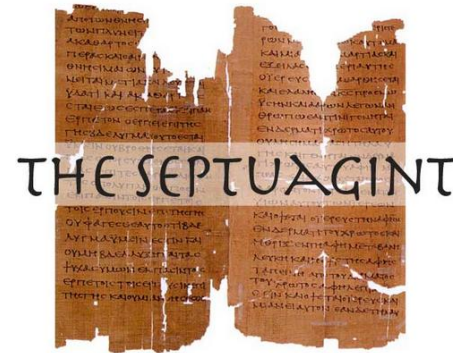


## Books of the Septuagint Part 1

### Introduction:

The name "Septuagint" comes from the Latin word for seventy (frequently referred to by the Roman numerals LXX) and is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The tradition behind the Septuagint is that 70 Jewish scholars translated the text in Alexandria, Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 BC). The Orthodox Church of today continues using the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. The books of the LXX also include the Apocryphal books.



The books of the LXX have been divided into four sections from the time of creation to the exile of Israelites and their return thereafter.

- 1) Books of the Law: Genesis to Deuteronomy
- 2) Books of Israel's History: Joshua to Maccabees
- 3) Books of Wisdom: Psalms to Wisdom of Sirach
- 4) Books of Prophecy: Hosea to Daniel

### Books Of The Law: Genesis to Deuteronomy

The first 5 books of the Old Testament are called the books of the Law. They are jointly known as the Pentateuch (penta means "five" in Greek) describe God's creation of the world. In Hebrew, the Pentateuch is the Torah (meaning "the law" or "instruction"), the Holy Book of the Jews. The author of these books is Prophet Moses. These books begin with God's creation and ends through the days of Moses. The main characters in the Pentateuch are Abraham and Moses.



**Genesis:** "*Genesis*" comes from a Greek word meaning "beginning", describes God's creation of the world, the rebellion of Adam and Eve and thus the fall of man. The first part of Genesis (Chapters 1-11) tells about creation and the human race up to the time of Abraham. And the rest of the book of Genesis (Chapters 12-50) contains the story of Abraham and his family. God chose them to be the beginning of His own special people. Abraham shows true faith in his One God and is called 'the father of all faithful'. Abraham and Sarah move to Canaan, the land that God had promised to give their descendants. They had a son named Isaac who had two sons named Esau and Jacob. As the book of Genesis concludes, Jacob's twelve sons and their families are living in Egypt. One of these brothers, Joseph, had become the governor of Egypt.

**Exodus:** "*Exodus*" means "Departure", referring to the journey the Hebrews took out of slavery in Egypt. This book was written during Israel's wandering in the wilderness for 40 years from the time of

**STOP AND THINK**  
> What is the purpose behind Moses documenting the events in the books of law? How is it relevant to us in the present times?

crossing the Red Sea to entering the promised land of Canaan. Exodus can be divided into three parts. Most of the events in the first part(Chapters 1-13) take place in Egypt, where the people of Israel had been made slaves by the pharaoh. The second part of the book(Chapters 14-18) includes events that happened while the people of Israel after being freed from Egypt by Moses, were on their way to Mt. Sinai. The final part of Exodus(Chapters 19-40) takes place at Mt. Sinai, where Lord appeared to Moses. The Lord gave the ten commandments(Exodus 20:1-17), as well as the laws for worship, sacrifice and everyday life, instructions on making the sacred tent and its furnishings, the altars, and the priestly clothes.



**Leviticus:** The third book "*Leviticus*" details the worship as dictated by God to be led by the ordained priests from the tribe of Levi. Most of the book is made up of laws, but it has a few stories telling what happened when the people or priests obeyed or disobeyed God's instructions.

**Numbers:** The book of Numbers continues the history of the people of Israel after they escaped from Egypt, and details the forty years when the Israelites lived in the desert on their journey from Mt. Sinai to Canaan. This book is named "Numbers" because it begins with Moses counting the Israelites to find out the number of people in each of Israel's twelve tribes. Numbers is about people who were rebellious, discouraged, and refused to believe that the Lord would take care of them. This book also shows how the Lord protected the



Israelites and wanted the Israelites to realize that He didn't want them to be destroyed, instead He wanted to bless them.

**Deuteronomy:** It was almost time for the people of Israel to cross the Jordan river and conquer Canaan. Moses had been told by God that he was going to die on the eastern side of the Jordan. So Moses gave several farewell speeches to the people of Israel in which he repeated many of God's laws. Because Moses was giving these laws to Israel for a second time, thus the book is called, "Deuteronomy", which comes from a greek phrase meaning "second law". When Jesus was asked which one of God's commands was the most important(Matthew 22:36-37), He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, "Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only true God! So love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength."

#### DID YOU KNOW

What is the origin of the english word jubilee?  
The word "Jubilee" is attributed from Leviticus 25. It is derived from the Hebrew word *jobel*, which means "ram's horn"; since the horn was used as a trumpet, whose sound indicated the beginning of the jubilee year. The jubilee year occurred every fiftieth year. The year of Jubilee involved liberty, repossession of inherited land, mandatory rest to land, cattle, slaves and labourers for the whole year.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Deuteronomy 5 explains the observation of Sabbath. Often the context is overlooked. As important as it is to keep the day holy, God wanted the Jewish people to always remember their struggles as slaves and have compassion towards their servants and all their living possessions to take rest.

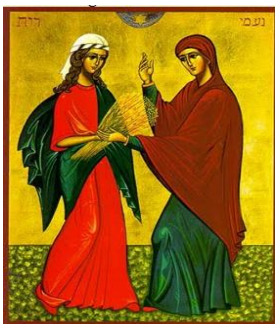
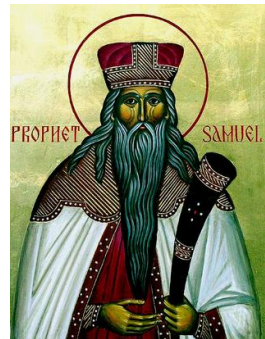
## Books of Israel's History: Joshua to Maccabees

The second section is known as the historical books of the Old Testament and it is comprised of 18 books.



**Joshua:** This book is ascribed to Joshua, whose name means "salvation". After the death of Moses at Mount Nebo, God chose Joshua to lead His people into the Promised Land after forty years of wandering in the wilderness. This book talks about how Lord helped Israel capture many of the cities and towns of Canaan. Sometimes this help even involved miracles. For example, in the battle of Jericho the Lord made the city walls collapse (Joshua 6:20); Later in the battle at Gibeon the Lord made huge hailstones fall from the sky and crush the enemy soldiers (Joshua 10:11); Then he made the sun stand still so the Israelites had a longer period of daylight (Joshua 10:13). It also describes how each tribe received its land. At the end of the book is also mentioned the two speeches Joshua made, emphasizing how good the Lord has been to the Israelites.

**Judges:** The book of Judges is believed to be written by Samuel. The Israelites had been settled for nearly 300 years in Canaan and they kept rejecting the Lord and worshiping idols. Each time, the Lord punished them by letting other nations attack and defeat them. As a result the Israelites turned back to the Lord and asked for His help, and He sent a special leader called a "judge", who helped them defeat their enemies. The book is named for the 13 judges of Israel, 12 raised up by God and one a usurper (the total number of judges the Israelites had were 15, the mention of the other two judges is in the book of first Samuel). The Israelites were faithful to the Lord for as long as the judge lived, they rejected God soon after the judge died. The judges were not kings, but deputies of God sent to save the people.

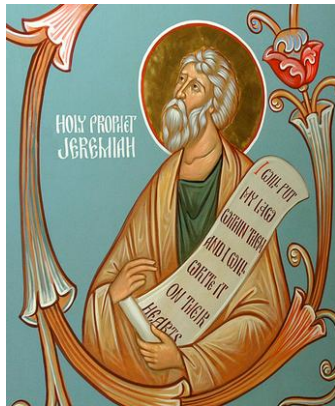


**Ruth:** The author of the book of Ruth is unknown. The book gives a glimpse into the life of an Israelite family during the period of the judges. This book gives a heroic account of a Gentile woman named Ruth, who broke all norms, and refused to leave her elderly mother-in-law Naomi. Naomi was left by herself with her two daughter-in-laws after the death of her husband and two sons. Ruth declines to leave her old mother-in-law all alone and placed herself under the protection of the one true God and was rewarded by a redeemer, a rich man named Boaz who later married her. The marriage to Boaz, Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David and foremother of Jesus.

**The First and Second Kingdom:** First and Second Kingdoms were written by Prophet Samuel and were single books but divided into two parts because together they were too long to fit on one scroll. The main character of these books is faithful Prophet Samuel who was the last judge of the Israelites and helped Israel's army fight against enemies. But when he grew old, the people decided to ask the Lord for a king who would lead the army. Saul is appointed as the first king of Israel and upon Saul's disobedience, God asked Samuel to anoint David as the second king. These books also give an account of the early childhood of Prophet Samuel and the lives of King Saul and King David.



**The Third and Fourth Kingdom:** The Third and Fourth Kingdom in the



Septuagint is called 1 and 2 Kings in the other versions of the Old Testament. The author of both the books is prophet Jeremiah. The Third Kingdom tells us how Solomon, the son of Bathsheba and King David is enthroned as the future king of Israel. These books give us a good record of King Solomon’s reign, his great wisdom and wealth. King Solomon is entrusted to build the temple in Jerusalem and does an outstanding job in all his endeavors. He remains faithful and humble to the One God and is blessed immensely. After the death of King Solomon many different Kings rule the land, none was as wise as King Solomon. By the end of Fourth Kingdom we learn that the Kingdom slowly goes in disarray and the temple at Jerusalem is totally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon and the Israelites are taken as prisoners to Babylon.



**First and Second Chronicles:** Prophet Ezra is considered to be the author of First and Second Chronicles. These books include the omitted details from the four books of the Kingdoms. This book contains details about the reign of King David, his son Solomon and the other Kings that followed them. The first chronicle gives special mention of the genealogy of David from Adam and writes how David became the King of Israel after the death of King Saul, according to the word of the Lord through Prophet Samuel. Prophet Ezra praises and admires King David, ignoring all his sins and shortcomings. The first book ends with the anointment of King David’s son Solomon as the King of Israel before the Lord. In the second book of Chronicles prophet Ezra writes in detail about the forty years of King Solomon’s reign and his major task of rebuilding the temple of God on mount Moriah.

**First and Second Ezra:** The first book of Ezra is an Apocryphal book and is written during the time of Israelites return to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon. The main theme of the First Book of Ezra is the renewed commitment of the Jewish people to worship in Jerusalem after the restoration of the Temple and follow the Law of Moses. The author of this book is not clear. The book depicts the Israelites as a people chosen to worship the One true God and through Him gain their strength and character. The second book of Ezra which is found in the Masoretic text, was written by prophet Ezra and emphasizes on the faithfulness and blessing of His chosen people when God’s commands are followed and sin and punishment otherwise. Thus, this book is also called the book of theology. Also, prophet Ezra advises the Israelites to trust in God and not in their military strength.



**Nehemiah:** Nehemiah was neither a priest nor a prophet. He is a great example of how a common man faithful to God can work wonders in a community. Nehemiah with his utmost dedication, patience and perseverance in God’s fulfillment of His promises becomes the sole motivator in shaping the religious practices of the Jewish community after their return from

exile in Babylon. He used his administrative powers as the Governor of Jerusalem to reestablish the Mosaic Law as the spiritual basis for the returning Jews and was instrumental in rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem.



**Tobit:** The book of Tobit, an apocryphal book is the story of a strong believer in exile in Nineveh. The author of this book of unknown. Despite being in exile he practiced charitable alms giving according to the mosaic law in all his dealings with his people. At one point the King of Nineveh seeks his life for burying the dead Israelites and yet Tobit praises God and seeks his mercy. Upon the change in leadership at Nineveh he returns to the land as a poor man and thereafter goes blind. The book of Tobit is considered an iconic book of salvation where God through time immemorial is preparing mankind for uniting us to Him in Christ.



**Judith:** Judith was a beautiful Jewish widow of a wealthy and pious farmer who lived in the village of Bethulia and her name means 'Jewess'. Though her countrymen were fearful of the approaching army of King Nebuchadnezzar led by his general Holofernes, Judith stands up single handedly and protects the Israelites against their strong and formidable enemy. Judith's unfailing trust in God to protect her people is the major theme of this apocryphal book and the author of this book is unknown.

**Esther:** The book of Esther in the Septuagint has significant additional sections more than the other modern versions of the Old Testament. These additional sections are a part of the apocryphal books. This book tells us the history of Israel and the author of the book is Mordecai an Israelite. This book writes the history of the Jews who chose to stay back in Persia after a decree by King Cyrus to return to Jerusalem. Esther is an orphan girl brought up by a pious Israelite Mordecai who taught her to worship the One true God. With divine intervention she replaces the queen of Persia to become the new queen of King Xerxes. Esther uses her royal position as queen to persuade the king to save her people from the evil plans of a general named Haman who was determined to eradicate the Jews.



**First, Second, and Third Maccabees:** The major theme in this Apocryphal book of Maccabees is God's deliverance of Israel during the Jewish wars and how God takes care of the Jewish people by rewarding those who are faithful to the Law and punishes evildoers. It is a story of the weak overcoming the mighty because they pray to God, trust in Him, and obey His laws. The author of the first Maccabees is unknown but is assumed to be an orthodox Jew. It was originally written in Hebrew and was probably called "The Hasmoneans", after Mattathias of the house of Hashmon. It was Mattathias who began the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid empire with the help of his five sons. The author of this book makes it clear that God chose the Hasmonean family as the instrument of his deliverance. Their primary objective was the rededication of the temple, an event still celebrated by the Jews as the festival of "Hanukkah" (from the Hebrew word meaning

“dedication”).

The author of the second Maccabees is also unknown but certainly not the author of first Maccabees. The author was most probably a Jew from Palestine. The second Maccabees starts with two letters from Jerusalem to the Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, urging them to celebrate the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem and to resist the pagans. Then the author summarizes the five-volume work of Jason of Cyrene concerning the exploits of Judas Maccabeus and his family.

The third Maccabees begins with the description of the attempt of King Ptolemy to enter and desecrate the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple. When the desecration is averted by divine intervention through the prayers of Simon the high priest, the king returns to Egypt determined to wreak vengeance on Israel for his humiliation in Jerusalem. The remainder of the book describes the persecution of the Jews, the miracles wrought on their behalf and their subsequent deliverance by God. The author of the third book of Maccabees is an unidentified Alexandrian Jew who wrote the book in Greek.



### Summary:

As we meditate on the first 23 books of the Septuagint, we understand God, and his deep love for his creation. He created man in His own image and being, to be an instrument to praise and worship Him. Through out God’s relationship with His chosen people He sends many prophets to preach the same. Unfortunately, man in his ignorance and arrogance fails to understand his purpose of existence. The Israelite community in the Old Testament times is the representation of the Church, those who hear the call of God, confess their sins, and come to Him, and those who reject the call and opt not to follow the word of God face the consequences. The Scriptures are a true testimony of God’s compassion towards His people, and a story of the weak overcoming the mighty because of their trust in God and their ardent desire to follow his laws. We can clearly understand the relationship of the One True God and His chosen people, their trials and tribulations and their victory under adverse conditions.

### CHECKPOINT:

1. Explain the first two sections of the Septuagint.
2. What are the apocryphal books found in the Books of Law and the Books of Israel’s history?
3. What do you understand about the role of women in history based on the books of Ruth and Esther?

### CHALLENGE:

- 1) What is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant of God?