their lives, they had to have grown up hearing things about Jewish people that were very negative. Again, all through their history the chosen nation has faced resistance of various degrees but one of the things that didn't need any organizational or political backing to take place was/is the telling of horror stories about what monsters Jews were. In history we see persecutions of the Jews that should be more than enough to convince us this storytelling had to be a part of the past; meaning it's not a modern phenomena. There is even literature that survives to this day which proves it did in certain places and times and it was/is more widespread than a lot of people believe. Thus, all this assures us the same kinds of activities going on today, didn't start with the invention of social media. It's deep rooted and even in times and places where Jews might seemingly be well accepted among the community, this snake has always lurked waiting for a chance to raise its ugly head!

The point is, non-Jewish Christians at the time of the third century didn't have to see persecution of the Jews firsthand to understand it existed under the surface. If you were someone who spent considerable time with Jewish people you would no doubt have experienced their culture and heard the stories from the Bible they tell and represent. From Purim to a hundred other examples there would be reason for you to have knowledge of how God's chosen nation has been received by this world. As printed copies of the Bible itself started to become more available people had direct access to such knowledge if from no where else than the pages of Scripture. It's why God preserved the stories He did within His Word. It wasn't just to show us all the ways the chosen nation went wrong, which far too often is the focus and very much driven by anti-Semitic thinking in and of itself, but the stories show us the persecutions from the minor to the major Jews have experienced. Historically the Bible's words do come to an end meaning newer stories are kept by time and the writing of history. However, what the Bible itself shows is a pattern of behavior by this world that has and will continue to persist until God brings this all to an end. Why do you think the words of Revelation tell us how Jesus will be

ruling and reigning on this planet, bringing a significant time of peace like man has never in any large numbers experienced before, yet when Satan is loosed from the bottomless pit he will find it easy to go out among the nations and stir up armies of people willing to go to battle for the sake of ending Christ's reign! (Rev. 20:6-10)

All the right information has been here when and as we have needed it to understand what can possibly and does happen to people who stand for the things of God on this planet. The reason so much anti-Semitism has existed in what calls itself the church is due to this truth. First, and foremost, men who are greedy for power will always wish to separate "Christianity" from the chosen nation because it gives them more of the freedom the religious leaders of Jesus' day enjoyed and didn't want to give up. The more your doctrine has to be directly linked to and supported by the words of God from Genesis to Revelation, the less power you have to dictate what you want. If you can paint the picture the chosen nation mattered once but doesn't since the time of Christ, you can throw away a significant bulk of the Bible's words as being not authoritative to our present time. This also leaves room for redefining Who Jesus was and what He was really teaching us which is a subject I could spend pages on all by itself! The second reason for wanting to separate Christianity from God's chosen nation has everything to do with what we've been talking about which is that you can brush away the idea Christians will always be persecuted like the chosen nation was. Understand, that's not an attempt to say Christians won't face persecution, but the real prize you gain is that you can take what calls itself Christianity and form it to suit the world at large so greatly that persecution is brought to a minimum or doesn't really come at all!

In so many ways it's super helpful if individuals claiming to be "Christians" believe they are not necessarily in the same category as the chosen nation when it comes to this issue because they won't find it odd that the world doesn't seem to hate them like it hates the people of the chosen nation. People may or may not question the doctrine they're taught, but for many it never crosses their mind that it's a little strange the church is more widely accepted in our world than the chosen nation ever has been. It's easy to think, sure that's true because Jesus started something new and different. Plus, the chosen nation rejected The Messiah so they have been rejected by God, right? See how Satan works to weave his tangled web? That kind of thinking is so embedded into the thought patterns and doctrines of what calls itself Christianity, not only do most individuals think nothing of it, they don't even realize it exists! That brings us directly back to where we are historically and talking about the fact the Romans didn't really attempt (at least at first) to outlaw being a Christian altogether. What they went after was what made Christians, Christians! It matters not if the Romans saw what they were doing as giving rise to a religion that claims a form of Godliness but denies the power thereof or not, their actions solidly set the stage for it. (II Tim. 3:1-7) Just like having people in political power can start the ball rolling on full-blown persecution of God's people, people with political power can get the ball rolling on a great many things they don't even realize they're actions are beginning! This is why God's Word tells us to pray for those in authority over us. (I Tim. 2:1-6) We may or may not know that our leaders have

motivation to create harm in some form but we know one thing for certain, they have power even they don't fully understand!

In a way this is true of all of us and a big part of why God didn't want us to have the knowledge of good and evil to begin with. Just as I have talked about when it comes to Catholic and non-Catholic doctrine, there are different things that motivate how they came about; both good intentions and bad. Regardless of how many of the Christians at the time these edicts were signed by the Tetrarchy changed or refused to change their ways, the very first edicts showed a path for how one could seemingly have their cake and eat it too! The Roman government was in a way jumping the question of how much do we restrict or not restrict religious freedom by saying you can be a Christian but you have to conform to traditional practices if you want to be accepted. Again, the question of how many Christians took this bait or not doesn't matter because it showed a way for not just Christians to seemingly have it all, it showed pagans how to as well. Now, maybe at the time of the Diocletianic Persecution that thought held little value since it was becoming increasingly dangerous to claim Christianity but the long-term effect certainly held more weight. I said in last segment that Satan really doesn't care how many generations of humans live and die in order to get what he wants. That's the reason we see in Revelation the idea Satan eventually sees his time as "short." (Rev. 12) Jesus coming to this earth showed Satan just how much the clock was ticking down on his attempt to get and somehow sustain what he believes he can accomplish. When Jesus returns to this earth the panic for him will really set in, so you can only imagine how agitated he will be when he's released from the bottomless pit!

All that said, he still doesn't care about the individuals he has to sacrifice and trample under foot regardless of haste or calm on his part. We are nothing but pawns in his game and considered expendable for any and all reasons. This is why Satan can literally offer you the world, which is something he attempted to draw Jesus in with, and make things look as wonderful as he wants. (Luke 4:1-8) Satan knows he never has to deliver on his promises if said delivery doesn't suit his purposes at the time. God, on the other hand, has been working and literally sacrificing to both give us what He created us to be as well as making sure we know He is willing and able to deliver on every promise He's made! Satan simply didn't care if every Christian on the planet was wiped out by these edicts or by what means they were wiped out. He also didn't care too much about the damage these edicts caused to the Christian populations. He understood what a win for the long game these edicts were because he saw clearer than I can probably ever use words in this publication to show/convince you, how the correct path to hurting the message of the Gospel was to form a false gospel! More so than being in the ear of every Christian attempting to get them shaking in their boots over the idea they needed to change or be killed for the sake of Christ, Satan was in the ear of those he knew were salivating at the thought of gaining power in some way, shape, or form. He didn't need this to be just one or two but he also didn't need it to be a group of any real size!

The apostles clearly had to deal with individuals in the early church that desired to throw around false doctrines as a way to bring importance to themselves. We see clearly how there where those who desired to somehow harness the power they saw in Christians to use for their own selfish purposes. (Acts 8:9-25, 13:4-13) Just like persecution of the things of God, these kinds of thoughts were and are always prevalent within the world's population. The brains of such people began to click off the correct way to use these edicts to form a religion that called itself Christian but was like pagan religion in that it served the purposes of men, not God! Think about it, the most powerful government in the world was telling Christians to specifically conform to traditional religious practices or face the consequences which were things like death by some of the worst ways imaginable. The logical in the human mind thing to do was walk away from being a Christian altogether or try to build a bridge that one could use to say, I'm a Christian and I still conform to traditional religious practices. The first option clearly means you're walking away from God but the second one seems like a reasonable compromise! One of the things that was causing so many people to come to Christ at the time was seeing the change God could bring into the lives of people around them. This in turn was bringing a popularity, if you will, to what people thought about being called a Christian. What if you could hold the title of "Christian" without being worthy of it? What if you further had an excuse to hold that title without being worthy with the excuse that you had to do and be what you were because the powers that be had decreed it to be the only way?

Compromise in so many things can and is a good thing when talking about relationships between humans. When discussing the commandments we considered the question of if it was even possible to truly love those around you to the degree you love and preserve one's self. The answers to all that seem to be found in compromise. I don't have to have everything I want so there will be resources for others to live but they too can't have everything they want. As good as compromise is and can be among humans, the one thing that should never be compromised is your faith! This is why the commandments have to be straight in our minds that the first and above all else commandment is to love The Lord with everything you are. If you have to sacrifice life itself, it's worth it to put God first in your life because only He has the life and death thing handled! In spite of this being the core of what the Bible has shown us from the opening words of Genesis, people still love to try and find a compromise that will give them this world and what God is offering in the next. The Roman government literally made it the law that compromising your faith was the only way to stay alive in this world. Individuals can choose correctly when faced with this but groups will always contain those who wish to take the compromise believing even God Himself can't expect more of us!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the

**Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by  
Philip E. Busby.**

## FBS continued from pg. 4

back to a place so far outside the Philistine's normal sphere of operations and influence there is no mention of anyone, much less Philistines, challenging Isaac for land or water here at Beersheba. This has a lot to do with the fact this was a place Abraham had clearly established himself in and due to his power and influence, controlled it. The Philistines had no claim here for many reasons and so the king finds himself clearly on Isaac's turf at this point. The tables of who had the power and who did not had turned to Isaac being the one who could welcome the king or tell him to - get out! Instead, Isaac simply makes it clear to the king he had not forgotten the way the king had treated him and the fact he had wanted Isaac to go find a place of his own somewhere away from the Philistines. There is also the strong likelihood that Isaac, at the very least, suspected what the king wanted. To what degree the king wanted to be in league with Isaac remained to be seen but Isaac had to know there was a similar reason for the king of the Philistines to come to him like the king of the past had come to Abraham his father.

Abimelech's response begins in verse 28 where he, or one of the men with him, begin their explanation with what I think of as a bit of a groveling tone. They say they had witnessed very clearly the fact God was with Isaac, and this statement alone is another one of those small things that pass by us if we don't study the words that are there for ourselves. I'm not saying it is one of those, specifically in the doctrine of a lot of churches/organizations kind of thing, but in my years of ministry I've found people far too often put way more stock than they should in the general thought (which is many times more of an assumption) that the people in Canaan didn't know The One True God. This is an issue I like to point to a lot because it's the basis for understanding several key points about the interactions of these forefathers and God Himself, with the Canaanites. This stands true no matter if one is talking about the time of the forefathers of the chosen nation or further down the line as the Israelites came out of Egypt with the command to destroy the Canaanite population. This assumption on the part of a lot of Bible students is also why and very connected to the idea that is within the doctrine of almost all churches/organizations (in one form or another) that there is the belief people don't know God until someone tells them. As I've emphasized over and over, the danger of this is that we flat don't understand the point of the Gospel message! We go about so many things wrong, not the least of which causes so many churches and Christians in general to look at people outside the church as souls to be pitied, we end up believing the Gospel needs our help to reach people!

Oh I'm very aware of the statement I just made and, again, we see the weakness of the English language. Maybe "pitied" isn't the right word as it hits most people's minds, but what I'm talking about is that base assumption Christianity carries everywhere it goes that says people who have not been told the Gospel message are without hope for salvation. This truth goes off into so many directions, it's the true web the doctrine of Christianity has woven itself into. Instead of Jesus coming to prove God had the power to do something He already told us He could do, Jesus is looked at as opening a

new way to salvation or a way people of the past had to in some way believe was coming in order for Christ's blood to flow to people of both the past as well as the present and future. It's where the arguments and massive misunderstandings come from about how people in the age just before Christ had to come join the chosen nation in order to be saved by the following of the Law. In turn, that's because people believe the following of the Law is what saved people who were born into the chosen nation. On and on we go through the hoops and turns of the twisted mess of misunderstanding most people proclaiming Christianity have! A ton of false doctrine can be cleaned up with the simple understanding we are all born knowing God. Most Christians readily accept the idea God knows the hairs on each of our head and many accept a fact that is sadly fading to some degree in the wash of sinful society we live in today, and that's the fact God knew us before we ever left our mother's womb! So why I ask, tell me why do we find it so hard to believe and hold as a foundational doctrine that people are born knowing God?

Again, I've been around long enough to fill the rest of this segment, and probably the entire next one, with the answers people will give to that question, but all of them hold about as much water as a bucket with no bottom. Simply put, if we accept that people are born knowing God the Bible's words and stories make far more sense. I'll add to that a warning that should be obvious and that's the fact the Bible will line up less and less with most any and all doctrine that calls itself Christian, but who would you rather believe, God or men? (Acts 5:29, Gal. 1:10-12) If we accept people are born knowing God we see clearly how much the responsibility to respond to His voice is an individual responsibility. The more we understand that the more we understand what it means to reach out with the Good News The Messiah has come and was willing to give His life for us. It seems like a minor shift but it's a major one when we begin with the right thoughts. Getting back to my use of the word "pitied" above, there is no doubt that our compassion for the lost should drive us to share our faith both in our actions as well as our words! We don't take on the idea that if people already know God then they can be responsible for their own choice to turn to God or not and they don't need us to have compassion or go to the work of reaching out to them. Why is that, should that be true, you might ask? Because that's the message and example Jesus showed us! The New Testament that Christians believe is the primary and most important part what we call the Bible is just filled to the brim, packed down and pressed together with the answer to that question, and why? Because it's the whole point of having The New Testament on top of the Old!

Why did Jesus tell us that if our brother strikes us on the cheek to offer him the other? (Matt. 5:38-42) Because it's worth getting slapped several times if our words finally cause someone to wake up and start walking in faith with the God they already know is there but are ignoring. Why does Jesus tell us not to be surprised when they persecute us for His sake? Because The Messiah went much, much further than being slapped around a few times to show the world how far God was willing to go to get them to pay attention to the most important thing in our lives and the true meaning of our existence! Thus,

we are told when they persecute us for reminding them of the God they've turned their back on, the reasons are clear; they hated God long before they hated you/us! (John 15:17-27) See how the words begin to fall in place? Jesus wasn't just talking about the general hatred of the world, He was talking about individuals. Individuals we interact with, in some cases on a daily basis, in some cases because they are literally blood relatives of ours who have chosen not to pay attention to The God Who created them; the God Who was there with them before their earthly mother and father even knew they were conceived and growing in the womb! That's the message that should bring out the compassion of our hearts to say it's worth giving our lives to help even a few turn back from the horrible mistake they've made no matter why they've made it! That's why it should truly bring tears to our eyes to think about Jesus being beaten, tortured, mocked and eventually nailed to a cross to die! That is the message of the New Testament; that God so loved the world and all the people in it whom He has been reaching to since the moment of their conception that He came down to offer Himself as an example of how far He was willing to go and we should be willing to go on saying, "You can have this whole world but I will not give up my faith!" "You can take my life but I will not turn my back on God!" Then there are the words of Job, God Himself can be the reason I die but I will still trust in Him! (Job 13:15)

Things like that are why I believe Job might be about the best example we have of people being born knowing God. The words of his book tell us even his wife knew who God was and believed in His existence, for she told Job when the times got hard what her response to God would be. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Job 2:9-10 Now there's a man who knew God, not because he had the Law of Moses to guide him, not because he had seen the work of The Messiah but because he had chosen to walk with God on a daily basis. Now, that's faith! Job had people slap him around, at least figuratively and emotionally, not because he was trying to convince them to start following God but simply because he already did in ways they couldn't grasp and he wasn't willing to bend to their foolish doctrinal beliefs even if he had known beyond the shadow of a doubt it was God Himself Who was putting him through all he was going through and all he was suffering. That's a faith stronger than most any of us can truthfully claim to have, if even conceive of having, in spite of our choice to come to faith being that we learned God Himself had come down in human form and scarified Himself for us. Job stood his ground through all that was put on him not ever seeing Jesus' example, and that should put a whole new light on the fact Jesus paid a debt He did know owe and we owed a debt we could not pay!

So how did I get into all this? It was due to a few simple words the Philistines began their explanation to Isaac with as they attempted to justify their coming to him when

Isaac was right in saying they "hated him." They didn't describe God as "The God of your father" or "The God of Abraham" or even "The powerful God you serve." They described God by calling Him "...the LORD..." Genesis 26:28 Let that soak in for a second instead of going right past it as so many do and we all do so many times. The Philistines had their own set of gods just as almost every culture on the planet had and has. Theirs was a Baal system of worship, again as so many had and still have where they worshiped the creation more than the Creator. (Rom. 1:24-25) So why do they not describe The One True God as in some way being the God Isaac and his father before him believed in, indicating He wasn't necessarily something they recognized as God or even simply a god? We can make all kinds of excuses to answer that but the bottom line was/is it was an insult to their gods to recognize The God Isaac served as - The Lord! By doing so they were at the very least acknowledging that no matter what they believed was and was not a god of any kind, the God Isaac served was over and above them all. If you don't think the words carry that much weight then you haven't been paying attention to what we've been discussing in this segment!

This was the king and his men who said to Isaac, Canaan is a big place so go and find some land that is not - among us. That is exactly what Isaac had done, and now these men had the audacity to come out to Isaac and intrude upon his space because they wanted something from him! They came with their hats in hand as the old saying goes because the same God they feared would have done terrible things to them had they so much as touched Rebekah; the same God they feared so much that they demanded Isaac leave them just because it was a possibility they might have touched Rebekah, they now feared was with a man they had more than likely made an enemy of! When Sarah had been taken by the Philistine king in the earlier story, they needed Abraham to pray for them in order to see God's hand lifted off of them, and the king at that time hadn't done anything like try to refuse to give Sarah back! The king Isaac was dealing with hadn't thought that far in advance because there was nothing immediately wrong other than him being angry at Isaac for withholding information they felt they needed for the very reasons Isaac feared telling them in the first place! The Philistines knew Who The One True God was and they feared Him in spite of refusing to worship Him as The One True God. That's what these words and this entire story is about! After seeing Isaac go out from them and prosper even more than he had while with them, after having time for their fear of what God would have done to them had they touched Rebekah to come more clearly into perspective, they now feared the one man they knew clearly had, did, and would continue to serve The One True God. Why did all this happen? Because before they were even out of their mother's womb, these men knew exactly Who the God Isaac served was!

Until next time, Shalom!

## The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

Testament it might have taken a considerable number of years for it to be completed. If and when circumstances are right for those years to be within a time period language drift and phrase changing is happening quite significantly the translator(s) him or herself, might feel the words they translate into should change as they go. This is often not a conscious thing as much as an unconscious thing when it happens. It's why I emphasize that it means something for a language to be a living spoken language when a translation is done from it or to it versus having the translation of the writing be from a language that's long gone. The smallest things can effect and change words and phrases we use on a daily basis and the thought of what word or phrase is correct today might not be the one we would choose for the very same words a few years down the road. So I just keep saying, the story of the Septuagint's creation likely contains a lot of truth with a little embellishment as well as some things that changed over the years between the events the story is describing and the Septuagint that became the one we have known for the last several centuries!

Now, I am very aware I have continued to speak of this "story" about the Septuagint's creation without actually covering the story, so let's see if we can get that in now and some of what we've been considering will make more sense. The very repeated version (if not word for word, using the same facts) is that the Greek "Pharaoh" of Egypt, a man by the name of Ptolemy, gathered 72 scholarly men and separated each of them into their own individual chambers in order to do the translation work from Hebrew to Greek. He instructed each of them personally to, "Write for me the Torah of Moshe (Moses), your teacher." The story says what happened after that is that God put it in the heart of each of these 72 men to translate identical copies of the Torah. Now, I'm by far not one to brush off stories of the miraculous kind as being fiction just because they are, to the human mind, hard to impossible to believe so let me be the first to say, this story is by far not impossible! That said, the story probably originated by witnesses to the events and not only do things have a tendency to not be told correctly in the first place, this story, of all stories, has a reason people of all stripes might have wanted to embellish it. So you probably have a combination of what police will tell you about eye witness accounts of a crime which is, everyone tells a different story to some degree, and some telling of the story contained embellishment of the facts for the sake of uplifting the accomplishment of the translation. If a king or leader of any kind told the story they had reason to hype it with a few not so truthful facts to heighten the prestige of their "accomplishment." As the story was told by men who believed the Septuagint was a wonderful accomplishment in all kinds of ways, they had motivation to see a more straightforward miraculous occurrence than the original telling might have contained.

The fact of the matter is this, in almost all legends and stories of great events there are fanciful details and, at the very least, nuggets of pure truth. One of the most disputed facts of this story is the side fact that it is said the 72 number came from the Pharaoh choosing six scholars from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. One of the reasons this fact is so in dispute is due to the misnomer that there are "ten lost tribes of Israel" after the

Assyrian invasion of the promised land and certainly after the Babylonian captivity. Maybe calling it a misnomer is incorrect or a little off but the point is, there were not ten lost tribes of Israel any more than there are twelve lost tribes of Israel. This is a point we have covered in talking about the idea that today, and for many centuries at this point, we call the children of Israel, Jews! This begins with the fact the Northern Kingdom of Israel which came into existence just after King Solomon died, consisted of ten of the original tribes. The Southern Kingdom of Israel consisted of two tribes which were Judah and Benjamin. When the Assyrians invaded the promise land they collapsed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and carried a great number of the people to other places within their growing empire. This is what causes people to say the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom were "lost." The truth of the story is that even before the Northern Kingdom was under any threat of being attacked people from the North were migrating south to become part of the Southern Kingdom which was still under the rule of the Davidic dynasty.

God allowed Israel to split into two parts because of the issue we've covered several times about the fact if Israel had to diminish in number in order to have a more pure group that was more correctly representing the ways of God and holding His Oracles, so be it. The Law of Moses makes this pretty clear in that over and over you find words about certain things being demanded out of the people of the chosen nation but if individuals refused or crossed certain lines they were to be sent out from the nation for their actions. The shorthand when talking about the Law is that it made it far easier to be removed from the chosen nation than it was for those not blood related to become a part of it! However, we see this truth of willingness on God's part to diminish the nation most clearly as Israel leaves Egypt on their way to the promised land. When they chose to make an idol to represent "the god who had brought them out of Egypt" while Moses was up speaking to God and receiving the Law, God became so angered by their action He told Moses He would destroy the nation and start over using just Moses. Moses pleads with God to spare the people but unless you believe God was never really serious about His willingness to do such a thing one can see how much this would have sent the entire plan of building the nation almost back to square one! If God was willing to do that, and there is no legitimate reason to believe He wasn't, this alone shows how much God was willing to diminish the nation in exchange for purity. In spite of Moses' plea and the ramifications that came with that for Moses (a subject we have also covered at other times) Moses would go down out of the mountain and end up carrying out punishment on the people for their actions that led to a great number of deaths among the nation as it was! (Ex. 32)

All through the rest of the stories we read about the journey to, as well as the taking of the promised land, we see God being willing to take actions that diminished the numbers within Israel including withholding His hand of protection due to their sins which led to many being killed in battle. I could go on and on making this argument but the point is, allowing the Northern Kingdom to exist in the first place was part of this same dynamic. Allowing the Northern Kingdom to fall to the Assyrians is another example of it. However, long before the fall of the North there were people out of all the ten tribes it

consisted of who desired to stay with the Davidic Dynasty and/or have more direct access to the temple in Jerusalem, which in spite of being part of the Northern Kingdom every Israelite was still obligated to go to order to follow the Law. What we see over the years are kings of the North trying to block and encourage people of their kingdom from crossing over to the South and specifically going to Jerusalem which only caused more people who still desired the things of God to leave the Northern Kingdom and join the Southern Kingdom as permanent residents. Looking at this gives the Bible student a great view of how the diminishing for the sake of purity worked in a very organic way. This view is even sharper when you consider the kings of the Northern Kingdom eventually developed a pagan “replacement” for following the true Law which had its own temple and altar of sacrifice built to mimic the one in Jerusalem but was embellished with the thoughts of men to make it more attractive to fleshly-minded people. (sound comparable to anything you remember us discussing about our modern day religious systems at times?) In doing this there can be no doubt many people from the Southern Kingdom who thought the Law of Moses was too restrictive, burdensome, etc. were attracted to move to the Northern Kingdom and live there!

As it relates to the subject of the story's information about six scholars from all twelve tribes being chosen to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek, such a fact is not impossible because there were members of all twelve tribes present in the Southern Kingdom just in smaller numbers than there had been before the nation split. Today we call people of the chosen nation “Jews” because the Southern Kingdom consisted primarily of the land belonging to the tribe of Judah. Benjamin was a small tribe and the part of the southern land belonging to them was really tiny compared to Judah. Combine this with the fact people from all twelve tribes were filtering from one kingdom to the other to live and you can see how the idea of specific land belonging to specific tribes became less and less a reality, especially in the South. This became even more true when the Assyrians collapsed the Northern Kingdom and people fleeing the invasion and subsequent captivity/displacement had no place to run but to the protection of the Davidic Dynasty. No matter when the reference came into common use, once there was no longer a Northern Kingdom of Israel there was no reason to refer to the Southern Kingdom of Israel by that name. Since the land was primarily the land originally given to the tribe of Judah and the ruling dynasty was also from that tribe it was only natural for the name of the entire Southern Kingdom to simply be called Judah. From there all the people of the chosen nation living on that land were naturally referred to as people from the land of Judah which easily boils down linguistically to “Jews.”

Now, some would take all that and say it doesn't apply to the base argument there were no longer twelve tribes of Israel to take scholars specifically from because as far down the line of captivities and wars as we are by the time of the Septuagint's creation the Jews had lost track of who was from any specific tribe. To some degree this argument sticks because more and more there were people who were fine with being called Jews and not worrying which tribe they originally came from but no

matter the personal opinions of individuals, keeping track of such facts was still the pride and job of the religious establishment that formed in Israel. By the time of Christ, people having lost track of their tribe and heritage, even marrying individuals outside the bloodline of the chosen nation, is a large reason we see people such as the Samaritans who were very connected to the Jewish people but also very much looked down upon by the pious Jews of the South! Clearly the stories of The New Testament show us there had to be great pressure of the political and social kind on the people of the chosen nation living in the South not to become part of those who lost enough of their Israeli heritage and position within the chosen nation to be ostracized in the way the Samaritans were! When that kind of pressure is real and in your face everyday as it was at the time of Christ, believe me, there were plenty of Jews keeping record of who they were, including what tribe they came from!

Does that confirm the authenticity of the story we are talking about concerning the Septuagint? No, not really, but again it shows the argument that the 72 men consisting of six scholars from each of the twelve tribes isn't impossible. People of the chosen nation today can have a very hard time figuring out what tribe they might belong to, and there is specific interest in identifying who is of the tribes of Levi and Judah for the sake of leadership both secular and religious. However, the task is not an easy one, yet it wouldn't take much searching online to find evidence that many Jews today are turning to DNA evidence as a way to try and restore knowledge of who is of what tribe. If the subject holds that kind of meaning to people of the chosen nation today there is really no reason to believe people of the nation at the time of the Septuagint's creation didn't care enough that hardly anyone knew their tribe. Of course, the idea of where these 72 men came from or how they were chosen is not the only facts of the story so one might be left wondering how we got this far down this particular segment of the study talking about it. That thought is in some ways why I started this conversation by expressing I thought it was odd the argument about the twelve tribe's existence is the one most used when saying the story is nothing but legend at best.

That said, one big reason that particular thread is pulled on so hard has everything to do with the accuracy of the 72 number no matter what's true or not true about the more miraculous portions of the story. Why would anyone care about the 72 number? It's because the name of the translation is the Septuagint for that reason! The term/word “Septuagint” comes from that strong language thing we find ourselves talking about for all kinds of reasons but most prominently when speaking of translating the Bible. It was true this translation was bringing the words of what Christians call The Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, but by the time of the translation the Romans had been and still were the empire in power. Thus, as odd as it might seem but in an example of how much language gets stirred all around, the name of the Greek translation is derived from Latin! “Septuagint” comes from the Latin phrase “Vetus Testamentum ex versione Septuaginta Interpretum” which in English means, “The Old Testament from the version of the Seventy Translators”!

Let's stay in God's Word!

