

An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the Old Testament

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The Transmission of the Old Testament Text

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Transmission of the OT Text

We don't have the originals!

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Oldest complete manuscript

- **Codex Leningrad** (MS B19^A) of 1008
- **Samuel ben Jacob**, from a text prepared by **Aaron ben Moses ben Asher**
- About 2,400 years from the time of Moses, assuming traditional dating.
- **Siglum L**

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Oldest dated codex

- **Codex Cairensis** (containing only the prophets), 895

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Oldest manuscript

- Some (unknown) fragment from the texts found in the Judean desert (DSS), dating from between 250 and 125 BC.

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Oldest citation

- Quotation of Num. 6.24-26 from **Ketef Hinnom** from pre-exilic period (7-6 c.).
- Written on metal amulets(?)

²⁴ May Yahweh bless you and keep you; ²⁵ May Yahweh make his face to shine upon you [and be gracious to you; ²⁶ May Yahweh lift up his face to you] and give you peace.

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Stages of Transmission

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Stages of Transmission

- During the **OT period** (c. 1450 BC to c. 400 BC)
- From the End of the OT Period to the End of the **Second Temple** (c. 400 BC to AD 70)
- **The Sopherim**: From the End of the Second Temple to the Masoretes (AD 70) to c. 800)
- The **Masoretic Period** (c. 800 - c. 1000)
- From the End of the Masoretic Period to the **Present** (c. 1000 -)

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The OT period (c. 1450 BC to c. 400 BC)

- Know almost nothing
- No exemplars
- No reliable written descriptions
- Scattered references (II K. 22)

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The OT period (c. 1450 BC to c. 400 BC)

Why no texts earlier than Qumran?

- Materials on which they were written
 - predominantly skin “vellum” (*Gewil* or *Qelap*) or papyrus
- Few copies in existence (in temple)
- Not funerary texts
- Few exemplars of any kind

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Second Temple (c. 400 BC to c. AD 70)

- Explosive growth in copying
- Development of synagogues
- Sectarian developments

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Second Temple (c. 400 BC to c.AD 70)

- Multiple groups copying
- Varying Standards
 - Temple Standard
 - Vulgar Standard
 - Qumran Practice

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Second Temple (c. 400 BC to c.AD 70)

Temple Standard

- tight restrictions
- quality control
 - limited errors 1-3 per column (avg. 20x32)
 - colophon counts
 - magghim
- rudiments of textual criticism

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Second Temple (c. 400 BC to c.AD 70)

- Varying Standards by erasures
 - Temple Standard (1-3)
 - Vulgar Standard (4-8)
 - Qumran Practice (8+)

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Second Temple (c. 400 BC to c.AD 70)

Other Texts

- Targumim and the versions.
 - Samaritan Pentateuch
 - Peshitta (Syriac)
 - Septuagint(s)
- Most variants arose in this period.

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Second Temple (c. 400 BC to c.AD 70)

Text Types at Qumran

- 35% Proto-MT
- 5% Pre-SP
- 5% Pre-LXX (none exact)
- 35% Unaligned
- 20% Qumran practice

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Before the Masoretes (AD 70 BC to c.AD 800)

- Other Greek versions
- Christian codices
- Origen's Hexapla
- Sopherim
- Paragraphing

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Before the Masoretes (AD 70 BC to c.AD 800)

- Developing standards of practice
- Fixing of the Hebrew consonantal text
- Talmud
- Cairo Geniza

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Masoretic Period (c.AD 800 to c.AD 1000)

- Ben Asher, Ben Naphtali et al. of Tiberias
 - Fixing of the vocalic system
 - Development of the Masorah

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Masoretic Period (c.AD 800 to c.AD 1000)

- Three Types of Workers
 - *Sopherim* — Consonantal Text
 - *Naqdanim* — Pointed the Text (vowels and accents)
 - *Ba'ale Ha-Masorah* — Developed and Copied the Masorah

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Masoretic Period (c.AD 800 to c.AD 1000)

- Most Important Manuscripts
 - *Codex Aleppo* (925)
 - *Codex Leningrad* (1008)

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After the Masoretes (c.AD 1000 to today)

- No significant textual development
- From the Masoretes to the printing press
 - Medieval Mss
 - Medieval commentators and grammarians

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After the Masoretes (c.AD 1000 to today)

- The Age of Printing
 - *Bologna Psalter*, 1477
 - *Soncino Bible*, 1488
3rd ed. (1494) used by Luther
 - *Complutensian Polyglot*
4 vols. 1514-1517
 - *2nd Rabbinic Bible*
(Jacob ben Chayyim), 1524/5
first with full Masorah

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After the Masoretes (c.AD 1000 to today)

- The Digital Age