How We Got the Bible

Lesson 2 - “IT’S ALL GREEK TO ME!

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. These two languages are very similar.

Most of the OT was written Hebrew.

Daniel and Ezra were written Aramaic.

The New Testament was written in Greek.

Hebrew reads right to left!

Hebrew usually has the verb before the subject!

(let there be) (God)(and he said)

וַיֹּ֥אמֶר אֱלֹהִ֖ים יְהִ֣י

(light) (and there was) (light)

א֑וֹר וַֽיְהִי־אֽוֹר׃

The Lexham Hebrew Bible. (2012). (Ge 1:3). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Hebrew  
ACROSTICS Psalm 119 ALEPH **א**

* **119 1 אַשְׁרֵ֥י תְמִֽימֵי־דָ֑רֶךְ הַֽ֝הֹלְכִ֗ים בְּתוֹרַ֥ת יְהוָֽה׃**
* 2 **אַ֭שְׁרֵי** נֹצְרֵ֥י עֵדֹתָ֗יו בְּכָל־לֵ֥ב יִדְרְשֽׁוּהוּ׃
* 3 **אַ֭ף** לֹֽא־פָעֲל֣וּ עַוְלָ֑ה בִּדְרָכָ֥יו הָלָֽכוּ׃
* 4 **אַ֭תָּה** צִוִּ֥יתָה פִקֻּדֶ֗יךָ לִשְׁמֹ֥ר מְאֹֽד׃
* 5 **אַ֭חֲלַי** יִכֹּ֥נוּ דְרָכָ֗י לִשְׁמֹ֥ר חֻקֶּֽיךָ׃
* 6 **אָ֥ז** לֹא־אֵב֑וֹשׁ בְּ֝הַבִּיטִ֗י אֶל־כָּל־מִצְוֺתֶֽיךָ׃
* 7 **א֭וֹדְךָ** בְּיֹ֣שֶׁר לֵבָ֑ב בְּ֝לָמְדִ֗י מִשְׁפְּטֵ֥י צִדְקֶֽךָ׃
* 8 **אֶת־חֻקֶּ֥יךָ** אֶשְׁמֹ֑ר אַֽל־תַּעַזְבֵ֥נִי עַד־מְאֹֽד׃

*The Lexham Hebrew Bible*. (2012). (Ps 119). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**א Lamentations**

* **3 1 אֲנִ֤י הַגֶּ֙בֶר֙ רָאָ֣ה עֳנִ֔י בְּשֵׁ֖בֶט עֶבְרָתֽוֹ׃**
* 2 **אוֹתִ֥י** נָהַ֛ג וַיֹּלַ֖ךְ חֹ֥שֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אֽוֹר׃
* 3 **אַ֣ךְ** בִּ֥י יָשֻׁ֛ב יַהֲפֹ֥ךְ יָד֖וֹ כָּל־הַיּֽוֹם׃ ס
* 4 **בִּלָּ֤ה** בְשָׂרִי֙ וְעוֹרִ֔י שִׁבַּ֖ר עַצְמוֹתָֽי׃
* 5 **בָּנָ֥ה** עָלַ֛י וַיַּקַּ֖ף רֹ֥אשׁ וּתְלָאָֽה׃
* 6 **בְּמַחֲשַׁכִּ֥ים** הוֹשִׁיבַ֖נִי כְּמֵתֵ֥י עוֹלָֽם׃ ס
* 7 **גָּדַ֧ר** בַּעֲדִ֛י וְלֹ֥א אֵצֵ֖א הִכְבִּ֥יד נְחָשְׁתִּֽי׃
* 8 **גַּ֣ם** כִּ֤י אֶזְעַק֙ וַאֲשַׁוֵּ֔עַ שָׂתַ֖ם תְּפִלָּתִֽי׃
* 9 **גָּדַ֤ר** דְּרָכַי֙ בְּגָזִ֔ית נְתִיבֹתַ֖י עִוָּֽה׃ ס

(2012). (La 3). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Hebrew Names

Cain – “I brought him from the LORD.” Gen. 4:1:

**“CAINEETEE” – I Brought**

Names with “Ja” – short for Yahweh

Names with “El” – short for God

The name of the “LORD” – tetragrammaton, the KJV way of saying, *Yahweh*

Hebrew HALLELUJAH!

….

Bless thou the **LORD**, O my soul. בָּרֲכִ֣י נַ֭פְשִׁי אֶת־**יְהוָ֗ה**

Praise ye the **Lord**  (HALLUJAH) הַֽלְלוּ־**יָֽהּ**׃

Psalm 104:35

* Hebrew “**Amen**!”
* Isaiah 65:16 - 16 אֲשֶׁ֨ר הַמִּתְבָּרֵ֜ךְ בָּאָ֗רֶץ יִתְבָּרֵךְ֙ בֵּאלֹהֵ֣י **אָמֵ֔ן**

Potential translations of “Amen” - “Truth,” “let it be so” – or just keep the Hebrew and say Amen!

Isaiah 65:16 KJV - That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth…

**Psalm 89:52 KJV -**  As you can see, sometimes the KJV translated “Amen” as “truth” or “let it be so” – **and other times they just left it with the Hebrew and chose not to translate it.**

“Blessed *be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.”*

What did Jesus do?

John 3 - The KJV uses yet another word here to translate “amen” – “Verily”

John 3:3

“Amen, amen, I say to you, except one be born anew/from above, not he able to behold the kingdom of-the God.

John 3:5 5

Answered Jesus, “Amen, amen I say to you, except one be born out of water and spirit, not he able to-enter-into the kingdom of-the God.”

Mark 15:34 – We know Jesus spoke at least Aramaic, and probably Hebrew as a good Jewish boy that could also read the scriptures and teach them in the synagogue. He said, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”

Remember the word **EL**?

EL is short for **ELOHIM**

Eli means “My God”

“Do I really need to know Greek to understand the Bible?” Well . . . at least a little bit!

What’s unique about “the Greek?” Consider this . . .

* Greek – ALPHA and OMEGA – Revelation 1:8  
  beginning and the end. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. See what I mean? You *do* need to understand a little bit of Greek even if you only ever read the KJV.
* Greek – What to me and to you? John 2:4

KJV - Jesus saith unto her, Woman, **what have I to do with thee**? mine hour is not yet come

* Greek – God forbid? – This is actually a 17th century English idiom.

Romans 6:2 **μὴ γένοιτο· “me genoito”**

Romans 6:1, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? V.2 **God forbid.”** (KJV)

Romans 6:1-2b – “Me genoito” literally means “No it-come-to-be” – “May it never be!”

God’s name is not in this verse. “God” and “forbid” have their own words.

“Forbid”

Acts 10:47 **κωλῦσαί** kolusai

Acts 28:31 **κωλύειν** koluein

“God”

John 1:1 **θεός** Theos

“Baptism”:

The Greek word “baptizo” simply means to immerse or dip. This is part of why you don’t see any Greek Orthodox churches sprinkling their babies.

It is not an English word. If you look up Baptize in any good dictionary, you will see the ancient connection to the Greek word “baptizo.”

This is another instance where the KJV translators decided to ***transliterate*** (using the English letters which make the closest sound possible to the language being translated) instead of translate.

Some things don’t carry over well from one language to another very well. “Kick the bucket” (a casual way of saying someone died) doesn’t make any sense if you say those words in most other languages: [What are some idioms in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/idioms-in-the-Bible.html)

So what? Do I need to be fluent in biblical Hebrew and Greek?

No. But make friends with people who do (Jesus, Paul, John, Luke, commentators, and maybe even your pastors!)

Understand enough to understand your English Bible because of 1 Tim. 2:15.

**Key Take-aways**

**I.** Scripture is trustworthy. While the nuances of languages are obvious, these are not enough to affect the meaning and intent of the core teachings of the Bible. We can trust good translations of which the intent is to accurately *represent* the original languages.

**II.** Scripture is beautiful. God chose to write scripture in the languages that He chose to write scripture: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. There are preserved concepts in those original languages of scripture that cannot be captured by any translation, but we can still study to learn the concepts in our language.

**III.** God uses a variety of languages and translations.

(1) Hebrew in Genesis 2) Greek when Jesus was speaking Aramaic, 3) the LXX for the Greek readers of the Old Testament, and 4) modern translations in many languages.

**IV.** The nuance and idioms of the original languages point to the reality that **Christianity happened within the history of reality.**

Christianity was not an invention of King James in the 1600’s, the pope, or a collection of conspiracy theorists in the 3rd and 4th centuries. This idea of “reality” is so important. See 1 Cor. 15 for example. The resurrection had to actually happen!

**V.** 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 John 1:8

You have work to do! You will not be done studying the word and being under the process of sanctification until you’re with Jesus.

**VI.** Many of the “differences” in translations both modern and ancient are usually because something in the original text could easily and **legitimately** be understood in a number of different ways. Translations **always** are slightly different from the language of origin, otherwise they would not be a good or faithful translation, because the purpose would not have been accomplished. The purpose of translation is to accurately represent the original language and make it understandable to the average readers and hearers of another language.