



## **Why do the number of Old Testament books differ between Catholic and Protestant/Reform Bibles?**

Over the course of history there have been many “diasporas” (scattering) of Jewish people to lands outside of Israel. It is believed that the majority of Jews spoke Greek as their primary language. In order to meet their needs, sometime in the 3rd century BC in Alexandria, Egypt, a group of 70 (or 72) scholars undertook to translate the texts in use at the time into Greek, as well as incorporate books that were in use and already in Greek. This translation is called the Septuagint (Greek for “70”) and often abbreviated as LXX. Here are key points about the Septuagint:

- It includes Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), the books of Maccabees and additional portions of the books of Daniel and Esther existing only in Greek. These additional texts are called the “Deuterocanonical” books in the Catholic tradition.
- When the New Testament writers are quoting the Old Testament in 90%+ of the instances it is clear that they have used the Septuagint, indicating that this translation was widely used by the early Christian communities.

After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD by the Roman armies, Judaism reformed around synagogue worship and the rabbis. It is believed that in 90 AD a meeting of the rabbis, at this point largely from the Pharisees, met to address the problem of Jews who held that Jesus was the Messiah (i.e. Jewish Christians). This was the point in time in which Jewish Christians were expelled from the synagogue. It was also decided that if the scroll of scripture was not in Hebrew it was not to be part of the canon of scripture for Jews. The oldest Jewish bible is a 7th century text from Spain, the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

As Christianity spread across the Mediterranean basin, different communities, while largely using the same books of Scripture, also included others. In the Old Testament this was largely limited to a few apocalyptic books. Most of the variations were among New Testament books. Long story short, over the course of about 30 years in a series of local Councils there were “surveys” of what books the Christian communities found helpful in terms of faith and worship. After communications among and between the communities, in 418 AD the Pope wrote an encyclical letter defining the Canon of the Old and New Testaments. It is the Canon that remained in use within the Catholic Church and was reaffirmed at the

Council of Trent in the shadow of Protestant and Reformed movements deciding to revert the Old Testament to what we know as the Masoretic text.

It's important to note that the differences in Old Testament canons do not significantly impact the core beliefs and teachings shared by both Catholic and Protestant Christians, as the New Testament, which is common to both traditions, is considered the primary source of Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, the variations in the Old Testament canons reflect the historical and theological diversity within Christianity.