Aleppo Codex

The [Aleppo Codex](#) – also known as the Keter Aram Tsova (כֶּתֶר אֲרָם צוֹבָא) – is a medieval bound manuscript of the Tanach written in the tenth century CE.[1] It is considered to be the most authoritative document in the masorah [tradition] by which the Tanach has been preserved from generation to generation.

The Aleppo Codex appears to have been divided into the three sections we seen in the modern editions of the Tanakh - Torah, Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuv'im (Writings). However, the order of the books in the Aleppo Codex is different from the modern Tanakh.

| Aleppo Codex | Modern Tanakh |
|---|---|
| **Torah**<br>Genesis<br>Exodus<br>Leviticus<br>Numbers<br>Deuteronomy | **Torah**<br>Genesis<br>Exodus<br>Leviticus<br>Numbers<br>Deuteronomy |
| **Nevi'im**<br>Joshua<br>Judges<br>Samuel<br>Kings<br>Isaiah<br>Jeremiah<br>Ezekiel<br>Hosea<br>Joel<br>Amos<br>Obadiah<br>Jonah<br>Micah<br>Nahum<br>Habakkuk<br>Zephaniah<br>Haggai<br>Zechariah<br>Malachi | **Nevi'im**<br>Joshua<br>Judges<br>Samuel<br>Kings<br>Isaiah<br>Jeremiah<br>Ezekiel<br>Hosea<br>Joel<br>Amos<br>Obadiah<br>Jonah<br>Micah<br>Nahum<br>Habakkuk<br>Zephaniah<br>Haggai<br>Zechariah<br>Malachi |
| **Ketuv'im**<br>Chronicles<br>Psalms<br>Job<br>Proverbs<br>Ruth<br>Song of Songs<br>Ecclesiastes | **Ketuv'im**<br>Psalms<br>Proverbs<br>Job<br>Song of Songs<br>Ruth<br>Lamentations<br>Ecclesiastes |

| | |
|---|---|
| Lamentations | Esther |
| Esther | Daniel |
| Daniel | Ezra-Nehemiah |
| Ezra-Nehemiah | Chronicles |

The Codex was purchased by the Karaite community of Jerusalem about one hundred years after it was written. During the First Crusade, the synagogue was plundered and the Codex was transferred to Egypt after the Jews paid a high price to ransom it. The Codex was preserved in the Rabbanite synagogue in Cairo where Maimonides (Rambam) described it as a text trusted by all Jewish scholars.[1] The Aleppo Codex was the manuscript used by Maimonides when he set down his rules in his Mishneh Torah in the book Hichot Sefer Torah.

"Since I have seen great confusion about these matters in all the scrolls I have seen, and similarly, the masters of the tradition who have written down and composed [texts] to make it known [which passages] are p'tuchot and which are s'tumot are divided with regard to the scrolls on which to rely, I saw fit to write down the entire list of all the passages in the Torah that are s'tumot and p'tuchot, and also the form of the songs. In this manner, all the scrolls can be corrected and checked against these [principles].

The scroll on which I relied on for [clarification of] these matters was a scroll renowned in Egypt, which includes all the 24 books [of the Bible]. It was kept in Jerusalem for many years so that scrolls could be checked from it. Everyone relies upon it because it was corrected by ben Asher, who spent many years writing it precisely, and [afterward] checked it many times.

I relied [on this scroll] when I wrote a Torah scroll according to law."[2]

In 1375, a descendant of Maimonides brought the Codex to Aleppo, Syria which led to its present name.[1] The Codex remained in Aleppo for 500 years until riots in 1947 led to the destruction of the synagogue where it was kept. It was assumed at first that the Codex had been completely destroyed but it turned out that the Codex had been saved and kept in a secret hiding place. In 1958, the Codex was smuggled out of Syria and brought to Jerusalem where it was delivered to the president of Israel, Yitzak ben-Zvi.[3]

In its current condition, the Aleppo Codex contains only 295 pages out of the original 491 pages. The missing or destroyed parts include:

The first seven pages which included the Masoretic grammatical commentary.

One hundred and eighteen pages containing the Torah (up to Deuteronomy 28:17).

Three pages from Second Kings (14:21-18:13).

Three pages from Jeremiah (29:9-31:34).

Three pages from the Trei Asar [12 Prophets] (Amos 8:13 to Micah 5:1 and the entirety of Obadiah and Jonah).

Four pages from the end of the Trei Asar (the end of Zephaniah to Zechariah 9:17 and the entirety of Haggai).

Two pages from Psalms (15:1-25:1).

Thirty-six pages from the Ketuvim [Writings] (Song of Songs 3:11 until the end of the Ketuvim-including the entirety of Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah).

One page containing the dedication of the Aleppo Codex.

Twenty pages at the end of the Aleppo Codex containing the Masoretic annotations.[4]

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[1]Pfeffer, Anshel. "Fragment of Ancient Parchment from Bible Given to Jerusalem Scholars." Haaretz 11 June 2007.
[2]ben Maimon, Moshe. Hilchot Sefer Torah. Chabad, n.d.
[3]Ofer, Yosef. The Aleppo Codex. The Aleppo Codex, n.d.
[4]"The Extant Parts of the Aleppo Codex." aleppocodex.org. Aleppo Codex, n.d.