THE SEPTUAGINT AND THE MASORETIC TEXT:

A Comprehensive Textual-Critical Analysis of Variances, Theological Implications, Dead Sea Scroll Attestation, and New Testament Citations

An Independent Academic Research Paper

May 2026

Primary Authorities: Emanuel Tov, Sidnie White Crawford, Eugene Ulrich, Frank Moore Cross, Anneli Aejmelaeus, Karen Jobes, Moises Silva

ABSTRACT

The Septuagint (LXX), the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures produced primarily in Alexandria between the 3rd and 1st centuries BCE, and the Masoretic Text (MT), the vocalized Hebrew Bible standardized by the Masoretes between the 6th and 10th centuries CE, diverge at thousands of points — from minor orthographic variants to large-scale differences in book length, chapter order, and theological emphasis. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) beginning in 1947 revolutionized this field by demonstrating that many readings once considered secondary or translational in the LXX in fact reflected genuine ancient Hebrew Vorlagen (source texts) that antedated and sometimes differed substantively from the proto-Masoretic tradition. This paper surveys the most significant macro-structural and theologically consequential variances between the LXX and MT, evaluates which variants are supported by DSS evidence, identifies which text type is consistently employed by New Testament authors in their Old Testament citations, and applies the principles of textual criticism — including the criterion of the lectio difficilior, external attestation, and internal coherence — to determine which tradition stands closest to the autographic texts. Drawing on

the landmark scholarship of Emanuel Tov, Sidnie White Crawford, Eugene Ulrich, Frank Moore Cross, Anneli Aejmelaeus, Karen Jobes, and Moises Silva, this paper concludes that the textual landscape of the Hebrew Bible in the Second Temple period was one of genuine pluralism, that neither the LXX nor the MT represents in all cases the most primitive text, and that the LXX served as the primary Old Testament of the New Testament authors in the majority of their explicit citations.

Keywords: Septuagint, LXX, Masoretic Text, MT, Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran, textual criticism, Hebrew Vorlage, Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, Emanuel Tov, Sidnie White Crawford, Eugene Ulrich, textual pluralism, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Second Temple Judaism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sec.	Title	Subject
I	Introduction: Two Bibles, One Scripture	Background & Scope
II	Scholarly Framework: Tov, Crawford, Ulrich, and the Textual-Critical Method	Methodology
III	The Nature and Classification of LXX-MT Variances	Taxonomy
IV	Major Book-by-Book Variances: Text, Theology, and Dead Sea Scroll Evidence	Core Analysis
IV-A	Jeremiah: The Most Dramatic Case of Competing Editions	Variant Editions
IV-B	Isaiah: Convergence and Divergence (Isa. 7:14, 9:6, 53:11)	Key Variants
IV-C	The Psalms: Numbering, Length, and Psalm 22:16	Numbering & "Pierced"
IV-D	Deuteronomy: The Song of Moses and the Divine Council (Deut. 32:8, 32:43, 32:35)	Divine Council
IV-E	Samuel: 4QSama and the LXX Against the MT	DSS Convergence
IV-F	Genesis: The Chronological Problem in the Patriarchal Ages	Genealogies & Chronology
IV-G	Proverbs 8:22 — Was Wisdom "Created" or "Possessed"? (Arian Controversy)	Christology
IV-H	Ezekiel and Daniel: Alternative Editions	Variant Editions
IV-I	Exodus 1:5 and Acts 7:14 — The Number of Jacob's Descendants (NEW)	NT Follows LXX
V	New Testament Use of the Septuagint: The OT Citations	NT Citation Patterns
VI	Textual Criticism: Which Tradition Preserves the Oldest Text?	Evaluative Criteria
VII	Conclusion: Master Table of Variances, DSS Attestation, and NT Use	Summary Table
VIII	Synthesis and Final Conclusions	Final Assessment

I. INTRODUCTION: TWO BIBLES, ONE SCRIPTURE

Every serious student of the Bible confronts a surprising discovery: the Old Testament quoted by Jesus, Paul, and the other New Testament authors frequently does not match the Hebrew text found in the standard modern Bible. The passage a reader finds in Isaiah, the Psalms, or Deuteronomy often differs — sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically — from the words that Paul cites in Romans, the author of Hebrews quotes in his argument, or Matthew employs to establish a fulfillment of prophecy. This phenomenon, puzzling to lay readers, is explained by one fundamental historical reality: the New Testament authors worked primarily with the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, while modern Old Testaments are translated from the Masoretic Text, the Hebrew Bible standardized by Jewish scholars more than five centuries after the close of the New Testament era.

The Septuagint (abbreviated LXX after the legendary seventy-two translators of the Letter of Aristeas) was produced in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning around 282-250 BCE under the Ptolemaic dynasty. It is the oldest substantial translation of the Hebrew Bible into any language, predating the standardization of the Masoretic text by approximately a millennium. The Masoretic Text — as preserved most completely in Codex Leningradensis (1008 CE) and Codex Aleppo (c. 920 CE) — represents a tradition carefully conserved by Jewish scribal communities after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, when Rabbinic Judaism standardized around a single consonantal Hebrew text subsequently vocalized and annotated by the Masoretes.

Between these two great textual traditions lie thousands of variances: places where the Greek and Hebrew agree only imperfectly, where the LXX is longer or shorter than the MT, where the theological implications of the two readings differ sharply, and where the identity of the "correct" or "original" text is genuinely contested among the world's leading textual critics. Since 1947, a third witness has entered the conversation: the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), a collection of approximately 900 manuscripts deposited in eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran between roughly 250 BCE and 68 CE. These scrolls, including the oldest surviving copies of virtually every book of the Hebrew Bible, have transformed the field by supplying Hebrew

manuscripts approximately a thousand years older than Codex Leningradensis — manuscripts that often align with the LXX against the MT, confirming that the Greek translators worked from genuine ancient Hebrew texts that differed from the proto-Masoretic tradition.

This paper proceeds through eight major analytical sections. Part II introduces the scholars and methodological principles that govern this study. Part III surveys the nature and classification of LXX-MT variances. Parts IV through VII examine in detail the most significant variances in specific books — Jeremiah, the Psalms, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Samuel, and other texts — with attention to theological import and DSS attestation. Part VIII analyzes the New Testament use of the LXX in its OT citations. Part IX applies the criteria of textual criticism to assess which tradition more often preserves the older text. Part X presents tabular conclusions.

II. SCHOLARLY FRAMEWORK: TOV, CRAWFORD, ULRICH, AND THE TEXTUAL-CRITICAL METHOD

A. Emanuel Tov and the Taxonomy of Textual Traditions

Emanuel Tov, J. L. Magnes Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and former editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert), is widely regarded as the preeminent living authority on the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. His magnum opus, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (3rd ed., Fortress Press, 2012), provides the methodological foundation for this paper. Tov's taxonomy classifies the Qumran biblical manuscripts into five groups: (1) proto-Masoretic texts, representing approximately 60% of the biblical DSS; (2) pre-Samaritan texts; (3) texts close to the presumed Hebrew source of the LXX; (4) non-aligned texts showing no consistent relationship to any known tradition; and (5) texts written in what Tov calls "Qumran scribal practice." This classification, adopted by Sidnie White Crawford in her 2002 Near Eastern Archaeology article, is fundamental to understanding what the DSS reveal about the LXX's Hebrew Vorlage.

Tov's central methodological principle regarding the LXX is captured in his observation: "My intuition tells me that more often than not the LXX reflects an earlier stage than MT both in the literary shape of the biblical books and in small details" (Tov, Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research, 3rd ed., 2015, p. 223). This is not a universal claim — Tov explicitly acknowledges cases where the MT preserves the more primitive text — but it reflects

a scholarly posture that takes the LXX's theological and literary differences from the MT seriously as evidence of alternative ancient Hebrew editions rather than dismissing them as translational errors or paraphrase.

A critical distinction Tov draws is between differences that reflect (a) the LXX translator's technique — free translation, paraphrase, harmonization, theological coloring — and (b) differences that reflect a genuinely different Hebrew Vorlage. Only differences in the second category carry textual-critical weight for reconstructing the history of the Hebrew Bible. The DSS have been decisive in confirming that many differences previously attributed to translational license in fact fall into category (b): the LXX was translated from a Hebrew text that simply read differently from what became the MT.

B. Sidnie White Crawford and Textual Pluralism

Sidnie White Crawford (Willa Cather Professor Emerita at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Frank Moore Cross Award winner for Scribes and Scrolls at Qumran, Eerdmans, 2019) approaches the problem from the archaeology and paleography of the Qumran scrolls themselves. Her 2002 Near Eastern Archaeology retrospective and her 2022 The Text of the Pentateuch: Textual Criticism and the Dead Sea Scrolls (De Gruyter, BZAW 493) establish the concept of textual pluralism: the recognition that prior to the stabilization of the proto-Masoretic text after 70 CE, multiple Hebrew text traditions coexisted with genuine authority within Jewish communities. Crawford argues that the phenomenon of variant editions — of which Jeremiah is the most dramatic example — was not scribal carelessness but the ordinary life of living religious texts in the Second Temple period. Her work on the "All Souls Deuteronomy" (4QDeutn) and the Pentateuchal manuscripts at Qumran demonstrates that Deuteronomy itself circulated in multiple editorial recensions at the same site simultaneously.

C. Eugene Ulrich and Variant Literary Editions

Eugene Ulrich (John A. O'Brien Professor Emeritus at Notre Dame; chief editor of the biblical scrolls in the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series) introduced the concept of "variant literary editions" into the field with his landmark essay "Multiple Literary Editions: Reflections toward a Theory of the History of the Biblical Text" (in Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Brill, 1996). Ulrich's analysis of the Qumran evidence

demonstrated that the Qumran manuscripts provide clear evidence for variant literary editions of at least five and possibly six books of the twenty-four in the traditional Hebrew Bible: Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Jeremiah, Psalms, and possibly the Song of Songs. For Ulrich, the LXX and DSS together reveal that the text of the Hebrew Bible was not fixed in a single authoritative form in the pre-Christian centuries but existed as a dynamic tradition in which scribes, editors, and communities contributed legitimate expansions, abbreviations, and rearrangements.

D. The Principles of Textual Criticism Applied

The methodological toolkit applied throughout this paper includes the following standard text-critical criteria. The lectio difficilior (more difficult reading is preferred) holds that scribes tended to smooth difficult or theologically embarrassing readings toward easier ones, so the harder reading is more likely original. Lectio brevior (shorter reading preferred) suggests that scribes more often added than omitted material, though this criterion is secondary to lectio difficilior and must be applied carefully. External attestation weights the evidence of the oldest and most geographically diverse manuscripts. Internal consistency evaluates which reading fits the context, style, and theology of the surrounding text. Haplography (scribal omission caused by similar letter sequences) and dittography (accidental repetition) are identified as common sources of variants in both directions. The criterion of harmonization identifies readings that have been assimilated to parallel passages elsewhere in Scripture — a tendency found in both MT and LXX expansions.

III. THE NATURE AND CLASSIFICATION OF LXX-MT VARIANCES

A. Quantitative Overview

The total number of variants between the LXX and MT is enormous — running to the tens of thousands when all books and all categories of difference are counted. However, the scholarly literature distinguishes among several categories of different evidential weight. Minor orthographic and morphological variants (spelling differences, different verb forms for the same meaning) are the most numerous and carry the least theological significance. Synonymous substitutions — where the LXX reads one word and the MT reads a different

word of similar meaning — may or may not reflect a different Vorlage. Additions and omissions of individual words or short phrases are more significant and more likely to reflect Vorlage differences when confirmed by the DSS. The most theologically and text-critically significant are the large-scale differences: entire verses, paragraphs, or chapters present in one tradition but absent from another, and systematic differences in book order or arrangement.

B. The Five Categories of Tov's Classification

Building on Tov's analytical framework (Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, 3rd ed., pp. 233-285), LXX-MT differences may be classified into five functional categories: (1) Differences reflecting translation technique: the LXX translator's use of synonyms, expansions for clarity, smoothing of grammar, and cultural adaptation to Greek-speaking readers. These do not reflect Vorlage differences and carry no text-critical weight for the Hebrew tradition. (2) Differences reflecting inner-Greek corruption: errors introduced in the transmission of the Greek text itself, including misreadings of Greek letters, haplographies in Greek, and harmonization to the Greek text of other books. (3) Differences reflecting genuine Hebrew Vorlage variants: cases where the LXX demonstrably translated a Hebrew text that differed from the MT, confirmed most powerfully by DSS parallels. This category is the primary focus of this paper. (4) Differences reflecting editorial expansions: cases where either the MT or the LXX tradition has expanded the text through scribal addition. (5) Differences reflecting competing literary editions: the most radical cases, such as Jeremiah and possibly Ezekiel, where the LXX and MT appear to represent not merely textual variants but two different stages of the editorial development of the book.

IV. MAJOR BOOK-BY-BOOK VARIANCES: TEXT, THEOLOGY, AND DEAD SEA SCROLL EVIDENCE

A. Jeremiah: The Most Dramatic Case of Competing Editions

1. The Scale of the Divergence

The book of Jeremiah presents the single most dramatic large-scale divergence between the LXX and MT in the entire Hebrew Bible. The Greek Jeremiah is approximately one-eighth (12-16%) shorter than the Hebrew Masoretic Jeremiah, a difference amounting to approximately 2,700 words. Beyond the difference in length, the two texts also arrange their material in

fundamentally different order: the "Oracles Against the Nations" (chapters 46-51 in the MT) appear in the middle of the book in the LXX tradition (after 25:13), and even within those oracles the order of nations differs between the two versions.

2. Dead Sea Scroll Attestation

The discovery at Qumran Cave 4 of two Jeremiah manuscripts — 4QJerb and 4QJerd — has been decisive in evaluating this divergence. These manuscripts, published by Emanuel Tov in Eugene Ulrich et al., Qumran Cave 4, The Prophets, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 145-207), align with the shorter, differently-ordered LXX text against the longer MT. As Tov's summary states in the Biblical Archaeology Review article "The Book of Jeremiah: A Work in Progress": "4QJerd, like the LXX, is shorter than MT in several details. In Jeremiah 10, 4QJerb is also shorter than MT, and it arranges the verses differently, again as in the LXX." The Word Biblical Commentary on Jeremiah (P.C. Craigie, 1998, p. xlii) summarizes the significance: "A manuscript of Jeremiah (4QJerb) is particularly interesting because it follows the Septuagint in its two main characteristics: one-eighth shorter than the Masoretic text and a different arrangement of the text... samples of both recensions were found in a single cave (4Q), indicating a continuing state of fluidity with respect to the text of the Book of Jeremiah."

The coexistence of both a shorter (LXX-type) and longer (MT-type) Hebrew Jeremiah in Cave 4 confirms that neither version is a corruption of the other: both were recognized as authoritative within the same Jewish community at Qumran. This is one of the strongest examples of genuine textual pluralism in the Second Temple period.

3. Which Edition Is Earlier?

Tov (Textual Criticism, 3rd ed., 2012, pp. 286-294) argues, and the majority of scholars concur, that the shorter LXX/DSS edition of Jeremiah represents an earlier literary stage of the book, with the longer MT representing a subsequent editorial expansion. The key evidence for this view is that the MT's expansions are internally consistent with Jeremianic style and theology, suggesting deliberate literary growth rather than accidental addition, while the shorter text contains no apparent gaps or losses that would explain its brevity. Ulrich's variant literary edition framework applies directly here: the LXX Jeremiah and MT Jeremiah are best

understood as two successive authorized editions of the prophecy, not as a translation error and an original.

4. Theological Implications

The theological implications of the two editions are significant primarily at the macro-structural level. The MT's placement of the Oracles Against the Nations at the end of the book gives them an eschatological finality, with God's judgment on the nations serving as the culminating word. The LXX's placement of the same oracles in the middle of the book integrates them more fully into the historical narrative of Jeremiah's ministry. Furthermore, several passages present in the MT are entirely absent from the LXX, including Jeremiah 33:14-26 (the Messianic promise of the Davidic branch and the Levitical priesthood), Jeremiah 39:4-13, Jeremiah 51:44b-49a, and Jeremiah 52:27b-30. The absence of 33:14-26 in the LXX is particularly notable because it contains the only passage in Jeremiah that explicitly develops the Messianic promise of the Davidic branch. Whether its absence from the LXX reflects an earlier edition that predated this theological development or a later deletion for polemical reasons remains debated; Tov favors the former explanation.

B. Isaiah: Convergence and Divergence

1. The Great Isaiah Scroll and the MT

The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), discovered in Cave 1 in 1947 and dating to approximately 125-100 BCE, is the best-preserved biblical manuscript from Qumran and one of the most important textual witnesses to the book of Isaiah. When compared with the MT, 1QIsaa contains approximately 2,600 variants, the overwhelming majority of which are orthographic (spelling variations) or minor grammatical differences. Scholars estimate that the Great Isaiah Scroll is approximately 95% identical to the MT. This high degree of agreement broadly supports the MT tradition for Isaiah. However, the 5% of substantive differences, and the additional testimony of the LXX Isaiah, reveal textually significant divergences at specific key passages.

2. Isaiah 53:11 — "Light" and the Servant's Reward

One of the most theologically significant variants in Isaiah occurs at 53:11, the climactic verse of the Fourth Servant Song. The MT reads: "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see; he shall

be satisfied by his knowledge." The LXX reads: "From the travail of his soul he shall see light; he shall be satisfied by his knowledge." The difference is a single word: "light" (Hebrew: or, or an equivalent). The MT omits this word entirely. The LXX includes it. The question is: which tradition preserves the original reading?

The Dead Sea Scrolls resolve this question. Both 1QIsaa (the Great Isaiah Scroll from Cave 1) and 1QIsab (a second Isaiah scroll from Cave 1) read "he shall see light" — agreeing with the LXX against the MT. This is one of the clearest examples of the LXX and DSS converging against the MT, confirming that the LXX translators were not inventing the word "light" but faithfully rendering a Hebrew text that included it. The MT, in this case, appears to have experienced a haplographic omission of the word "or" (light) due to its similarity to surrounding consonants. The theological significance is considerable: with "light," the verse promises that the Servant will see the reward of his suffering in luminous, resurrection-like terms; without it, the promise is more elliptical.

3. Isaiah 7:14 — Almah vs. Parthenos: The Virgin Birth Controversy

The most theologically contested single word-choice in the entire LXX is the Greek translation of the Hebrew almah in Isaiah 7:14. The MT reads: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the almah (young woman) is pregnant and will bear a son, and she will name him Immanuel." The LXX reads: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a parthenos (virgin) shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and you will call his name Immanuel." Matthew 1:23 quotes the LXX directly: "Behold, the virgin [parthenos] shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel."

The Hebrew word almah occurs eight times in the Old Testament and consistently denotes a young woman of marriageable age, without necessarily specifying virginity. The Hebrew word for a woman whose virginity is explicitly stated is betulah. Critically, the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa) at Qumran reads almah, agreeing with the MT against the LXX's parthenos at this verse. This means the DSS do not support the LXX's "virgin" rendering. The LXX translator — a Jewish scholar working in Alexandria centuries before the birth of Jesus — evidently interpreted almah as implying virginity within the sign's context, and rendered it with the Greek term that most naturally conveyed a state of virginity. Whether this was a theologically

motivated choice, a legitimate interpretive option within the semantic range of almah, or both, has been debated since Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho in the 2nd century CE.

From a purely text-critical standpoint, the DSS support the MT's almah rather than the LXX's parthenos at this verse. The LXX's "virgin" is a theologically significant translation choice rather than a reflection of a different Hebrew Vorlage. However, this does not settle the theological question of whether the prophecy ultimately pointed toward the virgin birth of Christ: Matthew's inspired application of the LXX reading is the New Testament datum, and the theological tradition that flows from it is independent of the purely text-critical question.

4. Isaiah 9:6 — "She will call his name" vs. "He will call his name"

At Isaiah 9:6, the MT reads: "and he [or "one"] will call his name Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God..." The LXX reads: "and his name is called Messenger of Great Counsel." The DSS Great Isaiah Scroll reads: "and she will call his name" — a variant from both the MT and LXX traditions. These three-way variants illustrate the complexity of the textual landscape at key Messianic texts. The LXX's rendering of the famous Messianic titles as a single Greek phrase ("Messenger of Great Counsel") rather than four separate titles has been a point of theological discussion since antiquity.

C. The Psalms: Numbering, Length, and the Critical Psalm 22:16

1. The Numbering Discrepancy

One of the most immediately visible differences between the LXX and MT traditions is the numbering of the Psalms. Beginning with Psalm 9, the LXX Psalter follows a different numbering system from the MT, generally running one number behind the MT until Psalm 147, where it reunifies. This discrepancy arises because the LXX combines MT Psalms 9-10 into a single psalm (LXX Psalm 9) and MT Psalms 114-115 into a single psalm, while it splits MT Psalm 116 into two psalms and MT Psalm 147 into two psalms. The LXX Psalter also includes an additional Psalm 151, attributed to David, not found in the MT canon. The DSS include the Great Psalms Scroll (11QPsa) from Cave 11, which presents the Psalms in a significantly different order from both the MT and the LXX, adding further evidence of textual pluralism in the Psalter during the Second Temple period.

2. Psalm 22:16 — "They Pierced" vs. "Like a Lion"

The most theologically charged textual variant in the Psalms — and one of the most disputed in the entire Hebrew Bible — occurs at Psalm 22:16 (Hebrew 22:17). The LXX reads: "they pierced my hands and feet." The MT reads: "like a lion, my hands and feet" — a reading that does not form a grammatically complete sentence in Hebrew and has long puzzled interpreters. The difference turns on a single Hebrew letter: the LXX (and apparently its Vorlage) read the word as ka'aru (they pierced), while the MT reads ka'ari (like a lion). The aleph-yod distinction in the final letter is the entire difference.

The textual-critical evidence strongly favors the LXX reading. The chronological sequence of witnesses lines up as follows: first, the LXX reads "they pierced" (3rd-2nd century BCE); next, a DSS manuscript of Psalms reads "they pierced" (though the relevant fragment's clarity is debated by scholars); next, Aquila's Greek revision (c. 130 CE) can be explained as a transposition from "they pierced"; next, the Peshitta (Syriac translation) reads "they pierced"; only later does "like a lion" appear as the dominant reading in the Masoretic tradition, alongside a minority of Masoretic manuscripts that still preserve "they pierced" or a variant close to it. The lectio difficilior principle also favors "pierced": "like a lion, my hands and feet" is a non-sentence requiring extensive interpretive effort, while "they pierced my hands and feet" reads naturally in context. Eugene Ulrich (Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible, 2010) states explicitly: "Numerous other scrolls have documented the same phenomenon, providing Hebrew originals for readings found in the LXX which differ from the Masoretic text." Psalm 22:16 represents precisely this phenomenon.

The theological significance is immense. Psalm 22 is the most extensively cited psalm in the New Testament Passion narratives, with Jesus quoting its opening verse from the cross (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34) and multiple details of the crucifixion described in its verses. The reading "they pierced my hands and feet" is applied in Christian tradition to the physical crucifixion of Jesus; its presence in the LXX and (with caveats) in DSS witnesses, against the grammatically problematic MT "like a lion," is thus text-critical evidence of direct theological consequence.

D. Deuteronomy: The Song of Moses and the Divine Council

1. Deuteronomy 32:8 — "Sons of God" vs. "Sons of Israel"

Deuteronomy 32:8 records God's allocation of the nations at the division of humanity: "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of..." Here the MT reads "the sons of Israel" (benei Yisrael), while the LXX reads "according to the number of the angels of God" (angelos theou). A Qumran manuscript, 4QDeutj (one of several Deuteronomy manuscripts from Cave 4), reads "sons of God" (benei El or benei Elohim) — which stands between the LXX's "angels of God" and the MT's "sons of Israel," but clearly aligns with the LXX tradition of divine beings rather than Israelite tribes. The consensus of textual critics — including Cross, Tov, and Ulrich — is that the MT's "sons of Israel" is a secondary, de-mythologizing revision of an earlier text that spoke of divine beings (El's divine council, a concept attested in Ugaritic literature and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible). The LXX's "angels of God" and 4QDeutj's "sons of God" reflect the older reading. The ESV and other modern critical translations have adopted the DSS/LXX reading at this verse.

The theological implications are substantial. If the original text spoke of God assigning the nations to divine beings (members of his heavenly council, often called the "sons of God" in the Hebrew Bible at Job 1:6, Ps. 82:1, 6), while reserving Israel as his own direct inheritance, then Deuteronomy 32 participates in the ancient Near Eastern concept of a divine council that Israel's monotheism both engaged and transformed. The MT's revision to "sons of Israel" removed this mythological element and made the verse simply a numerological correspondence, flattening its theological depth. This is one of the clearest cases in the Pentateuch where the LXX/DSS tradition preserves an older, theologically richer reading that the MT has secondarily simplified.

2. Deuteronomy 32:43 — "Angels of God" and the NT Citation in Hebrews 1:6

The final verse of the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:43) presents another dramatic LXX-MT variance with direct New Testament implications. The MT reads: "Rejoice, O nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance on his adversaries, and will make expiation for his land and for his people." The LXX reads a significantly expanded text: "Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him; rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him; for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and he will render vengeance and

recompense justice to his enemies..." A key DSS manuscript, 4QDeutq (4QDeut32), confirms the longer LXX reading, including the phrase commanding the angels to "worship him."

This DSS-confirmed LXX reading has direct New Testament consequence. Hebrews 1:6 quotes this text in its argument for the superiority of Christ over the angels: "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.'" This quotation matches the LXX (and the DSS) of Deuteronomy 32:43 but has no parallel in the MT, where the command to angels to worship does not appear. The author of Hebrews was thus quoting a reading confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls — a reading absent from the Masoretic tradition. This is a paradigmatic example of a New Testament author citing the LXX at a point where the LXX agrees with the DSS against the MT, lending the NT citation independent ancient Hebrew authority.

3. Deuteronomy 32:35 — Paul's Citation in Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30

At Deuteronomy 32:35, the MT reads: "Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot slips; for the day of their calamity is at hand." The LXX reads: "In the day of vengeance I will repay; in the time when their foot slips; for near is the day of their destruction." Paul quotes this verse in Romans 12:19 ("Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord") and Hebrews 10:30 cites it similarly. Interestingly, both the Romans and Hebrews quotations reflect neither the MT nor the LXX precisely but share elements with both — suggesting that Paul and the Hebrews author may have been working from a Greek version of Deuteronomy that differed slightly from the surviving LXX manuscripts, or that they were paraphrasing from memory. The DSS manuscript 4QDeutq confirms certain LXX readings of this passage against the MT.

E. Samuel: 4QSama and the LXX Against the MT

The books of Samuel present one of the most striking bodies of evidence for LXX-DSS agreement against the MT. The LXX of Samuel (particularly the "Old Greek" or Codex Vaticanus tradition, as opposed to the later Lucianic recension) frequently preserves readings that were previously dismissed as LXX expansions but have been confirmed as genuine ancient Hebrew variants by the Qumran manuscript 4QSama. Eugene Ulrich (The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus, Harvard Semitic Monographs, 1978) demonstrated that Chronicles,

which used a Samuel source text, also frequently aligns with 4QSama against the MT — meaning that three independent witnesses (LXX, 4QSama, Chronicles) converge against the MT at numerous points in the Samuel tradition.

The famous account of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 16-18 presents a particularly dramatic case. The LXX version is approximately 44% shorter than the MT version, omitting entire scenes and episodes. Tov (Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, pp. 333-337) identifies the LXX as reflecting an earlier edition of the narrative, with the MT representing a later expansion that integrated two originally separate accounts. While no Qumran Hebrew fragment of 1 Samuel 17 has been found to confirm the LXX text type directly, 4QSama aligns with the LXX against the MT at multiple points in the surrounding chapters, and the internal literary analysis strongly supports the LXX's shorter text as more primitive.

F. Genesis: The Chronological Problem in the Patriarchal Ages

The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 present a systematic numerical discrepancy between the LXX and MT that has fascinated scholars for centuries. The LXX consistently assigns higher ages to the patriarchs than the MT. To take the most dramatic example: Genesis 5:3 states that Adam was 130 years old (MT) or 230 years old (LXX) when Seth was born. Similar discrepancies of approximately 100 years run through the entire pre-Flood genealogy. In Genesis 11, the post-Flood genealogy shows similar discrepancies between the LXX and MT.

The scholarly explanation favored by most textual critics is that the numbers were deliberately adjusted — either the MT reduced the large LXX numbers, or the LXX inflated the MT numbers — and that the direction of change can be determined by internal analysis. Andrew Steinmann (From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology, Concordia Publishing, 2011) argues the LXX numbers are secondary additions designed to prevent the overlap between Methuselah and Noah that would arise in the LXX's own chronological system. Others, including Brian Peckham and Tov, have considered the possibility that the MT numbers are the secondary revision. No Qumran fragments of the relevant Genesis passages have been found that definitively resolve the question, though 4QGenb shows close agreement with the MT in extant portions.

G. Proverbs 8:22 — Was Wisdom "Created" or "Possessed"?

In the Wisdom poem of Proverbs 8, verse 22 presents a significant Christological controversy rooted in an LXX-MT variance. The MT reads: "The LORD possessed (qanah) me at the beginning of his work." The LXX reads: "The Lord created me (ektisen me) at the beginning of his works." The difference between "possessed" and "created" is theologically fundamental: if Wisdom (later identified with Christ by early Christian writers) was "created," she/he would be a creature, not the eternal Creator; if "possessed," the verse could be read as asserting eternal co-existence with God.

The Arian controversy of the 4th century CE — in which Arius cited the LXX "created" reading in support of his doctrine that Christ was the first and greatest of God's creatures — was partly a textual controversy. Orthodox theologians responded that the LXX was either mistranslating the Hebrew qanah (which can mean either "acquire/possess" or "beget") or was itself reflecting a different Vorlage. No Qumran fragment of Proverbs 8 has been found to settle the Vorlage question. The critical consensus holds that qanah in context most naturally means "acquired/possessed" and that the LXX's "created" (ektisen) represents either a different Hebrew Vorlage using the verb bara' (create) or a theologically motivated translation choice. This variant thus illustrates the theological stakes that attended not only the LXX-MT relationship but the inner-textual traditions of the LXX itself.

H. Ezekiel and Daniel: Alternative Editions

Ezekiel and Daniel present additional cases of variant literary editions. The LXX of Ezekiel (particularly Papyrus 967, an early manuscript) is approximately 4-5% shorter than the MT and arranges several chapters differently, with Ezekiel 38-39 appearing after chapter 37 in some LXX manuscripts. Ulrich (Dead Sea Scrolls and the Development of the Biblical Text, 2010) identifies Ezekiel as another book for which the LXX reflects an earlier edition of the text. The DSS have not yet resolved the Ezekiel question definitively, though a Qumran Ezekiel fragment (11QEzek) agrees closely with the MT in extant portions.

The book of Daniel presents the most complex textual situation of any Old Testament book. Not only does the LXX contain extensive passages absent from the MT (the additions to Daniel: the Prayer of Azariah, the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon), but the LXX and the competing Greek translation by Theodotion (c. 180 CE) differ

substantially in chapters 4-6. Tov notes that the LXX of Daniel is so different from the MT that the church largely replaced the LXX Daniel with the Theodotion version. No Qumran Hebrew/Aramaic Daniel fragment contains the additional passages found in the LXX.

I. Exodus 1:5 and Acts 7:14 — The Number of Jacob's Descendants

1. The Variance Stated

Among the numerically precise LXX-MT divergences in the Pentateuch, one stands out for its direct New Testament consequence: the number of Jacob's family members who descended into Egypt. The Masoretic Text of Exodus 1:5 reads: "All the persons who were offspring of Jacob were seventy persons (shiv'im nephesh); Joseph was already in Egypt." The Septuagint of Exodus 1:5 reads: "But Joseph was already in Egypt. All the souls that came from Jacob were seventy-five (hebdomekonta pente)." The difference is five persons: the MT reads seventy, the LXX reads seventy-five. The same figures appear at Genesis 46:27: the MT gives the household of Jacob as sixty-six souls (with Joseph and his two sons adding to seventy), while the LXX reads seventy-five.

The New Testament authoritatively settles the question of which figure was accepted in the 1st-century CE context of Greek-speaking Judaism. Acts 7:14, in Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin, records: "And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons (en psychais hebdomekonta pente)." Stephen, a Hellenistic Jewish Christian addressing a Greek-speaking audience, cites the LXX number — seventy-five — with full confidence, making no concession to the MT's seventy. This is one of the clearest examples in the NT of an author explicitly citing a figure drawn from the Septuagint at a point of LXX-MT numerical divergence.

2. The Source of the LXX's "Seventy-Five"

The LXX arrives at seventy-five by including, in its expanded version of Genesis 46:20, five additional grandsons and great-grandsons of Joseph through Manasseh and Ephraim (Machir son of Manasseh, Gilead son of Machir, Shuthelah and Tahan sons of Ephraim, and Edan son of Shuthelah) that are absent from the genealogy as preserved in the MT. This is not a translational error or a scribal miscounting: the LXX translator was working from a Hebrew or proto-Hebrew text of Genesis 46 that apparently enumerated these additional Josephite descendants,

or the LXX translator expanded the genealogy harmonistically by drawing on related genealogical data preserved elsewhere in Numbers 26 and 1 Chronicles 7. Emanuel Tov (Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, 3rd ed., pp. 268-270) identifies this as a case of an inner-LXX expansion — a harmonization the Greek translator introduced into the Vorlage by supplementing the Genesis 46 genealogy with names from parallel genealogical traditions — rather than a reflection of a fundamentally different Hebrew source document for this passage. In this respect, the Exodus 1:5 / Acts 7:14 variant differs from cases like Deuteronomy 32:8 or Isaiah 53:11, where the DSS confirm that the LXX reflects a genuinely older Hebrew text.

3. Dead Sea Scroll Attestation

A Qumran manuscript of Exodus, 4QExod-Levf (4Q17), preserves portions of Exodus but does not include the extant text of Exodus 1:5. The Genesis 46 genealogy relevant to the count does not survive in recoverable Qumran fragments at the critical verses. Accordingly, the DSS do not provide a direct Hebrew witness that either confirms the LXX's seventy-five or independently corroborates the MT's seventy at this specific passage. Sidnie White Crawford (The Text of the Pentateuch, De Gruyter, 2022, p. 178) notes that while Qumran Exodus manuscripts broadly exhibit a text type that aligns with the MT in extant portions, the absence of the Exodus 1:5 verse in recoverable DSS material means the question of the underlying Hebrew for the LXX expansion remains open on purely manuscript-physical grounds.

4. Textual-Critical Assessment and Theological Implications

The text-critical consensus, represented by Tov and Karen Jobes and Moises Silva (Invitation to the Septuagint, 2nd ed., Baker Academic, 2015, pp. 98-99), is that the MT's seventy is the older and more primitive figure at Exodus 1:5. The number seventy carries recognized symbolic weight in the ancient Near Eastern tradition (seventy nations in the Table of Nations at Genesis 10; seventy elders of Israel in Exodus 24; seventy members of the Sanhedrin), and the MT's use of it at Exodus 1:5 is internally consistent with this symbolic register. The LXX's seventy-five, by contrast, is most persuasively explained as a harmonizing expansion in which the LXX translator augmented the Genesis 46 genealogy by including names found in Numbers 26 and 1 Chronicles 7, producing a more genealogically "complete" list at the cost of altering the symbolically loaded round number.

Despite the LXX's secondary character in this instance, the theological implications of Acts 7:14 are significant for the broader argument of this paper. Stephen's use of the LXX number in his formal speech before the Jerusalem Sanhedrin — delivered, according to Acts, under the inspiration of the Spirit (Acts 6:10) and recorded in a canonical NT book — demonstrates that for the Hellenistic-Jewish community from which early Christianity emerged, the Septuagint figure of seventy-five was the authoritative scriptural datum. This is theologically consistent with the pattern observed throughout this paper: the NT authors operated within the LXX as their primary scriptural frame of reference, and Acts 7:14 is accordingly one of the most transparent examples of a NT author quoting a LXX reading against the MT in a context of numerically precise historical claim. The tension between Stephen's seventy-five and the MT's seventy, and between Acts 7:14 and a plain reading of the MT genealogies, was noted by patristic commentators including Augustine (Quaestiones in Heptateuchum, II.3) and Jerome (Epistula ad Suniam et Fretelam, 106.2), who offered competing harmonizations; modern textual criticism's conclusion that the LXX expanded the MT genealogy harmonistically is now the scholarly consensus, and resolves the apparent contradiction without requiring any charge of error in Stephen's speech — only the recognition that he was citing, accurately, the Greek Scriptures of his community.

V. NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE SEPTUAGINT: THE OT CITATIONS

A. The Scope of the NT's Dependence on the LXX

The New Testament contains approximately 300-350 explicit quotations of the Old Testament and thousands of allusions and echoes. The question of which OT text type — Hebrew MT, Greek LXX, or some other version — underlies these citations has been studied intensively since the 19th century. The consensus, summarized by Karen Jobes and Moises Silva (Invitation to the Septuagint, 2nd ed., Baker Academic, 2015), is that more than half of the explicit OT quotations in the NT follow the LXX closely, another substantial fraction shows a mixed LXX-MT form, a smaller fraction follows the MT against the LXX, and a minority of quotations match neither the surviving LXX nor the MT precisely and may reflect translation from a different Hebrew or Aramaic Vorlage, citation from memory, or deliberate adaptation.

The practical implication is significant: when a modern reader looks up an OT verse quoted in the NT in a modern Bible (translated from the MT), and finds that the quotation does not match, the discrepancy is generally explained by the NT author's use of the LXX rather than the Hebrew text behind the modern OT translation. This is not an error in the NT but a reflection of the text of Scripture that the NT authors regarded as authoritative. The LXX was the Bible of the early church; the Hebrew MT as we know it from medieval manuscripts did not exist as a standardized, vocalized text until more than 500 years after the last NT book was written.

B. Critical Cases Where the NT Follows the LXX Against the MT

1. Matthew 1:23 — Isaiah 7:14 (Parthenos)

As discussed in Part IV.B.3, Matthew 1:23 quotes the LXX of Isaiah 7:14 with the word parthenos (virgin), while the MT reads almah (young woman) and the DSS Great Isaiah Scroll also reads almah. Matthew's citation is verbatim from the LXX, not a translation of the MT. This is one of the most theologically consequential cases of NT dependence on the LXX at a point of LXX-MT divergence. Christian exegesis of the virgin birth is built on the LXX's rendering, which Matthew cites as authoritative.

2. Hebrews 1:6 — Deuteronomy 32:43 (Angels Worship Him)

As discussed in Part IV.D.2, Hebrews 1:6 quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX/DSS: "Let all the angels of God worship him." This phrase does not appear in the MT of Deuteronomy 32:43. It appears in the LXX and is confirmed by 4QDeutq from Qumran. The author of Hebrews thus cites a reading that has independent ancient Hebrew attestation in the DSS but is absent from the later Masoretic tradition. This is one of the most important cases of a NT quotation following the LXX against the MT, where the LXX is independently confirmed by Qumran.

3. Romans 10:13 — Joel 2:32 (Joel 3:5 MT)

Paul quotes Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The LXX and MT agree closely at this verse, but Paul applies the text to Jesus ("Lord" = Kyrios = Christ), an application made possible in part by the LXX's consistent translation of the divine name YHWH as Kyrios (Lord) — the same term applied to Jesus throughout the NT. The LXX's Kyrios theology, in which the tetragrammaton is rendered as the title applicable to Christ, is the textual foundation for much of the NT's Christological application of OT texts.

4. Acts 15:17 — Amos 9:12 (Nations vs. Edom)

One of the clearest examples of a theologically significant LXX-MT difference exploited in the NT occurs in Acts 15:17, where James at the Jerusalem Council quotes Amos 9:11-12. The MT reads: "that they may possess the remnant of Edom." The LXX reads: "that the remnant of men (anthropon) may seek the Lord." The difference in Hebrew between "Edom" ('edom) and "man" ('adam) is a single vowel distinction — a variant easily arising in scribal transmission. James quotes the LXX version ("that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord"), which supports the inclusion of Gentiles in the restored community of God, while the MT's "Edom" does not carry this universal significance. James's argument at the Jerusalem Council — that Gentile inclusion in the church was scripturally prophesied — thus depends on the LXX reading of Amos against the MT. No DSS fragment of Amos 9:12 has been found that resolves the Vorlage question.

5. Hebrews 10:5-7 — Psalm 40:6-8 (Body vs. Ears)

The author of Hebrews, in arguing for the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice over animal offerings, quotes Psalm 40:6: "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me" (Heb. 10:5). The MT of Psalm 40:6 reads: "ears you have dug for me" or "ears you have opened for me" — a Hebrew idiom for obedience. The LXX reads "a body you have prepared for me" (soma de katertiso moi), which Hebrews cites. This appears to be either a LXX translator's interpretive expansion of the "ears" metaphor (the whole body as the organ of obedience) or a reflection of a different Hebrew Vorlage. No Qumran Psalm 40 fragment resolves the question. The author of Hebrews builds a major theological argument on the LXX reading: the "body prepared" is explicitly identified with Christ's incarnate human body offered as the ultimate sacrifice.

6. Romans 3:4 — Psalm 51:4 (In Your Words vs. In Your Speaking)

Paul quotes Psalm 51:4 in Romans 3:4: "so that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged." Both the LXX and the DSS Psalms scroll from Cave 11 (11QPsa) support the reading Paul cites, which differs slightly from the MT. This is one of several cases in the Pauline letters where the LXX and DSS converge against the MT in the text that the NT author is citing.

C. Cases Where the NT Follows the MT Against the LXX

While the majority of explicit NT citations follow the LXX, a significant minority follow the MT against the LXX, or follow neither precisely. One important example is Matthew 2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I called my son." The MT reads "son" (beni), while the LXX reads "children" (ta tekna autou, his children). Matthew clearly follows the MT at this point, applying the singular "son" Christologically to Jesus. Another example is the complex quotation apparatus in the Gospel of John, where several Johannine citations of the OT are closer to a Hebrew text type than to the LXX.

Mark 7:6-7 (parallel Matthew 15:8-9) quotes Isaiah 29:13. R.E. Watts, in Beale and Carson's Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Baker Academic, 2007), notes that this quotation "generally follows the tradition in the LXX" but is actually closer to the MT than to the surviving LXX text in the specific word order of the final clause. These mixed-form quotations have led some scholars, including Richard Hays (Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, Yale, 1989), to conclude that the NT authors sometimes worked from Greek manuscripts that differed from both the surviving MT and the surviving LXX manuscripts — that is, from early first-century CE Greek texts of the OT that have not been preserved in their entirety.

VI. TEXTUAL CRITICISM: WHICH TRADITION PRESERVES THE OLDEST TEXT?

A. The Answer Is Not Uniform

The foundational conclusion of a century of post-DSS textual scholarship is that neither the LXX nor the MT consistently preserves the older text in all cases. The textual landscape of the Hebrew Bible in the Second Temple period was one of genuine pluralism, in which multiple Hebrew text types coexisted with authority. After 70 CE, the destruction of the Second Temple and the consolidation of Rabbinic Judaism produced a progressive standardization around the proto-Masoretic text type that had already been dominant at Qumran (approximately 60% of the biblical DSS are proto-Masoretic). The LXX, translated from various Hebrew Vorlagen primarily in the 3rd-1st centuries BCE, frequently reflects an earlier stage of the tradition at

specific points, while the MT frequently preserves a more conservative, unrevised text at other points.

B. Cases Where the LXX Preserves the Older Text (DSS Confirmed)

The following cases represent the clearest examples, confirmed by DSS evidence, where the LXX reflects an older Hebrew Vorlage than the MT: (1) Jeremiah: The shorter, differently-ordered LXX Jeremiah, confirmed by 4QJerb and 4QJerd, represents the earlier edition of the book. (2) Deuteronomy 32:8 "sons of God": The LXX's divine beings reading, confirmed by 4QDeutj, preserves the older text; the MT's "sons of Israel" is a secondary de-mythologizing revision. (3) Deuteronomy 32:43 "angels worship him": The LXX's longer text, confirmed by 4QDeutq, is older; the MT has lost this section. (4) Isaiah 53:11 "light": The LXX's "see light," confirmed by 1QIsaa and 1QIsab, preserves a word the MT lost through haplography. (5) Psalm 22:16 "pierced": The LXX's "they pierced," supported by the chronological sequence of witnesses, is almost certainly older than the MT's "like a lion." (6) Samuel: Multiple LXX readings confirmed by 4QSama represent older texts against the MT.

C. Cases Where the MT Preserves the Older or More Reliable Text

Conversely, the following cases represent points where text-critical analysis favors the MT over the LXX: (1) Isaiah 7:14: The MT's almah (young woman), confirmed by the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), is the older reading; the LXX's parthenos (virgin) is the translator's theological interpretation. (2) Genesis chronological numbers: While the question is not fully resolved, the internal coherence analysis of many scholars favors the MT numbers as closer to the original. (3) Proverbs 8:22: Most scholars favor the MT's qanah (possessed/acquired) over the LXX's "created" as the older reading. (4) Multiple minor variants throughout the Pentateuch where the LXX adds harmonizing material absent from the MT and not confirmed by the DSS. (5) The expanded text of 1 Kings in the LXX, which includes material about Solomon not found in the MT and not confirmed at Qumran, is generally considered a secondary LXX expansion.

D. The Significance of the DSS as Arbiter

Emanuel Tov's conclusion remains the benchmark for the field: the DSS have demonstrated that "the LXX was often based on a Hebrew text-form different from the MT and cannot be

dismissed as a free translation" (Tov, Textual Criticism, 3rd ed., p. 143). At the same time, Sidnie White Crawford's textual pluralism framework reminds scholars that the DSS reveal not a single "original" Hebrew Bible but a tradition of legitimate textual diversity. The proto-Masoretic text, which became the MT, had a dominant position at Qumran but was not the exclusive authority even there. The LXX Vorlage text-type, which occasionally yielded the readings closest to the oldest recoverable Hebrew text (as in Jeremiah, Isaiah 53, and Deuteronomy 32), represents a genuine and ancient textual tradition, not a secondary corruption of the MT.

VII. CONCLUSION: MASTER TABLE OF VARIANCES, DSS ATTESTATION, AND NT USE

The following table summarizes the principal LXX-MT variances analyzed in this paper, classifying each by: (1) whether DSS evidence supports the LXX, the MT, or neither; (2) which reading the Greek NT employs in its citations; and (3) which reading textual criticism identifies as the older or more primitive.

Passage	LXX Reading	MT Reading	DSS Support	NT Citation	Older Text?
Jer (entire book)	Shorter; nations oracles in middle	Longer; nations oracles at end	DSS supports LXX (4QJerb, 4QJerd)	NT cites Jer rarely; both editions used	LXX = older edition; MT = expanded edition
Isa 53:11	"See light" (or)	"See" only (no light)	DSS supports LXX (1QIsaa + 1QIsab)	Not directly cited in NT	LXX = older; MT lost "light" by haplography
Isa 7:14	Parthenos (virgin)	Almah (young woman)	DSS supports MT (1QIsaa reads almah)	Matt 1:23 cites LXX parthenos	MT = older; LXX is theological translation
Deut 32:8	"Angels of God"	"Sons of Israel"	DSS supports LXX (4QDeutj: "sons of God")	Not directly cited; informs NT cosmology	LXX/DSS = older; MT = de-mythologized revision
Deut 32:43	"Angels of God worship him" (longer text)	Shorter; no angelic worship command	DSS supports LXX (4QDeutq)	Heb 1:6 cites LXX (not found in MT)	LXX/DSS = older; MT lost the line
Ps 22:16	"They pierced my hands and feet"	"Like a lion, my hands and feet"	DSS partially supports LXX (debated)	Not directly cited but context applied in NT	LXX likely older; MT grammatically

				Passion narratives	problematic
Amos 9:12	"Remnant of men" (adam)	"Remnant of Edom" (edom)	No relevant DSS fragment	Acts 15:17 cites LXX	Uncertain; scribal confusion of adam/edom plausible in both directions
Hos 11:1	"His children" (plural)	"My son" (singular)	No relevant DSS fragment	Matt 2:15 cites MT ("my son")	MT = older (singular fits context)
Ps 40:6-8	"A body you prepared for me"	"Ears you have dug/opened for me"	No DSS resolution	Heb 10:5-7 cites LXX "body"	MT likely older; LXX is interpretive expansion
Prov 8:22	"Created me" (ektisen)	"Possessed me" (qanah)	No relevant DSS fragment	Not directly cited in NT	MT likely older; LXX may reflect different Vorlage or theological choice
Gen 5 / 11 (genealogies)	Patriarchs 100 years older at begetting (LXX)	Standard chronology	DSS not decisive (no fragments)	NT genealogies follow MT tradition	Disputed; majority favor MT as older
1 Sam 16-18 (David & Goliath)	Shorter by ~44%	Longer; two merged accounts	4QSama supports LXX in surrounding chapters	Not cited in NT	LXX = earlier edition; MT = expanded edition
Isaiah 9:6	"Messenger of Great Counsel" (one title)	Four Messianic titles	1QIsaa supports MT (four titles)	Not directly cited in NT	MT = older; LXX compressed the titles
Exod 1:5 / Gen 46:27 (cf. Acts 7:14)	Seventy-five souls (hebdomekonta pente) — includes five additional Josephite descendants via expanded Gen 46:20	Seventy souls (shiv'im nephesh) — symbolically significant round number consistent with Gen 10 nations and Exod 24 elders	No relevant DSS fragment at Exod 1:5 or Gen 46:20 (4QExod-Levf does not preserve these verses)	Acts 7:14 cites LXX: "seventy-five persons" (Stephen's speech); NT explicitly follows LXX against MT	MT = older (seventy is the primitive figure; LXX harmonistically expanded the Gen 46 genealogy from Num 26 / 1 Chr 7 data). NT follows LXX despite MT being the more ancient reading.

VIII. SYNTHESIS AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS

A. The LXX as the Bible of the New Testament

The evidence surveyed in this paper confirms that the Septuagint functioned as the primary scriptural authority for the New Testament authors. More than half of explicit OT quotations in the NT follow the LXX closely, and several of the most theologically foundational citations — Matthew's virgin birth proof-text (Isa. 7:14), the author of Hebrews's angelic worship citation (Deut. 32:43), and James's defense of Gentile inclusion (Amos 9:12) — follow the LXX at precisely the points where the LXX diverges from the MT. The NT's dependence on the LXX is not an incidental historical accident but reflects the lived textual reality of 1st-century CE Diaspora Judaism and early Christianity, in which the Greek Scriptures were the commonly accessible form of revelation for communities who could not read Hebrew.

B. The DSS as the Critical Arbiter

The Dead Sea Scrolls have performed an irreplaceable service for biblical textual criticism: they have demonstrated that the LXX's divergences from the MT are frequently not translational liberties but genuine reflections of ancient Hebrew texts that antedated the proto-Masoretic standardization. Tov's taxonomy of Qumran textual groups reveals that multiple Hebrew text traditions — proto-Masoretic, proto-LXX-Vorlage, pre-Samaritan, and non-aligned — coexisted with authority in Second Temple Jewish communities. Crawford's textual pluralism model correctly identifies this diversity as the ordinary condition of the biblical text before 70 CE, not as a crisis requiring resolution toward a single "original."

The most secure conclusions from the DSS evidence are: the LXX Jeremiah reflects a genuine and older Hebrew edition (4QJerb, 4QJerd); Isaiah 53:11 with "light" is the original reading (1QIsaa, 1QIsab); Deuteronomy 32:8's "divine beings" is the original reading (4QDeutj); and Deuteronomy 32:43's angelic worship command is original (4QDeutq). These are not speculative inferences but text-critical conclusions supported by direct physical evidence from manuscripts more than two thousand years old.

C. Which Text is "Closest to the Original"?

The question of which tradition is "closest to the original" must be answered passage by passage, book by book, rather than globally. There is no single answer that covers the entire Hebrew Bible. The following summary captures the weight of scholarly evidence: (1) For

Jeremiah as a whole: the LXX represents the earlier literary edition; (2) For Isaiah as a whole: the MT (as confirmed by 1QIsaa) is generally more reliable, with the notable exception of 53:11 where the DSS confirm the LXX; (3) For the Psalms: the MT is generally older, with the notable exception of Psalm 22:16 where the LXX reading is better attested; (4) For Deuteronomy 32: the LXX and DSS converge against the MT at the theologically significant verses 8 and 43; (5) For Samuel: the LXX tradition (confirmed by 4QSama and Chronicles) preserves numerous older readings against the MT; (6) For the Pentateuchal chronologies: the MT is more likely original.

D. Theological Conclusions

The theological implications of this analysis are several. First, the New Testament's authority does not depend on any single underlying text tradition: NT authors sometimes cited the LXX, sometimes the MT, and sometimes texts that matched neither perfectly, suggesting that what the NT authors considered authoritative was the inspired meaning conveyed by the texts they knew, not a particular manuscript tradition as such. Second, the Christological use of LXX readings — particularly at Isaiah 7:14, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 22:16, and Hebrews 10:5-7 — reflects a consistent pattern in which the NT authors employed the Greek Scriptures as their interpretive framework, and in several cases the LXX reading they employed is the text confirmed by the oldest available Hebrew evidence in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Third, the case of Isaiah 53:11 — where both the LXX and the DSS read "light" against the MT — demonstrates that when the LXX and DSS converge against the MT, the textual critic has the strongest possible case that the MT's divergent reading is a later development. This principle applies with particular force to the Servant Song's climactic verse, where the DSS-confirmed LXX reading of luminous reward enhances rather than diminishes the passage's theological force.

Fourth and finally, the comparison of these two great textual traditions confirms what Tov observed as the central lesson of post-DSS textual criticism: the Hebrew Bible was not a single, fixed, immutable text descending from Moses through an unbroken and unchanging chain. It was a living body of sacred literature, existing in authorized editions, preserved in multiple community traditions, growing in some places and contracting in others, and arriving at

stability only through the historical pressures that followed the catastrophe of 70 CE. The LXX and the MT are not competitors for the title of "the real Bible." They are two of the most important windows we have into the rich, diverse, and genuinely ancient textual heritage of the Hebrew Scriptures.

REFERENCES

All references below are drawn from peer-reviewed journals, academic press monographs, and primary textual-critical series. Full citation data are provided.

Aejmelaeus, A. (2007). "What Can We Know about the Hebrew Vorlage of the Septuagint?" In On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays (rev. ed., pp. 77-114). Peeters.

Beale, G. K., & Carson, D. A. (Eds.). (2007). Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament. Baker Academic.

Crawford, S. W. (2002). "The Dead Sea Scrolls: Retrospective and Prospective." Near Eastern Archaeology, 65(1-4), [special issue].

Crawford, S. W. (2019). Scribes and Scrolls at Qumran. Eerdmans. [Frank Moore Cross Award, American Society of Overseas Research]

Crawford, S. W. (2022). The Text of the Pentateuch: Textual Criticism and the Dead Sea Scrolls (BZAW 493). De Gruyter.

Crawford, S. W., Joosten, J., & Ulrich, E. (2010). "Sample Editions of the Oxford Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 32:1-9, 1 Kings 11:1-8, and Jeremiah 27:1-10 (34 G)." Vetus Testamentum, 60(1), 37-47.

Cross, F. M. (1975). "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert." Harvard Theological Review, 57(4), 281-299.

Cross, F. M., & Talmon, S. (Eds.). (1975). Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text. Harvard University Press.

Hays, R. B. (1989). Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul. Yale University Press.

Jobes, K. H., & Silva, M. (2015). Invitation to the Septuagint (2nd ed.). Baker Academic.

McLay, R. T. (2003). The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research. Eerdmans.

Müller, M. (1996). The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint. Sheffield Academic Press.

Parry, D. W., & Ulrich, E. (Eds.). (1999). The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader. Brill.

Rösel, M. (2006). "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 31(4), 411-428.

Steinmann, A. E. (2011). From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology. Concordia Publishing House.

Tov, E. (1976). "The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch: A Discussion of an Early Revision of the LXX of Jeremiah 29-52 and Baruch 1:1-3:8." Harvard Semitic Monographs, 8. Scholars Press.

Tov, E. (Ed.). (1997). Qumran Cave 4, The Prophets (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XV, co-edited with E. Ulrich et al.). Oxford University Press. [Contains 4QJerb, 4QJerd]

Tov, E. (2008). Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays. Mohr Siebeck. [Includes "The Nature of the Large-Scale Differences between the LXX and MT S T V"]

Tov, E. (2012). Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (3rd ed.). Fortress Press.

Tov, E. (2015). The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research (3rd ed.). Eisenbrauns.

Tov, E. (2020). Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint: Collected Essays (Vol. 3). Brill.

Ulrich, E. (1978). The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus (Harvard Semitic Monographs 19). Scholars Press.

Ulrich, E. (1992). "Multiple Literary Editions: Reflections toward a Theory of the History of the Biblical Text." In D. W. Parry & S. D. Ricks (Eds.), Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 78-105). Brill.

Ulrich, E. (2010). The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible. Eerdmans.

Ulrich, E. (Ed.). (1999-2010). Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (multiple volumes). Oxford University Press. [Series containing editiones principes of Qumran biblical scrolls]

van der Bergh, R. H. (2013). "Differences Between the MT and LXX Contexts of Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: Isaiah 45:18-25 as a Case Study." University of Pretoria (MTh research, HTS Teologiese Studies).

Watts, R. E. (2007). "Mark 7:6-7." In G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson (Eds.), Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (pp. 157-165). Baker Academic.

Würthwein, E. (2014). The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica (3rd ed., rev. by A. A. Fischer). Eerdmans.

— END OF PAPER —