

The Septuagint is a translation of Hebrew Torah or Pentateuch scriptures into Greek. By tradition, it was ordered for the expansive library in Alexandria under the reign of Pharaoh Ptolemy Philadelphus (283-246 BCE) because there was a large Greek-speaking Jewish community there. The high priest in Jerusalem supposedly sent 72 scholars (6 from each of the 12 tribes) to Alexandria. Some claim the work was completed in 70 days. The name Septuagint, meaning 70, comes from those traditions. As a result it is often referred to by the Roman numeral LXX. By the 1st century BCE, the entire “Old Testament” had been translated into Greek, which was, somewhat ironically, the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire.

While the entire Old Testament is often attributed to the 70 or 72, the English biblical scholar H. B. Swete rather bluntly suggested multiple translators is more likely. “Strictly speaking the Alexandrian Bible is not a single version, but a series of versions produced at various times and by translators whose ideals were not altogether alike. Internal evidence of this fact may be found in the varying standards of excellence which appear in different books or groups of books. The Pentateuch is on the whole a close and serviceable translation; the Psalms and more especially the Book of Isaiah shew obvious signs of incompetence. The translator of Job was perhaps more familiar with Greek pagan literature than with Semitic poetry; the translator of Daniel indulges at times in a Midrashic paraphrase..... When we come to details, the evidence in favour of a plurality of translators is no less decisive. A comparison of certain passages which occur in separate contexts distinctly reveals the presence of different hands.”

Either way, the entire Old Testament, commonly referred to as the Septuagint, had probably been translated by the 1st century BCE and it was the scripture that Jesus and his disciples knew and quoted.

In the first two or three centuries after the Roman Empire made Christianity its faith with