

On the Corner Fringe: The Septuagint January 19, 2018

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://cornerfringe.com/media/4qv7n2t/otcf-the-septuagint>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document be printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliteration into the English alphabet. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

The Septuagint

This is a transcript of a message from **Pastor Daniel Joseph** of **Corner Fringe Ministries** regarding the historical and theological importance of the **Septuagint**, the ancient Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible**. Originating around **250 BC** for the **Library of Alexandria**, this work is identified as an explicitly **Jewish** production that predates Christianity. Daniel highlights how the **New Testament apostles** frequently quoted the Septuagint, using its specific Greek terminology to clarify messianic prophecies like the **virgin birth** in Isaiah. He argues that the Septuagint provides essential insight into the **mindset of ancient Jewish translators** and their understanding of biblical intent. Furthermore, Daniel notes that the **Dead Sea Scrolls** have occasionally proven the Septuagint to be a more accurate reflection of early Hebrew manuscripts than the later **Masoretic Text**. Ultimately, he encourages students of the Bible to use this **invaluable resource** to gain a deeper, more accurate perspective on Scripture.



[Introduction]

Insightful—Challenging—Cutting Edge—
Biblical

[Daniel Joseph]

Shabbat Shalom, everyone. Welcome to *On the Fringe*. I'm Daniel Joseph, and today I want to give you a powerful study tip. Over the years, as I've pursued my biblical studies and gotten to know the Bible better,

I've acquired several resources which I rely on. One of which, and I would preface it by saying it's invaluable to me now, is that of the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. This dates back to about 250 BC.

Since it dates back to about 250 BC, it is not a Christian work per se. Obviously, the New Testament, we would classify as a Christian work. The early church fathers' writings, we classify those as Christian works. It needs to be noted the Septuagint is explicitly a Jewish work. And that becomes important

when you get into the realms of anti-missionaries, and I'll mention a few things in this brief video about that, and it'll have a lot more meaning for you.

But getting a little bit of history, around 250 BC, Demetrius was the chief librarian at the Library of Alexandria. The library was obviously infamous and is known throughout the world for its collection of books and history. Well, Demetrius had advised King Ptolemy II, the king of Egypt, that they needed to acquire Jewish works, the sacred writings of the Jews, specifically the laws of the Jews. He was referencing the Torah.

So, based upon Demetrius's advice to King Ptolemy, he sent delegates to Jerusalem and to the High Priest, to the *Kohen Gadol* (כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל), Eleazar. Eleazar agreed, and they ended up sending 72 Jewish elders from the area back to King Ptolemy to translate the Hebrew writings of the Torah, the Jewish law, into Greek, into Koine Greek, which was the language of the world at that time.

There are commentaries, like the Letter of Artemis, or writings of Josephus, and Philo. We have all these early resources that hail back to the Letter of Artemis, which goes back further than the first century. It goes closer back to the second century BC. But then Josephus actually quotes from the Letter of Artemis, which tells of the history of this, of what I was just going through regarding the origin of the Septuagint. Then Philo also refers to it, and then of course you have the early church fathers referring to it, so to be able to track the historicity of the Septuagint, it's pretty clear. It's powerful when you begin to look at it through the lens of Josephus and Philo and the Letter of Artemis and more.

So, we have a very clear construction, historically on how this developed. Later traditions came into play with the early Church Fathers, who would embellish a little bit. But the bottom line is, one thing we can track and identify is that this was explicitly seen when they translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, or the Torah into Greek. Later on, the rest of the books were added, but they saw this as divinely inspired, and the Jewish people all heard it. It was read in the presence of priests, and they were all in perfect unison regarding loving this translation and believing it was a faithful translation.

It wasn't until Christianity that the rabbis took an opposition against the Septuagint being translated into Greek because it was seen as, obviously, a very powerful tool for spreading the gospel. And that's a huge point in recognizing the Septuagint and what the LORD did, understanding how He, hundreds of years in advance, was already setting up to have His Word go out to the entire world, to the entire nations, according to His good purpose. So, you can see the hand of God in the Septuagint and know what He was going to do in a short time by bringing His Son to the earth and then spreading the gospel. And the gospel was spread in Greek.

Many of the Jewish people did not speak Hebrew. They were Hellenistic Jews, and they didn't speak Hebrew; they only spoke Greek, and we know that the then-known world really spoke Greek primarily. So, if you're going to spread the gospel, you're going to have to involve many languages—we know the Apostles would be bilingual, trilingual, speaking Aramaic and Greek. It's thought someone could speak the formal language of Rome, which is Latin. I mean, but be that as it may, the Septuagint was really a divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit and a work to spread the gospel to the four corners of the earth.

I just want to briefly share some aspects of the Septuagint so you can appreciate why I utilize it as a resource. If I'm studying a particular passage or a particular story and I really want to dig deep, I am going to utilize several different types of resources. Obviously, I go back to the Hebrew; that's the first

thing I do. The second thing I do is usually go to the Greek. I'll go to the Septuagint. If I'm feeling very motivated at times, I'll dig up the Targums on the particular book or particular passage I'm studying.

But what I have found with the Septuagint, and if you're going to get anything out of this little tidbit that I'm giving you, get this: when you have Jewish men translating from their native language, from their father's, father's, father's language, into the language of the day and a language that they were fluent in as well, something unique is going to happen, and we see this over and over again, and I'll give you a couple examples in a moment.

What we see is when they go to translate, they are forced to look at the passage's intent and what is being said, and they're forced to say, "I need to bring this specific idea. I need to bring this group of words into it, moving it from a host language to a receptor language." And when you do that, it requires some serious thought. Well, in the midst of this, the beauty of the Septuagint is this: We get to know the mindset, and we get to see some understanding bleed through. It results in translation from the Hebrew to the Greek of how these Jewish people understood the text.

For the most part, you're going to see it was basically a formal equivalence. However, there are times when you get in the Septuagint where you see these Jewish elders literally take a dynamic approach. They take a dynamic equivalence approach. And by doing that, it actually brings a deep understanding of what is being said in the passage. So, they're drawing out this deep understanding.

Let me take you to Isaiah 28:16. Let's just look at this. This is coming from the Masoretic text. So, this is in our Hebrew Bible, the Hebrew text. It's translated into English, and this is what it says: **Therefore thus says the LORD God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily."** (Emphasis added).

That last part is what I want you to focus on: **"Whoever believes will not act hastily"** because Paul quotes this very verse, but he says in Romans 10:11, **"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."** (Emphasis added). Now, that's a really interesting translation. And this is where the anti-missionaries come in and say, well, you know, Paul totally veered off of Scripture. He basically reworded it to make it say whatever he wanted to say just to simply spread the gospel; that is not entirely true. And why is that? Paul is quoting the Septuagint, and this is literally what the Septuagint says: that he would **not be put to shame**.

And so here you have something where, okay, the Hebrew text, the Masoretic text, says he will not act hastily, but you go to the Septuagint, and it gives you a little bit more clarity. You're not going to **be put to shame**. And you might say, "Well, you're kind of getting into potato-potato." Well, you can go to other passages, and it gets more intense. For example, it gets into theology.

Isaiah 7:14—**Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel** (emphasis added). Now this is the English translation of what we typically read. Most of you have your Protestant Bibles, and it says the virgin. The point I want to focus on here is when we look at this in the Hebrew. This is not what it says in Hebrew. The Hebrew renders it **"almah"** (עַלְמָה), and **"almah"** simply means "young woman." It's not explicit to a virgin. The Hebrew word that would be used there is **"betulah"** (בְּתוּלָה). **Betulah** would express that she is a virgin, explicitly a virgin, but that's not what's used here.

And so, this is important as you come to the New Testament, and especially as you come to and you understand what the anti-missionaries are saying; they're crying foul, Christianity is a fraud, and it's making stuff up because Matthew 1:23 records this:

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son...” (Emphasis added). Now here's the thing about this: you look at this, and

we do have it in Greek today, of course, since the New Testament was written in Greek. But we would have one exception, the early book of Matthew. Papias records

that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew but translated into Greek. But we don't have a surviving copy. We have nothing of that nature, but we do have the Greek Matthew.



In Greek it is *“parthenos”* (παρθένος). *“Parthenos”* is not simply a general term for a young maiden as you would see with *almah*. *Parthenos* is explicit to a virgin. You would use a different word, like *“neanis”* (νεάνις) or *“korasion”* (κοράσιον) in Greek, to capture the term *“almah.”* But that's not what's used here.

Parthenos is used here, and so anti-missionaries come out and say, "Well, you know, Matthew is just trying to create an environment for this virgin birth, which never really existed. " The Hebrew text doesn't say that, and so on. The problem is Matthew is actually quoting from the Septuagint. It's not a Christian work; it's pre-Christian. This is explicitly a Jewish work. And in the Septuagint, Isaiah 7:14 does use *“parthenos,”* which is explicit, not *“neanis”* or any other Greek term that would reference *“almah.”* No, it's virgin. So, here we can see the power of the Septuagint. There's a lot of power here for biblical studies, and for better understanding.

Let me be clear: when you read the New Testament, with all due respect, it drives you to the Septuagint, because more than half the time Scripture is actually quoted. So, where the Tanakh is quoted, it is actually being drawn from the Septuagint, the Septuagint translation. And there are so many passages we can look at that are so different in the Septuagint. "Different" in the sense that the Septuagint is even clearer. It's even more direct.

Amos 9:11 is a perfect example pertaining to the Gentiles because when you read Amos 9:11, it's about the fallen tabernacle of David. It is the prophecy that he would raise up this fallen tabernacle of David, and what would happen is the nation of Israel would go out and possess the remnants of Edom. However, when you read the New Testament, you see James utilizing this very term in Acts 15:17, he actually interprets and draws from this **that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD**. Again, this is drawing more from the Septuagint. He's taking that from the Septuagint, and that is a profound revelation.

Let me take it a step further and show you how, at times, the Septuagint is actually seen as a superior translation to what we call today the Masoretic Textual Tradition. The Hebrew manuscripts are what develop our Old Testament today. All the English translations that we have, whether you're going for the Critical Text, the Majority Text, etc., draw from the Masoretic Text, the Masoretic Textual Tradition.

Well, let me show you an example where the Septuagint has actually proved itself to be the superior translation, and this is 1 Samuel 1:24—**Now when she had weaned him, meaning Samuel, she took him up with her, with, now here's the thing, three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child was young.** (Emphasis added).

Now the interesting thing about this is she's taken three bulls up as the Masoretic Textual Tradition records. Obviously, this is to sacrifice to the LORD. The interesting thing is, nowhere in the Torah, and I mean nowhere, are you going to find a sacrifice that has three bulls. This is completely out of the ordinary. If you studied the Book of *Vayikra*, Leviticus, you know something's not right. You don't see a template for this sacrifice.



Well, here's the interesting thing. As you go to the Septuagint, and read the Septuagint's translation. —[LXX] 1 Samuel 1:24—**And she went up with him, meaning Samuel, to Selom (Shiloh) with a calf of three years old...** (emphasis added). Ah, isn't that interesting? She went up with a calf of three years old. The Masoretic Textual Tradition says three bulls, but the Septuagint translation actually has a three-year-old bull. Now that we can find located other places in the word, because that is something Abraham actually sacrificed to

the LORD. So we have a template; we have a precedent within the Torah to support what this is...**and loaves, and an ephah of fine flour, and a bottle of wine: and she entered into the house of the LORD in Selom, and the child with them.**

Here's the thing: some might say, Well, this Septuagint took a liberty here, and it's not accurate; we'll rest with the Masoretic Textual Tradition. The problem with that is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, this passage was found in a Hebrew document, obviously written earlier, than that of the Masoretic Textual Tradition. And wouldn't you know, it has it exactly as the Septuagint has it. It has it as a three-year-old bull. That's what she took up with her to sacrifice to the LORD. Not just that, you also find the same thing in the Syriac translations.

And so, here's just a perfect example of how the Septuagint, at times, by no means all the time, can show itself to be the superior translation. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have confirmed the authenticity and the purity, I would go as far as to say, the Septuagint has absolutely shown itself to be a legitimate translation. It's more than that; it's so much more powerful because we're drawing from it what the first-century Jewish apostles drew from it. When they quoted, they quoted explicitly from the Septuagint because the wording is different, and I could give you many other examples. I'm not going to do this in this video, but it's something for you to think about. They are constantly quoting explicitly from the Septuagint, which tells you—and this is important—number one, they relied upon it; number two, they trusted it because they taught from it and they were learned in it.

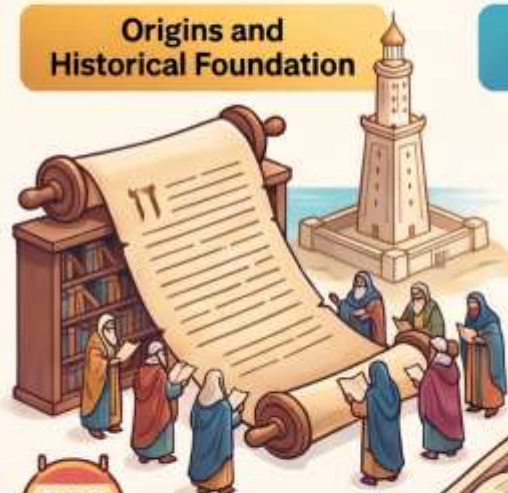
And so just a little helpful tidbit for you to utilize as you go deeper into the Word: you may want to utilize the Septuagint, and you can go online. There are several different resources, and what I'll try to do is to get these on our website. I want to give some resource links. I want to have a whole resource

page put together for you so that you can go on there and just click on it, but you can find the Septuagint; it's totally free; it's online; there are several different venues for that.

With that said, may the LORD bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you. Blessings. Shalom.

The Septuagint (LXX): The Greek Bridge to the Bible

Origins and Historical Foundation



250 BC

Commissioned in 250 BC

Translated by 72 Jewish elders in Alexandria centuries before the Christian era.



A Jewish, Pre-Christian Work

It is explicitly Jewish in origin, not a later Christian invention or embellishment.

The Apostles' Primary Resource



Accuracy and Divine Legacy



Provides Essential Linguistic Clarity

Clarifies specific meanings, such as defining "virgin" in the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy.



Validated by the Dead Sea Scrolls

Modern archaeology confirms the Septuagint preserves older Hebrew readings lost in other traditions.

50%+

Over half of the Old Testament quotes in the New Testament match the Septuagint.

Comparing Textual Traditions (1 Samuel 1:24)

Source	Textual Reading	Historical Precedent
Masoretic Text	"Three bulls"	None; no Torah template for this sacrifice.
Septuagint (LXX)	"A three-year-old bull"	Matches Abraham's sacrifice and the Dead Sea Scrolls.