

## Leningrad Codex

The Leningrad Codex (also known as Leningradensis or the Cairo Codex) is the oldest complete Tanach that is still preserved. This Codex belongs to the group of Hebrew texts known as the Masoretic texts. The Codex was written in 1009 in Cairo, Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The person who commissioned the Codex is known as Meborak Ha-Kohen ben-Netan'el (also called Ozdad ha-Kohen) and written by the scribe Shemu'el ben-Ya'aqob.<sup>2</sup>

In 1863, The Russian National Library acquired the Codex from the Karaite Abraham Firkovich.<sup>2</sup> Today it still resides in St. Petersburg, Russia in the Russian National Library where it has been located since the 1800's. Since the Leningrad Codex is the oldest complete manuscript of the Tanach within the Masoretic textual tradition of the Ben Asher family, it is used today as the basis for most of the modern-day printed editions of the Tanach,<sup>3</sup> including the Biblia Hebraica (1937) and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1967/1977).<sup>2</sup>

The Leningrad Codex is a completely vowelized text. It also contains the te'amim (trop marks) above and below the letters that are used for cantillation marks, markers for the stress in each word, and marks for phrasing and punctuation.<sup>1</sup> The te'amim follow the Masoretic traditions – specifically the traditions from the scholars centered in Tiberias. As a product of the Ben Asher scribal tradition (as is the Aleppo Codex), there are also Masoretic textual and marginal notations throughout the Codex.<sup>2</sup>

There are also indications as to the Medieval Jewish world contained within this Codex. There are two poems – The Adornment of Israel and the Genealogy of the Prophets of Israel. These poems are attributed to Moshe ben-Asher. The Codex is also illuminated with sixteen full carpet pages decorated in gold, red, and blue painted ornaments. These illustrations are attributed to Shemu'el ben-Ya'aqob.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Leviant, Curt. A Review of the Leningrad Codex. Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.

<sup>2</sup>Freedman, David & Beck, Astrid. The Leningrad Codex. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. (Old Link)

<sup>3</sup>Lundberg, Marilyn. The Leningrad Codex. West Semitic Research Project, n.d.