

Chapter Two: Word of Truth – Word of God

1. Provide one example of the perceived power of words in the ancient world.

Polytheistic cultures practiced performative magic, which included the use of spoken incantations, spells, charms and curses. In Israel, a person's name revealed his/her character. In this light, God's name was not used lightly.

2. When did literacy, written texts and monotheism likely develop in Israel?

They likely developed in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE with the rise of the urban elite in Jerusalem.

3. Describe the Hebrew concept of a “book.”

The Hebrew concept of a “book” refers to anything written down, collected, edited and eventually preserved.

4. List and describe the four types of thinkers or scholars who produced the OT books.

1) Anonymous Authors who composed texts 2) Collectors / Compilers who updated and arranged texts to create collections 3) Editors / Redactors who rearranged existing works to create new compositions 4) Scribes / Scholars who preserved texts and translated them into other languages

5. When were the major components of the OT likely compiled?

During Israel's exile in Babylon in the middle of the 6th century BCE or shortly after their return to their homeland (i.e. the Promised Land of Canaan).

6. Define canon and explain the major idea behind its development.

The word “canon” refers to the list of books that a religion accepts as authoritative for determining its beliefs and practices. These books are believed to be divinely inspired; therefore, a canon is typically a closed collection. The process by which a collection of books becomes a canon is called canonization. Though the specifics of the process are largely unknown, the process itself is based on the idea that the authority and power typically associated with spoken words has been transferred to written texts.

7. Briefly explain the differences between the Jewish and Christian arrangements of the Old Testament.

The Jewish Bible contains 24 books arranged into three parts: the Torah / Law, Neviim / Prophets and Ketuvim / Writings. The Christian Bible contains the same material divided into 39 books and arranged in four parts: Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetry and Prophets.

8. What is textual criticism?

Textual criticism is the scholarly task of comparing and contrasting various texts in order to understand how texts are transmitted and in an attempt to reconstruct, as much as possible, the literary product standing at the beginning of the transmission process.

9. Define the Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targumim, Vulgate, Mishnah and Talmud.

The Masoretic Text is the best-preserved Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the OT. The Targumim are Aramaic interpretations and paraphrases of the OT. The Vulgate is a Latin translation of the Old Testament. The Mishnah is a collection of oral legal traditions based on the Torah written by rabbis. The Talmud refers to two different commentaries on the Mishnah one originating in Palestine and the other in Babylon.

Chapter Three: The Old Testament World

1. What were the two revolutionary developments in the Axial Age and where did they develop?

The two revolutionary ideas of the Axial Age were ethical monotheism, which developed in Israel, and rational philosophy, which developed in Greece.

2. Familiarize yourself with the maps in this chapter. Pay particular attention to the major regions, rivers and roads.

Know the location of the Coastal Plains, Western Hills, Shephelah, Jordan Rift Valley and the Eastern Hills Transjordan on Map 3.1. Know the location of the Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Nile River, Tigris River, Euphrates River, Egypt, Canaan, Assyria and Babylonia on Map 3.2. Know the location of