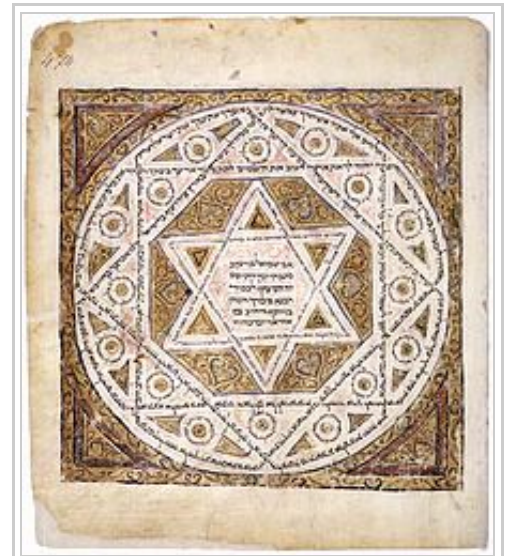


Leningrad Codex

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The **Leningrad Codex** (or *Codex Leningradensis*) is the oldest *complete* manuscript of the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew, using the masoretic text and Tiberian vocalization.^[1] It is dated 1008 CE (or possibly 1009 CE) according to its colophon.^[2] The Aleppo Codex, against which the Leningrad Codex was corrected, is several decades older, but parts of it have been missing since 1947, making the Leningrad Codex the oldest complete codex of the Tiberian mesorah that has survived intact to this day.

In modern times, the Leningrad Codex is significant as the Hebrew text reproduced in *Biblia Hebraica* (1937) and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977). It also serves scholars as a primary source for the recovery of details in the missing parts of the Aleppo Codex.



Leningrad Codex (cover page E, folio 474a)

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Contents

The biblical text as found in the codex contains the Hebrew letter-text along with Tiberian vowels and cantillation signs. In addition, there are masoretic notes in the margins. There are also various technical supplements dealing with textual and linguistic details, many of which are painted in geometrical forms. The codex is written on parchment and bound in leather.

The Leningrad Codex, in extraordinarily pristine condition after a millennium, also provides an example of medieval Jewish art. Sixteen of the pages contain decorative geometric patterns that illuminate passages from the text. The carpet page shows a star with the names of the scribes on the edges and a blessing written in the middle.

The order of the books in the Leningrad Codex follows the Tiberian textual tradition, which is also that of the later tradition of Sephardic biblical manuscripts. This order for the books differs markedly from that of most printed Hebrew bibles for the books of the Ketuvim. In the Leningrad Codex, the order of the Ketuvim is: Chronicles, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah. The full order of the books is given below.

History



Leningrad Codex text sample,
portions of Exodus 15:21-16:3

According to its colophon, the codex was copied in Cairo^[3] from manuscripts written by Aaron ben Moses ben Asher. It has been claimed to be a product of the Asher scriptorium itself; however, there is no evidence that Asher ever saw it. Unusual for a masoretic codex, the same man (Samuel ben Jacob) wrote the consonants, the vowels and the Masoretic notes. In its vocalization system (vowel points and cantillation) it is considered by scholars to be the most faithful representative of ben Asher's tradition apart from the Aleppo Codex (edited by ben Asher himself). Its letter-text is not superb, however, and contradicts its own masoretic apparatus in many hundreds of places.^[4] There are numerous alterations and erasures, and it was suggested by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein that an existing text not following Asher's rules was heavily amended so as to make it conform to these rules.

The codex is now preserved in the National Library of Russia, accessioned as "Firkovich B 19 A". Its former owner, the Crimean Karaite collector Abraham Firkovich, left no indication in his writings where he had acquired the codex, which was taken to Odessa in 1838 and later transferred to the Imperial Library in St Petersburg.

Name

The Leningrad Codex (a codex is a hand-written book as opposed to a scroll) is so named because it has been housed at the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg since 1863. In 1924, after the Russian Revolution, Petrograd (formerly Saint Petersburg) was renamed Leningrad, and, because the codex was used as the basic text for the Biblia Hebraica since 1937, it became internationally known as the "Leningrad Codex". Although in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the city's original name was restored to St Petersburg, the National Library of Russia requested that "Leningrad" be retained in the name of the codex. Nonetheless, the Codex is occasionally

referred to as the Codex Petersburgensis or Petropolitanus, or the St. Petersburg Codex. This is ambiguous as, since 1876, these appellations refer to a different biblical codex (MS. Heb B 3) which is even older (916 CE), but contains only the later Prophets.

Modern editions

Biblia Hebraica

In 1935, the Leningrad Codex was lent to the Old Testament Seminar of the University of Leipzig for two years while Paul E. Kahle supervised its transcription for the Hebrew text of the third edition of *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK), published in Stuttgart, 1937. The codex was also used for *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) in 1977, and is being used for *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ).

As an original work by Tiberian masoretes, the Leningrad Codex was older by several centuries than the other Hebrew manuscripts which had been used for all previous editions of printed Hebrew bibles until *Biblia Hebraica*.

The Westminster Leningrad Codex is an online digital version of the Leningrad Codex maintained by the J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research at the Westminster Theological Seminary. This is a verified version of the Michigan-Claremont text, transcribed from BHS at the University of Michigan in 1981-1982 under the direction of H. Van Dyke Parunak (of the University of Michigan) and Richard E. Whitaker (of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont Graduate University) with funding from the Packard Foundation and the University of Michigan,^[5] with further proofreading and corrections. The online version includes transcription notes and tools for analyzing syntax.

Jewish editions

The Leningrad Codex also served as the basis for two important modern Jewish editions of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh):

- The Dotan edition, which was distributed to soldiers in mass quantities as the official Tanakh of the Israel Defense Forces throughout the 1990s.
- The *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (Philadelphia, 1999) and the various volumes of the JPS Torah Commentary and JPS Bible Commentary.

For minute masoretic details, however, Israeli and Jewish scholars have shown a marked preference for modern Hebrew editions based upon the Aleppo Codex. These editions use the Leningrad Codex as the most important source (but not the only one) for the reconstruction of parts of the Aleppo Codex that have been missing since 1947.

Sequence of the books

As explained in the Contents section above, this is different from most modern Hebrew bibles:

The Torah:

1. Genesis [בראשית / Bereishit]
2. Exodus [שמות / Shemot]

3. Leviticus [ויקרא / Vayikra]
4. Numbers [במדבר / Bamidbar]
5. Deuteronomy [דברים / Devarim]

The *Nevi'im*:

6. Joshua [יהושע / Yehoshua]
 7. Judges [שופטים / Shofetim]
 8. Samuel (I & II) [שמואל / Shemuel]
 9. Kings (I & II) [מלכים / Melakhim]
 10. Isaiah [ישעיהו / Yeshayahu]
 11. Jeremiah [ירמיהו / Yirmiyahu]
 12. Ezekiel [יחזקאל / Yehezqel]
 13. The Twelve Prophets [תרי עשר]
- a. Hosea [הושע / Hoshea]
 - b. Joel [יואל / Yo'el]
 - c. Amos [עמוס / Amos]
 - d. Obadiah [עובדיה / Ovadyah]
 - e. Jonah [יונה / Yonah]
 - f. Micah [מיכה / Mikhah]
 - g. Nahum [נחום / Nahum]
 - h. Habakkuk [חבקוק / Habakuk]
 - i. Zephaniah [צפניה / Tsefanyah]
 - j. Haggai [חגי / Hagai]
 - k. Zechariah [זכריה / Zekharyah]
 - l. Malachi [מלאכי / Mal'akhi]

The *Ketuvim*

14. Chronicles (I & II) [דברי הימים / Divrei Hayamim]

The "Sifrei Emet," "Books of Truth":

15. Psalms [תהלים / Tehilim]
16. Job [איוב / Iyov]
17. Proverbs [משלי / Mishlei]

The "Five Megilot" or "Five Scrolls":

18. Ruth [רות / Rut]
19. Song of Songs [שיר השירים / Shir Hashirim]
20. Ecclesiastes [קהלת / Kohelet]
21. Lamentations [איכה / Eikhah]
22. Esther [אסתר / Esther]

The rest of the "Writings":

23. Daniel [דניאל / Dani'el]
24. Ezra-Nehemiah [עזרא ונחמיה / Ezra ve-Nehemiah]

See also

- Aleppo Codex
- Damascus Pentateuch
- Codex Cairensis
- Tanakh at Qumran
- List of Hebrew Bible manuscripts

References

1. There are older manuscripts of translations into other languages, such as the Codex Amiatinus in Latin.
2. Foreword by Gérard E. Weil to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 1977.
3. Stuhlman, Daniel D. (1 March 1998). "The Leningrad Codex". Librarian's Lobby. Retrieved 13 October 2014.
4. On the vocalization and letter-text of the Leningrad Codex see Israel Yeivin, *The Aleppo Codex of the Bible: A Study of its Vocalization and Accentuation* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1968) pp. 357-359 (Hebrew).
5. Introductory notes to the Bibleworks WTT text, www.bibleworks.com

External links

- The Unicode/XML Westminster Leningrad Codex (<http://www.tanach.us/Tanach.xml>), a digital text version transcribed from the Westminster Leningrad Codex maintained by the J. Alan Groves Center (<http://www.grovescenter.org>).
- Wikimedia Commons - full online digital images (book by book).
- Seforim Online (http://www.seforimonline.org/seforimdb/index.php?table_name=seforim_database&function=details&where_field=id&where_value=264) - full online digital images (in a single large file). Number 264 in the database.
- The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition (<http://books.google.com/books?id=gFmv8oWQg8oC>) at Google books.
- Daniel D. Stuhlman, "Librarian's Lobby: The Leningrad Codex" (<http://home.earthlink.net/~ddstuhlman/crc10.htm>) (March 1998): occasioned by the photofacsimile edition.
- The Leningrad Codex (http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/educational_site/biblical_manuscripts/Leningrad_Codex.shtml) (West Semitic Research Project at USC).



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