



The Dead Sea Scrolls

Textual Critical Edition

by The Way to Yahweh

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Preface

Even though they were discovered nearly 70 years ago now, the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) are still objects of investigation and discovery. The vast majority of the manuscripts are secretarian (that is, writings of the sect that produced them), however there are a considerable amount of them that contain Scriptural material from the Tanakh (or Old Testament), written in Hebrew (both Phoenician and Paleo), Aramaic, and Greek. As such, they are mostly studied for their agreement (or disagreement) with those Scriptural manuscripts that were known before their discovery.

The two chief collections of manuscripts of the Tanakh are those of the Masoretic Hebrew Text (a Hebrew text produced by the sect known as *Masoretes* between the 6th-10th centuries CE, based on a textual tradition of the Ben-Asher family; designated *Mas* in this publication), and the Greek translation known as the Septuagint (LXX) that was done sometime in the 3rd century BCE. Despite being a Greek translation, before the discovery of the DSS, the extant LXX manuscripts were the oldest known portions of the Tanakh, with the oldest manuscript, Papyrus Rylands 458, dating to the 2nd century BCE. However, our oldest complete manuscript of the LXX is Codex Vaticanus, dated to the mid-4th century CE.¹

Comparing this to our pre-DSS-discovery Hebrew manuscripts, the oldest manuscript containing any significant portion is Codex Orientales 4445, dated to around 850 CE, and contains Genesis 1:1-Deut 1:33 (omitting Numbers 7:47-73 and 9:12-10:18). One of the oldest, almost complete ones we have is the Aleppo Codex (dated to early-to-mid 10th century CE). This manuscript is incomplete, having been saved from a Synagogue fire in 1947 (due to Syrian rioters not liking the proposed *UN Partition Plan for Palestine*), and emerged near the end of the 1950's, being smuggled into Israel and presented to Israeli President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi.²

The next oldest is the Leningrad Codex, dated to the early part of the 11th century CE. Unlike the Aleppo Codex, this is a complete copy of the Hebrew Tanakh, with which most other manuscripts are compared (with the main Textual Critical Edition of the Hebrew Tanakh published, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), being more or less a direct copy of the Leningrad Codex, with textual alternatives from other manuscripts filling the footers on each page). There are a sporadic collection of other Masoretic manuscripts, but none are significantly older.³

With most manuscripts being 2 to 3 millennia away from the original autographs, it is little wonder that the DSS are quite probably the most significant archaeological finds of the 20th Century. Going from a handful of Hebrew manuscripts to having nearly 300 is quite the jump. With this, the *Textual Criticism* of the Hebrew Tanakh received a massive influx of activity; did these 2000+ year old manuscripts support the Masoretic Hebrew Text-type? Did they support the LXX

¹ For an incomplete, but large list, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint_manuscripts

² For a history of the Aleppo Codex, and a discussion on the missing segments, see Matti Friedman, *The Aleppo Codex: In Pursuit of One of the World's Most Coveted, Sacred, and Mysterious Books*.

³ For a list of these manuscripts, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hebrew_Bible_manuscripts

(which in many places is very different to the Masoretic)? Only studying these manuscripts would answer that.⁴

Unfortunately, it took an *awful* long time for the manuscripts to be published, with only select scholars having access to the DSS material. Even when published in the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series, the information contained within was hardly accessible to the larger public (as of 2016, the cheapest volume of the DJD series comes in at £96!⁵). Notwithstanding, with many a year comes new things, and since the invention of computers and the internet, access to the manuscripts was finally within the public reach, with the ever powerful Google giving money to assist in putting at least some of the DSS online.⁶ Scans of the manuscripts were also provided by the Israel Antiquities Authority,⁷ not to mention the electronic versions contained in the Bible Software Programmes Logos⁸ and Accordance⁹ (albeit, they are highly flawed, as comparisons with the images showed - which Accordance now has a module of¹⁰). Nonetheless, this still requires people to part with their money (a significant amount of money) to get access to something that frankly, should be free. Knowledge should be free and not blocked behind institutions and greedy, sociopathic hasbins.

With all this in mind, it supplied the main goal for the current author to make the scrolls more accessible to the public, without them having to pay through the nose. Bar some newly discovered DSS manuscripts, all of the Scriptural DSS manuscripts have been transcribed, compared with the Masoretic Hebrew Text-Type, and published online.¹¹

The question still remained: what of the text of the Tanakh? Have the DSS confirmed the Masoretic Tanakh, or the Greek one? The answer isn't quite as simple as one or the other; it's all more a mixed bag. Several DSS manuscripts are almost exactly like the Masoretic Hebrew (MurExod, MurXII), several support the LXX against the Masoretic (4QJosh^b, 4QSam^b, 4QJer^c), others have a mixed text, supporting neither the Masoretic or the LXX (4QpaleoExod^m, 4QSam^a), and others still have their own form of the text (4QJosh^a, 4QJudg^a).

Despite being used by the same sect, differences between the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts themselves, before even comparing them to the Masoretic and LXX, are replete - which this publication provides the Textual notes for. This publication is not a comparison between the DSS against the Masoretic, or against the LXX; it is the differences between the DSS manuscripts that is in view (comparisons against the Masoretic, manuscript by manuscript, has already been done). When the difference between two or more manuscripts has a Masoretic or LXX equivalent, this has been put in the footnotes. If there is only one manuscript containing a verse, no textual difference

⁴ For a history of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Robert Leaney, *From Judaean Caves: The Story of the Scrolls*; Edmund Wilson, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea: The most startling discoveries of our time*; J.M Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: The story of the famous manuscript discoveries and their momentous significance for students of the Bible*.

⁵ <https://global.oup.com/academic/content/series/d/discoveries-in-the-judaean-desert-djd/?cc=fr&lang=en&prevNumResPerPage=20&prevSortField=1&sortField=5&resultsPerPage=20&start=0>

⁶ <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>

⁷ <http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive>

⁸ <https://www.logos.com/product/5961/qumran-biblical-dead-sea-scrolls-database>

⁹ <https://www.accordancebible.com/store/details/?pid=DSSB-C>

¹⁰ <https://www.accordancebible.com/store/details/?pid=DSS%20Images>

¹¹ <http://thewaytoyahuweh.com/research/dss-transcriptions/> ;
http://downloads.thewaytoyahuweh.com/#dead_sea Scrolls

between it and the Masoretic or LXX has been noted. As such, this is not a full Textual Critical edition of the Hebrew Tanakh, and there will be many sections without footnotes. There will however been numerous places where the footnotes will take up most of the page; such are the differences between the manuscripts that overlap.

I hope that this publication is well received, and the information and notes contained therein are explanatory enough when it comes to discussing the variant readings among the DSS manuscripts. With it, I hope that it assists in people's walk with Yahweh, and in their own studies on the text that many a person has held dear.

Stephen Walch

Abbreviations & Technical Terms

LXX

Greek Septuagint

Mas

Masoretic

Mas^{qere}

The *what is read* reading of Masoretic

Mas^{ketib}

The *what is written* reading of Masoretic

SP

Samaritan Pentateuch

**(vid)*

Probable reading of a manuscript, but not completely certain

**(corr)*

The reading of a manuscript by a corrector

**(orig)*

The original reading of a manuscript before being corrected

**c.a*

The first identified corrector of a manuscript

[]

Reflects a word used in the translation provided in the notes, but not in the section highlighted

Conjugation

The inflection of a verb to indicate different mood, tense, gender, number, voice etc.

Medial

The form of a Hebrew letter used in the midst of a word

Final

The form of a Hebrew letter used at the end of a word

Defective

Short spelling of Hebrew word

Plene

Full spelling of Hebrew word

Paragogic

A letter used at the end of a word to indicate a change of meaning

Prefix

A letter added to the beginning of a word to indicate an additional word or pronoun

Suffix

A letter added to the end of a word to indicate an additional word or pronoun

Dittography

The repetition of letters, words, or phrases that have already been written

Homoeoteleuton

Omission of words with similar endings or beginnings

Orthography

Use of different letters to give the same sound or meaning

Parablepsis

Omission of similar looking text or words