

# 72 Rabbis vs. 70 Rabbis

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## Which is the most accurate of all of the translations of the bible?

This is one of the most hotly debated topics in all of Christendom. Most of the Protestant denominations will tolerate a wide variety of translations. American (English-speaking) Catholics will generally argue for the Douay-Rheims version. Jehovah's Witnesses use their official, Watchtower Society version, even though they don't know the qualifications or identity of the translators. Mormons will use the King James Version (KJV), but they have their official "corrections" of various passages by Joseph Smith and the other presidents of their church.

Anyone familiar with mold making (such as molded ceramics, concrete, or plastics) is familiar with the phenomenon of *multiplication of errors*. When there are errors in the original mold, and other molds are made off of the original, then the errors are *doubled*, not *duplicated*. Transferring this principle to *translation*, we can see that when the shade of meaning of a word is *even slightly off* in the first translation, then the resulting error is multiplied in the second language translation. The introduction to the KJV contains the comment "*other translations diligently compared and revised.*" So we see that the same principle of making molds is going to be in full force and effect in the KJV, and probably most of the other translations, as well.

In the days when I was a heavy user of PalTalk, the on-line chat program, I was a frequent visitor to a room in the Jewish section wherein I was exposed to the information that the history of the Septuagint is not so simple as to have been translated by **70** Rabbis, and all of the Rabbis coming out with exactly the same wording. The allegation was that there were actually 72 Rabbis in *Jerusalem*, and they *ONLY* translated the Torah. At a *later* date, there were **70**, *Greek-speaking (Hellenized) Rabbis* in *Alexandria, Egypt*, that translated the rest of the Tanakh, and when they were finished, they then went through the work of the **72** Jerusalem Rabbis and made amendments to the Rabbis' translation of the Torah, as well. *It was the 72 Rabbis that had exactly the same translation of the Torah, not the 70 Rabbis*, who *did not* have the exact wording in each of their translations of the Tanakh.

In my learning process while moving between conservative, fundamental Christianity and **Karaite Judaism**, one of my teachers was a New Testament-believing "*Rabbi*," who is of the Tribe of Judah (Mother's family name, *Yehudi*), but was raised in Christianity. He had graduated from the **Southern Baptist Theological Cemetery**, in Ft. Worth, Texas. I have depended upon his knowledge of Hebrew, as well as the *REAL* expert, **Uri Harel**. Uri's website is: <http://www.c-bh.com/> Uri has since passed away, but I still request the Christian Rabbi's input on occasion, taking into account the Rabbi's bias and blindness regarding the pagan origin, nature, and practices of Christianity.

This is my favorite Rabbi's response to my question to him about **72 Rabbis vs. 70 Rabbis**:

*"In a footnote to Josephus's book Antiquities of the Jews, you will find someone reading into their interpretation what they want. The 70 Egyptian Jews translated the Old Testament - all of it - as indicated here."*

**"p. 468 Note (3) Of the translation of the other parts of the Old Testament by seventy Egyptian Jews, in the reigns of Ptolemy the son of Lagus, and Philadelphus; as also of the translation of the Pentateuch by seventy-two Jerusalem Jews, in the seventh year**

of **Philadelphus** at Alexandria, as given us an account of by **Aristeus**, and thence by **Philo** and **Josephus**, with a **vindication of Aristeus's history**; see the Appendix to Lit. Accorap. of Proph. at large, p. 117--152.” [emphasis added]

**Bernie's comments:**

The above is found in “**Antiquities of the Jews**” by **Flavius Josephus, Book 12, Chapter 2, footnote 3**, translated by **William Whiston**.

**What is the Septuagint and why is it important?** The **Septuagint** is known to be faulty in its translation in several important verses that allowed the **Roman Emperor Constantine** to attempt a **merger** between **Mithraism**, the then popular Roman religion, with the Tanakh, and use a blending of the two to form a newer, better, more powerful bonding force that would keep the **Holy Roman Empire** strong for many more centuries. **The result is known as Christianity**, and the book that unites them is called “**The New Testament**.”

As you can see, the **Messianic Rabbi** makes no comment regarding the fact that the footnote limits the translation by the **70 Egyptian** Jews to “*the other parts of the Old Testament*.” Nor does the **Messianic Rabbi** comment regarding the statement that the **72 Jerusalem** Jews translated *only the Law* (Pentateuch), but *not* the *Prophets* or the *Writings*. Also, the **Messianic** seems to leave out the references cited in Josephus's footnote that indicate that there is a lot more evidence regarding **the two parts being translated by different groups**, with their **different levels of qualification**. He lets Josephus speak for himself.

Most scholars will agree that the **Septuagint** was written during the **3rd through 1st** centuries **BCE**. But nearly all attempts at dating specific books, with the exception of the **Pentateuch** (early- to mid-3rd century BCE) by the 72 Jerusalem Rabbis, are uncertain and without unanimity.

According to **Jennifer M. Dines**, the author of **The Septuagint** (Michael A. Knibb, Ed., London: T&T Clark, 2004), **seventy-two** Jewish scholars were asked by the Greek King of Egypt Ptolemy II Philadelphus to translate the Torah from Biblical Hebrew into Greek, for inclusion in the Library of Alexandria. The result was astounding!

King Ptolemy once gathered **72** Elders. He placed them in **72** chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: “*Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher.*” God put it in the heart of each one to translate *identically* as all the others did. [Found in **Tractate Megillah, pages 9a-9b**. The **Talmud** identifies fifteen specific unusual translations made by the scholars.]

*In My* (sometimes) *Humble Opinion* [**IM(s)HO**], the only **reliable** translation of the **Torah into Greek** is the **original work** of the **72** Rabbis, **not the Septuagint**. The only (semi) reliable modern translations of the **Tanakh** will be the **more recent** translations, made **directly** out of the Hebrew into the other language, by native speakers and writers of the biblical Hebrew language that have better-than-average familiarity with the language into which they are translating the Tanakh. The best example would be the **Jewish Publication Society's 1999 version**.

There is no contention over the fact that during the reign of **Ptolemy II** Philadelphus, between **309** and **246** years before the Common Era, that **70** Rabbis **did** translate the **Nevi'im** and **Kethuvi'im**. The **contention** is that because the **70 Rabbis** were heavily under the influence of the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian culture and mythology, therefore, there are **culturally-induced** errors in their interpretation and translation. Especially in parts of the Prophets that are

now used *by Christians* to support their belief in the *virgin birth* (Isaiah 7:14), *second coming* (Daniel 9:26), *cruci-fiction* (Psalm 22:16) & (Zechariah 13:6), and other beliefs that Christians borrowed from other pagan religions that were prevalent in those centuries. The very biggest problem is that the “translation” of *the Torah* by the 70 Rabbis consisted of going back and “revising” the work of the 72 Rabbis, making it conform with their own, “*culturally-induced*” misinterpretation of the Tanakh.

I do not have a wide base of experience in selections of translations directly out of Hebrew into English, possessing only Artscroll’s *Stone Edition* and the Jewish Publication Society (*JPS*) editions of **1999** and **1917**. My personal opinion that the Stone Edition is not as reliable as the JPS edition, because I believe that there are places where the wording was skewed in an *anti-Christian way*, even though this is absolutely unnecessary. The real wording of the Tanakh is anti-Christian enough. There are *NO* changes in the Torah that are acceptable, [IM(s)HO]. I quite understand the *zeal* of the translators of the Stone Edition in their anti-pagan position, but I cannot understand their willingness to *violate* Torah by *making changes* in Torah. Because the footnotes in the Stone edition are heavily influenced by the *Talmud* and *Zohar*, which are *anti-Torah enough in their own right*, maybe I *can* understand *why* the authors of the Stone edition would be *willing* to violate Torah in this manner, also. 😊

The JPS **1999** translation is not only translated into modern English that is very easy to understand, it also corrects a few more of the errors that are found in the KJV and JPS **1917** editions.

So, OK! Back to the original question, “*Which is the most accurate of all of the translations of the bible?*”

[IM(s)HO], there most likely is *no* translation that can be completely accurate, because Hebrew letters also have numeric, color, and musical tone values. The Hebrew Tanakh is a multi-dimensional book. There is no language that can adequately translate any more than the mere surface story, and much of the depth of meaning is lost when translating into German, English, Spanish, Greek, Latin, or any other language.

Because of cultural and other forms of pre-disposition toward mistranslation, even *unintentional* mistranslation, the best that can be said of *any* translation, is that it is a very extensive and articulate *commentary* on the Hebrew Tanakh. This is why **YHWH** gave us the ability to learn how to read, write, and speak **Hebrew!**

## Please send any comments about this article to:

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## יהוה

The name of our Creator is made up of four, Hebrew vowels, Y H W H יהוה. Vowels are sounds, not just marks on paper. (source: **Flavius Josephus** - *Antiquities of the Jews*)

The letter ה (h) when used as a vowel, usually has the "ah," "ha," or the "huh" sound. The ה is the *definite* article, or *THE, SPECIFIC, to the EXCLUSION of ALL others*.

This is exemplified in showing the difference between the word "eretz," meaning land, and the words "ha\_Eretz," meaning *THE Land of Israel, to the exclusion of all others*.

In Hebrew, the letters י (y) and ו (v)(w) are used interchangeably, and when located in the first, second, or third position in a word, indicate the tense of the word, either past, future, or continuing.

Being placed in the first and third positions, the י and ו indicate that the name is **both past and future**, or, - *Eternal*.

The ה associated with **both** the י and the ו means that the name is specifically, to the exclusion of all others, both *past* and *future*, or **THE Eternal**.

Furthermore, being *singular*, and *being found twice*, the ה would also allow the addition of the word, **ONE**, as a descriptor.

The Name, **YHWH**, could then be logically rendered as **The Eternal ONE**, because **He** has eternal existence, **to the exclusion of all others**.

It is pronounced in one, long breath, like the wind, with the accent on the middle syllable. .

eeeeeeaaaaaa UUUUUU' waaaah