

TAMPERED TEXTS

Or

Rabbinical Razzle-Dazzle
Regarding Religious Writings

by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

An article in the *International Jerusalem Post* (May 22-28, 2009) reinforces what we have written in the pamphlet *Why Orthodox Christians Prefer the Septuagint*. And what is that? That, after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A. D. 70 by the Roman legions, and after the extermination of the Jewish priesthood by the same forces, a radical change took place in Judaism. In fact, it was a revolutionary change, a "sea change" in the Jewish religion.

According to author Rachael Elijor, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, after the destruction of the Temple the rabbis were involved "in nothing less than a reinvention of Judaism."

The rabbis, first of all, became "engaged in a culling of all the Hebrew religious texts composed until that time. The works they would choose from this [sacred] library would constitute the Jewish canon [the books of the Hebrew Old Testament], which henceforth would be the only texts deemed to have divine authority," writes Elijor.

This was in the time *after* Christ, when Christianity was gaining thousands of converts from paganism and Judaism. And what was one of the most effective tools for gaining these converts? The Greek translation of the Old Testament — the Septuagint, which had been translated by Jewish scholars some 300 years before Christ. This is the text the rabbis now emphatically rejected, as we know.

"But what of the works excluded from the [new Jewish] canon?" asks Elijor. "Many were of comparable literary and religious quality to those chosen [to be retained in the new Jewish canon]... To many of the Jews of the first millennium BCE, *all* the texts had been equally holy."

"Yet," she writes, "the excluded works — close to a dozen major works — were not just abandoned, but excised as if they were a malignant growth."

"Left to die, some of the expelled texts were rescued and adopted by another religion. Newborn Christianity, which regarded itself as a successor of Judaism, incorporated these texts into its own corpus of holy works along with the Old Testament, as the Hebrew Bible came to be called," writes Elijah.

In the Talmudic tractate *Shabbat* (136), a passage says that if it were not for a rabbi named Hanania, even the prophetic Book of Ezekiel would have been suppressed by the other rabbis at that time. Why? Because its teachings contradicted the rabbinical interpretations of the Torah!*

Mercilessly, Professor Elijah continues: "Half a century ago, another lost library... surfaced on the shores of the Dead Sea, this one having been literally lost for 1,900 years after being hidden in the caves of Qumran. Many of these Dead Sea Scrolls would have been suppressed for the same reasons that the previously known [religious texts] were suppressed."

She concludes her article as follows: "Following the destruction of the Temple, the priestly order was shattered and the rabbis were free to reconfigure the playing field. They not only discarded [the previously acknowledged religious] texts, but probably amended some passages in the books they would include in the Bible..."

In the pamphlet, *Why Orthodox Christians Prefer the Septuagint*, we showed many instances of where that "probably" became not only probable, but fact.

* Torah — the first five books of the Old Testament