

The Masoretic Text

How Jewish scribes preserved the Hebrew Old Testament across a thousand years of exile

• c. AD 500–1000

By Shane Gunn • Primary-source study

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Where this fits: Lesson 11 of the Pleasant Springs *Church History* series — first of three lessons on how the Bible you own today was preserved, translated, and bound. This one is the **Hebrew Old Testament**. Lesson 12 will be Jerome’s **Latin Vulgate**. Lesson 13 will be the **English Bible** from Wycliffe to the KJV. See the full [Series Timeline](#).

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Every Protestant Old Testament you have ever read — King James, ESV, NIV, NASB, NLT — is translated from a single foundational Hebrew text called the **Masoretic Text**. The name comes from the Hebrew word *masorah* (מִסְרָה), which means “tradition” — specifically the tradition of careful copying, preserving, and marginally annotating the Hebrew Scriptures that was carried by a guild of Jewish scribes called the *Masoretes* between roughly AD 500 and 1000.

The work they did is almost unbelievable. Over five centuries, in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee and in scattered academies across Babylonia, they standardized the consonantal Hebrew text of the Old Testament, invented a system of vowel points to preserve its pronunciation, invented another system of cantillation marks to preserve its chanted public reading, and wrote marginal

notes counting every letter, every word, and every unusual spelling in every book of the Hebrew Bible — so that any future copy could be checked line by line against their arithmetic. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, scholars held their breath. Would a Hebrew text preserved in Qumran caves for a thousand years before the Masoretic standard match it or contradict it? The answer, with a few illuminating exceptions, was: it matches.

This lesson is about the scribes no one remembers who gave us a Bible we still read. It is, in many ways, the Old Testament counterpart to **Benedict's monastic rescue**: while Benedictine monks were copying Latin Bibles in Italian and Frankish scriptoria, Jewish scribes in Tiberias and Baghdad were doing the same thing in Hebrew, with a rigor the Christian copyists could only envy.

LXX (Ps 118:89): εἰς τὸ ἄϊῶνα, κύριε, ὁ λόγος σου διαμένει ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.

Psalm 119:89 (ESV): “Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

PART 1 — THE HEBREW BIBLE BEFORE THE MASORETES

To understand what the Masoretes saved, you have to understand what Hebrew looked like in the centuries before them. Classical biblical Hebrew is written in a consonantal script. The alphabet has 22 consonants and zero vowels. A reader of ancient Hebrew saw something like this English-analogy sentence:

WHAT CONSONANTAL HEBREW LOOKED LIKE

THBGNNGGDCRTHDVNSNDRTH

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

You can *read* that if you already know the text. You cannot read it if you don't. And in a living Hebrew-speaking community, you didn't need to — the pronunciation was passed orally from father to son, teacher to student, reader to reader. The synagogue's Scripture reading every Sabbath was a living memory as much as a written text.

That oral pronunciation tradition began to be endangered in two ways:

- **AD 70 — The Temple is destroyed**, as we covered in **Lesson 3**. The center of Jewish religious life shifts to the synagogue, the rabbinic academy at Yavneh, and later to academies in Babylonia. Hebrew is becoming a liturgical language rather than a spoken one.
- **By AD 200** Hebrew is no longer the native speech of most Jews. Aramaic had replaced it as the everyday language centuries earlier; Greek dominated the Mediterranean diaspora. The Mishnah (c. 200), compiled in Galilean Hebrew, is the last major Jewish work in that register; everything after it — the Talmuds, the Midrashim — is Aramaic.
- **By AD 500** Hebrew is primarily a scholarly and liturgical language. The chain of people who could simply *pronounce* the consonantal text correctly was growing thinner.

This is the crisis the Masoretes solved.

PART 2 — THE SOFERIM (C. 450 BC – AD 200)

Before the Masoretes there were the *Soferim* (סופרים, “scribes”) — the guild of professional scribes that tradition traces back to **Ezra** the priest-scribe of the 5th century BC.

כִּי עֲזָרָא הֵכִין לְבָבוֹ לְדְרוֹשׁ אֶת־תּוֹרַת יְהוָה וְלַעֲשׂוֹת וּלְלַמֵּד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
חֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט:

Hebrew MT • Ezra 7:10

Ezra 7:10 (ESV): “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”

The Soferim standardized the text of the Hebrew Bible by counting. The Talmud (*Kiddushin* 30a) says they got their name “because they counted all the letters of the Torah.” They established which variant readings were original, fixed the layout of the text on the scroll (the width of columns, the number of lines), and preserved what became known as the **Tiqqune**

Sopherim (“scribal corrections”) — a small set of passages where tradition acknowledged the scribes had slightly altered the text to avoid irreverence (for example reading “kissed the hand of” instead of “kissed the hand of God” in 2 Sam 20:18 LXX variant).

By the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls (roughly 250 BC–AD 68), the Hebrew text was already remarkably stable. Among the 230 biblical manuscripts found at Qumran, the overwhelming majority agree with the later Masoretic consonantal text in the smallest details. The Soferim had done their work.

Rival Greek translations (2nd century AD). With Christianity adopting the Septuagint as its Old Testament, several Jewish translators produced rival Greek translations designed to bring the Greek closer to the Hebrew the Soferim had standardized:

- **Aquila of Sinope** (c. AD 130) — an ultra-literal Greek translation, word-for-word from the Hebrew.

- **Symmachus** (c. AD 170) — a more idiomatic Greek translation.

- **Theodotion** (c. AD 180) — a revision of the LXX closer to the Hebrew; his version of Daniel eventually replaced the original LXX Daniel in Christian Bibles.

All three appear side by side in Origen’s *Hexapla* (see [Lesson 6](#)). Their existence is evidence that by the second century AD, Jewish scholars were already comparing manuscripts with extreme care.

PART 3 — WHO WERE THE MASORETES?

The Masoretes were not a single movement. The name covers about fifteen generations of Jewish scholars working between roughly AD 500 and 1000, in three geographic traditions:

The Tiberian Masoretes (c. 750–950)

TIBERIAS, ON THE WESTERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE • THE
DOMINANT AND EVENTUALLY STANDARD TRADITION

Standard tradition

Tiberian vowels

Tiberias had been a major rabbinic academy since the 2nd century. By the 8th century its scholars produced the most refined vowel-pointing system — the *Tiberian niqqud* still used in every printed Hebrew Bible today. Two great scribal families dominated: the **ben Asher** family and the **ben Naphtali** family. Where they disagreed (about 800 minor variants), the ben Asher tradition generally won.

The Babylonian Masoretes (c. 500–900)

SURA AND PUMBEDITA, IN MODERN IRAQ • THE OLDER TRADITION;
GRADUALLY DISPLACED BY TIBERIAN

Supralinear vowels

Older tradition

The great Jewish academies of Babylonia (the ones that produced the Babylonian Talmud) developed an independent vowel-pointing system with marks placed *above* the consonants. Fewer Babylonian Masoretic manuscripts survive — the Cairo Geniza preserves fragments — but they testify to an independent, careful scribal tradition.

The Palestinian Masoretes

RURAL PALESTINE • A THIRD LOCAL TRADITION WITH ITS OWN VOWEL
SYSTEM

Palestinian vowels

Smallest tradition

A third, less documented tradition flourished briefly in Palestinian towns outside Tiberias. A few manuscripts in the Cairo Geniza use its supralinear pointing system.

Aaron ben Moses ben Asher (c. 900)

THE LAST GREAT TIBERIAN MASORETE • WHOSE VOCALIZATION BECAME
THE STANDARD

Ben Asher tradition

Endorsed by Maimonides

Aaron ben Asher finalized the vocalization and Masoretic apparatus of what would become the authoritative Tiberian text. Maimonides (d. 1204) examined Aaron's master copy (the Aleppo Codex, see Part 5) and declared it the standard to which all

subsequent Torah scrolls should conform. That decision settled the question for world Judaism. From that day to this, every synagogue Torah scroll on earth follows the ben Asher consonantal text.

PART 4 – WHAT THE MASORETES ACTUALLY DID

The Masoretes did not change the consonantal text — they considered it untouchable. What they did was build four remarkable systems on top of it:

1. **Niqqud (vowel points)**. A system of dots and strokes under, inside, and above the consonants to indicate the vowels the reader should pronounce. The Tiberian system they perfected has about a dozen distinct vowel signs. Here is a short demonstration:

CONSONANTS ALONE VS. POINTED TEXT

בראשית

consonants only: B-R-'Š-Y-T

בְּרֵאשִׁית

with Tiberian pointing: *b'rêšîth*

“In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1)

2. **Te'amim (cantillation marks)**. A parallel system of 27 additional marks above and below the text, indicating (a) the melodic pattern for chanting the verse in public reading, (b) where sentences and clauses break, and (c) which word in a phrase carries the logical

stress. The cantillation marks preserve an ancient oral tradition of how the text was chanted in the synagogue.

3. Masorah (marginal notes). The *Masorah Parva* (“small Masorah”) in the side margins of the page records how many times unusual words or spellings occur in the Hebrew Bible. The *Masorah Magna* (“large Masorah”) at top and bottom of the page gives fuller notes. The *Masorah Finalis* at the end of each book gives the total letter count, the middle letter, the middle verse, and other arithmetic. Every one of these notes is a checksum — a way any future copy can be checked against the original. If your scroll of Genesis does not contain 78,064 letters, you know you’ve missed or added something.

4. Kethib-Qere (“what is written / what is read”). In roughly 1,300 places in the Hebrew Bible, the Masoretes preserved a reading that did not match what they thought the reader should actually pronounce. Rather than alter the consonantal text, they wrote the word as it appeared (*kethib*, “written”) but pointed it with the vowels of the word that should be read (*qere*, “read”), noting the reading word in the margin. The most famous example: the divine name YHWH (יהוה) is always written in the consonants, but from sometime in the Second Temple era has not been pronounced; Jewish readers say *Adonai* (“Lord”) instead. The Masoretes pointed יהוה with the vowels of *Adonai*, producing the hybrid form that much later, badly misread by Christian Hebraists, produced the pseudo-word “Jehovah.”

The sheer scale of the work. The Masoretic apparatus for the entire Hebrew Bible runs to tens of thousands of marginal notes. A trained Masorete could tell you, without looking, that the consonant *aleph* (א) occurs exactly 42,377 times in the Hebrew Bible; that the exact middle verse of the Torah is Leviticus 8:7; that the word *b’reshith* (בראשית) begins only two books of Scripture (Genesis and, adjusting for the definite article, Jeremiah 26:1). This is not trivia. It is a textual immune system. Any copy that fails any of the checksums is known, instantly, to be defective.

Three Masoretic manuscripts matter enormously for every Old Testament we read today.

The Aleppo Codex — *Keter Aram Tzova* (c. AD 930)

TIBERIAS • WRITTEN BY SHLOMO BEN BUYA’A • VOCALIZED AND ANNOTATED BY AARON BEN ASHER HIMSELF • PARTIAL LOSS IN 1947

Ben Asher master copy

Authoritative

The Aleppo Codex is the oldest known complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible in the Tiberian Masoretic tradition and the one Maimonides (d. 1204) used as his authority. It was written at Tiberias around 930 by the scribe Shlomo ben Buya’a and vocalized, accented, and annotated by Aaron ben Asher, the last great Masorete. The codex was housed for centuries in the ancient synagogue of Aleppo, Syria — hence its name. In December 1947, when the UN vote on the partition of Palestine sparked anti-Jewish riots across the Arab world, the Aleppo synagogue was burned. For years the codex was thought lost. Then, over the 1950s, roughly 295 of its original 487 leaves were secretly smuggled to Israel, where they are now housed at the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem. Roughly two-thirds of the codex survives; the missing third (including most of the Torah) is lost. The Aleppo Codex is the basis for the modern Israeli *Hebrew University Bible Project*.

The Leningrad Codex — *Codex Leningradensis B19a* (AD 1008 or 1009)

CAIRO • SAMUEL BEN JACOB, SCRIBE • NOW IN THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL LIBRARY, ST. PETERSBURG

Oldest complete MT

Base of BHS/BHQ

The Leningrad Codex is the oldest *complete* manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible in the Masoretic tradition. It was produced in Cairo in 1008 or 1009 by the scribe Samuel ben Jacob, who notes in his colophon that he copied it from manuscripts corrected by Aaron ben Asher (the same authority behind the Aleppo Codex). Its survival is the reason the Leningrad Codex, not the Aleppo Codex, is the base text of every modern scholarly edition: **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia** (BHS, 1977, reprinted many times) and the newer **Biblia Hebraica Quinta** (BHQ, 2004–ongoing). When your

ESV or NIV footnote says “MT reads...,” it is almost certainly citing the Leningrad Codex as published in BHS or BHQ.

The Cairo Genizah (discovered 1896)

BEN EZRA SYNAGOGUE, OLD CAIRO • C. 350,000 JEWISH MANUSCRIPT FRAGMENTS, AD 700–1800

Fragment trove

Solomon Schechter

A *genizah* is a room in a synagogue where old, worn-out sacred documents are stored rather than destroyed, because anything containing the divine name should not be burned. For a thousand years the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo quietly accumulated torn manuscripts in a sealed upper-floor room. When the Cambridge scholar Solomon Schechter arranged in 1896 to ship the lot to England, he found himself in possession of the richest medieval Jewish manuscript trove in the world — including Babylonian Masoretic fragments, Palestinian Masoretic fragments, and lost works like the Hebrew original of Ecclesiasticus. The Cairo Genizah is still being catalogued.

PART 6 — THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS CONFIRMATION (1947–1956)

In the winter of 1946–47, a Bedouin shepherd chasing a stray goat into a cave at Qumran, on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, found a clay jar containing ancient scrolls. Over the next decade, in eleven Qumran caves, archaeologists and local searchers recovered approximately 930 manuscripts dating from around 250 BC to AD 68 — eight to ten centuries *older* than the oldest Masoretic manuscripts.

Of these, about 230 were biblical manuscripts, representing every book of the Hebrew Bible except Esther. The central scholarly question was obvious: **would the pre-Masoretic Hebrew text match the Masoretic Text?**

The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a, c. 150 BC)

THE FIRST AND MOST FAMOUS DEAD SEA SCROLL • COMPLETE TEXT OF
ISAIAH • C. 1,000 YEARS OLDER THAN ANY PREVIOUSLY KNOWN ISAIAH
MANUSCRIPT

1QIsa^a is a complete scroll of the book of Isaiah dating to roughly 150 BC — over a millennium older than the Masoretic manuscripts at Aleppo and Leningrad. Scholars rushed to compare it verse by verse with the MT.

The result was stunning. Across 66 chapters and more than 17,000 words, the Great Isaiah Scroll agrees with the Masoretic Text in essentially all meaningful respects. Most of the differences are spelling variations (full vs. defective writing of vowel letters), scribal errors of the kind any handwritten copy produces, and a few word-order variants. The *text* was the same. A thousand-year gap had produced almost no meaningful drift.

A more nuanced picture. The overall picture the Scrolls paint is still a strong vindication of the Masoretic tradition, but with a couple of qualifications:

- **Multiple text-types circulated in the Second Temple period.** Scholars identify at least three Hebrew text-types at Qumran: a proto-Masoretic text (matching the later MT), a proto-Samaritan text (matching the later Samaritan Pentateuch), and a Hebrew text that agrees with the Septuagint where it differs from the MT. The MT was not the only game in town — but it was clearly the dominant text.

- **The stabilization was earlier than we thought.** The proto-Masoretic text was already the preferred text of the Jerusalem Temple establishment by the 1st century AD. After AD 70, it simply won the field. The Masoretes of 500–1000 inherited a text that had already been selected and stabilized before they were born.

- **In a few places, the LXX now looks better.** For a few verses (most famously the longer LXX reading of 1 Samuel 17 and parts of Jeremiah), Qumran Hebrew texts agree with the Septuagint against the MT. Most scholars now think that, in those specific cases, the LXX preserves an older Hebrew reading than the MT does. Modern critical footnotes — including in your ESV — flag these passages.

For the vast majority of the Old Testament, though, the Masoretic Text is confirmed to be remarkably close to the Hebrew text Jesus himself read.

PART 7 — MT, LXX, SAMARITAN, AND THE CHURCH’S CHOICE

By the time of the Masoretes, four Old Testament text traditions were in use in the ancient world:

Tradition	Language	Rough date	Used by
Masoretic Text (MT)	Hebrew	Stabilized c. 100 BC–AD 100; vocalized c. 500–1000	Jewish tradition; later: Protestant Bibles; modern scholarly editions
Septuagint (LXX)	Greek	Translated c. 250–150 BC in Alexandria	Hellenistic Jews; the New Testament; the early church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox to this day
Samaritan Pentateuch	Hebrew (in Samaritan script)	Oral tradition, script from c. 200 BC	The Samaritan community — a small body that still exists today near Nablus
Aramaic Targums	Aramaic (paraphrase)	c. 200 BC–AD 500	Aramaic-speaking Jewish communities

For the first centuries of Christianity the universal Old Testament of the church was the **Septuagint**. Jesus and Paul’s Old Testament quotations are overwhelmingly from it; the early fathers wrote sermons and commentaries on it; Origen’s *Hexapla* (see [Lesson 6](#)) assumed it as baseline. The question “which Hebrew text underlies the Greek?” was essentially a scholarly sideshow.

Jerome’s break. The first major Christian theologian to reverse this preference was Jerome in the late 4th century. Commissioned to revise the Old Latin translations of the Bible, Jerome insisted on going back to the *hebraica veritas* — “the Hebrew truth” — behind every Old Testament book. He consulted rabbis; he learned Hebrew; he produced a Latin Old Testament translated directly from the Hebrew. That was the **Vulgate**, the subject of our next lesson.

Augustine famously argued with him about it — Augustine preferring the LXX’s traditional authority — but Jerome’s Hebrew-based Latin eventually won.

The Reformation’s return to the Hebrew. When the Reformers in the 16th century reached for the original languages, they found that in Jewish hands the Hebrew Bible had been preserved with extraordinary care through the Masoretes. Luther learned Hebrew and translated from the Masoretic consonantal text. Calvin used it. Every Protestant Old Testament translation from Tyndale (1530) to the ESV (2001) is translated primarily from a Masoretic base. This is why the Protestant Old Testament is 39 books (the Hebrew canon), not 46 (the Catholic) or more (the Orthodox). See **Lesson 2 Part 5** for the canon question.

A modern complication. The church’s confidence in the MT alone has been chastened by the Dead Sea Scrolls, which occasionally vindicate an LXX reading against the MT. Most serious modern translations (including the ESV) work from the MT as base but note significant LXX, Samaritan, Dead Sea Scroll, and Vulgate readings in footnotes. The picture is no longer “MT good, everything else late or corrupt.” It is: “MT is the most carefully preserved consonantal text we have, and the other traditions are witnesses to earlier stages of the Hebrew that sometimes preserve readings the MT has lost.”

PART 8 — THE FIRST PRINTED MT AND BEYOND

1488 • The **Soncino Bible**, the first printed complete Hebrew Bible, appears in northern Italy. Printed by Soncino, a Jewish press.

1516–1517 • Daniel Bomberg, a Christian printer in Venice, produces the **First Rabbinic Bible** — Hebrew text with Aramaic Targum and major medieval Jewish commentaries (Rashi, Ibn Ezra) alongside.

1524–1525 • Bomberg publishes the **Second Rabbinic Bible**, edited by **Jacob ben Chayyim**. This edition includes a full Masorah apparatus and becomes the *textus receptus* of the Hebrew Bible for nearly four centuries. Every printed Hebrew Bible until 1937 was essentially a re-edition of ben Chayyim.

1937 • Rudolf Kittel publishes **Biblia Hebraica** (3rd ed.), the first printed Hebrew Bible to abandon ben Chayyim's text in favor of the Leningrad Codex.

1977 • **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia** (BHS) is published — the Leningrad Codex with a modern critical apparatus. For the next four decades, every serious scholarly Old Testament study sits beside a BHS on the desk.

2004–present • **Biblia Hebraica Quinta** (BHQ) is appearing fascicle by fascicle, replacing BHS with a fuller apparatus that includes Dead Sea Scroll evidence and more careful treatment of the ancient versions.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR US

• **The Bible came to us through real hands.** The Masoretic Text was not dictated to a prophet; it was preserved by fifteen generations of men counting letters in a language their grandchildren would not speak. The doctrine of inspiration does not diminish the human work of transmission — it honors it. Every verse in your Hebrew Old Testament passed through the hands of scribes who wept over their errors and corrected them.

• **The Jewish stewardship of Scripture is a gift to the church.** Paul's question in Romans 3:1–2 — *what advantage has the Jew?* — still has the same answer. "To them were entrusted the oracles of God." That entrusting did not end at the cross. The Hebrew Bible you open on Sunday morning was preserved for you by rabbis you have never thanked.

• **Textual criticism is a gift, not a threat.** Evangelicals sometimes worry that acknowledging textual questions undermines biblical authority. The opposite is true. A Bible whose textual history we know in detail is a Bible whose trustworthiness we can

demonstrate. The Dead Sea Scrolls did not shake biblical authority; they strengthened it. The MT has come through a thousand-year stress test and survived.

• **Behind every translation stands a text.** When your pastor reads “this is what the Lord says” from a pulpit Bible on Sunday, there is a long, careful chain of Hebrew scribes, Greek translators, Latin revisers, English reformers, and modern textual scholars behind that sentence. None of them is an idol. All of them are grace.

Greek NT (2 Tim 3:16–17): πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν...

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV): “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Masoretes did their most important work between AD 500 and 1000 — the same centuries Christians call the “Dark Ages” in the West. What does it do for your sense of those centuries to know that careful Bible scholarship was flourishing somewhere the whole time?

2. Every Protestant Old Testament is translated from a Jewish text preserved by Jewish scribes. How should that shape Christian attitudes toward the synagogue?

3. The Masoretes refused to change the consonantal text even when they thought the reader should say something different (*Kethib/Qere*). What instinct does that preserve? What would we lose if we tidied up our Bibles that way?

4. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the reliability of the MT across 1,000 years. Why do you think God appears to have waited until the 20th century to hand us that

confirmation?

5. Our translations sometimes depart from the MT (footnoted “LXX” or “Syriac” or “DSS”). Does that unsettle you, or does it increase your confidence in the translators? Why?

6. If we took the Masoretes’ example seriously, how might our own congregation be more careful in how we handle the text of Scripture — in memorization, in quotation, in preaching?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we thank you for the synagogues of Tiberias and Babylonia. Thank you for the scribes who counted letters through persecution and exile, whose names we do not know, whose faces we will not see until you raise them. Thank you for Aaron ben Asher at his desk, and Samuel ben Jacob in Cairo, and the Bedouin shepherd who chased a goat into a cave at Qumran. Forgive the church’s long forgetting of our Jewish brothers and sisters who kept your word when much of the church could not read it. Make us careful readers of the text that has been given to us at such cost. Let every sermon we preach honour the scribes who first preserved the Scripture we now quote so freely. Through Jesus Christ, whose Bible was the Hebrew Scripture we still read. Amen.

FURTHER READING

Primary sources and reference editions:

- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS, 1977/1990) — the standard scholarly edition of the Leningrad Codex.
- *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ, 2004–ongoing) — the new replacement edition.
- The *Hebrew University Bible* project — based on the Aleppo Codex, in progress.
- The Aleppo Codex (c. AD 930) — available online at aleppocodex.org.
- The Leningrad Codex (AD 1008) — high-resolution images available free online.
- The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a) — fully digitized at the Israel Museum's *Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library*.
- The Talmud, *Kiddushin* 30a — the Soferim counting-letters tradition.

Modern studies:

- Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed., 2012) — the standard reference.
- Paul D. Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible* (2006).
- Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (rev. ed. 2014) — the classic textbook.
- Martin Jan Mulder (ed.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (1988).
- Matti Friedman, *The Aleppo Codex* (2012) — the story of the codex's rescue and its missing pages.
- Shmuel Kotték and others, *The Cairo Genizah: A Mediterranean Society* (eds. various).
- Adam Kirsch, *The People and the Books: 18 Classics of Jewish Literature* (2016) — accessible introduction including the Masorah.

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