

HISTORY OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE

The Language of the New Testament

The Dead Sea Scrolls

There is evidence of the Septuagint among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of Jewish texts that were discovered in the mid-20th century in the vicinity of the Dead Sea. The scrolls include many copies of biblical books, as well as other Jewish texts, and they were written between the third century BC and the first century AD.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls are several fragments of Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible, including fragments of the Septuagint.

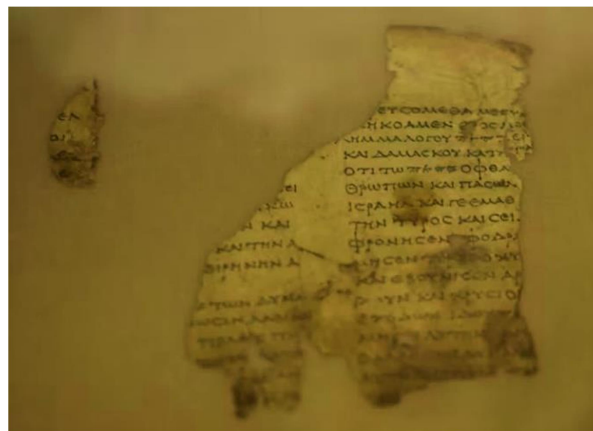
One of the most significant of these is the so-called "Septuagint of Jeremiah," which is a Greek translation of

the Book of Jeremiah that was found among the scrolls. The Septuagint of Jeremiah contains significant differences from the Masoretic Text, which is the standard Hebrew version of the book, indicating that it was translated from a different Hebrew text.

Other fragments of the Septuagint that have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls include portions of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

The presence of the Septuagint among the Dead Sea Scrolls indicates that it was a significant text in Jewish circles during the Second Temple period, and it suggests that the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible had a wider influence than was previously thought.

This must be kept in mind when considering why Greek became the language in which the New Testament was written.



Why Greek?

Greek was the language of the New Testament for several reasons.

Historical context

Greek was the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean world during the time the New Testament was written. It was the language of trade, commerce, and culture, and was spoken by educated people throughout the region.

Spread of Hellenistic culture

After the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC, Greek culture spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean world. Many Jews in this region became Hellenized, adopting Greek language, customs, and ideas. This led to the use of Greek among the Jewish communities of the region, including those that produced the New Testament.

Audience

The authors of the New Testament were writing for a primarily Greek-speaking audience. This included both Jews who had adopted Greek language and culture, as well as non-Jews who were attracted to the new Christian movement.

Literary tradition

Greek had a rich literary tradition, with a large body of literature stretching back several centuries. This made it a natural choice for the authors of the New Testament, who were writing in a literary style that drew heavily on the conventions of Greek literature.

Overall, the use of Greek in the New Testament reflects the broader cultural and linguistic context of the eastern Mediterranean world during the first century AD, as well as the specific needs of the Church expanding beyond the borders of the Jewish nation.

To say it with Jesus' words, "*new wine into new wineskins.*" (Mark 2:22): The New Covenant needed a

new language to better describe it to a new people, made of Gentile and a remnant of the Israel together.