A HARMONY OF THE PSALMS IN THREE TRADITIONS

The Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls — Phase 2A of the MT/LXX/DSS Textual Harmony Project

Independent Scholarly Research

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Preface

This volume presents Phase 2A of the MT/LXX/DSS Textual Harmony Project, focusing on the Psalter — the book of Psalms. If Jeremiah presented the most dramatic **literary-structural** divergence among the three traditions, the Psalms present the most dramatic **compositional** divergence: the very number, order, and identity of the psalms themselves differ between the traditions.

The Psalter harmony examines four dimensions that have no parallel in the Jeremiah volume:

The Numbering Problem — The MT and LXX count the psalms differently, creating a persistent numerical offset of one psalm through much of the Psalter.

The 11QPsalms Scroll — A Dead Sea Scroll (11Q5) containing 41 psalms in a substantially different order from both the MT and the LXX, raising fundamental questions about when and how the Psalter was "closed" as a canonical collection.

Psalm 151 — A psalm present in the LXX (and in 11QPsalms) but absent from the MT entirely, raising the question of the Psalter's boundaries.

Verbal Variants — Across dozens of individual psalms, significant differences in wording between the MT and LXX that carry exegetical and theological weight.

The Three Traditions for the Psalms

The Masoretic Text Psalter (MT)

The MT Psalter contains **150 psalms** organized into five books:

Book	Psalms	Dominant Divine Name	Closing Doxology
Book I	1–41	Jehovah (*YHWH*)	41:13
Book II	42–72	Elohim (God)	72:18–19
Book III	73–89	Elohim / YHWH	89:52
Book IV	90–106		

Jehovah (*YHWH*)

106:48

Book V

107–150

Jehovah (*YHWH*)

150

The five-book structure mirrors the five books of the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) — a structural parallel explicit in rabbinic tradition (*Midrash Tehillim*: "Moses gave Israel the five books of the Torah, and David gave Israel the five books of the Psalms"). The MT Psalter has been the Jewish canonical Psalter since at least the first century C.E. and the Protestant and Catholic canonical Psalter through the present.

The standard critical text is the **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia** (BHS, Psalm fascicle edited by H. Bardtke, 1969) and the **Biblia Hebraica Quinta** (BHQ, Psalms volume edited by Carmel McCarthy, 2014). The standard scholarly Hebrew text is also preserved in the **Westminster Leningrad Codex** (WLC), freely available at the J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research.

English translations from the MT: ASV, ESV, NASB, NIV, KJV, NKJV, NRSV, JPS Tanakh.

The Septuagint Psalter (LXX)

The LXX Psalter contains **151 psalms** — the 150 of the MT plus **Psalm 151**, a psalm about David's youth that is attributed to David himself and appears after Psalm 150 in Greek manuscripts.

The LXX numbering also **differs from the MT numbering** through most

of the Psalter because the LXX combines MT Psalms 9 and 10 into a single psalm (LXX Psalm 9) and combines MT Psalms 114 and 115 into a single psalm (LXX Psalm 113), while splitting MT Psalm 116 into two (LXX Psalms 114 and 115) and MT Psalm 147 into two (LXX Psalms 146 and 147). The result is a one-psalm offset for most of the Psalter:

MT Range	LXX Range	Relationship
Psalms 1–8	Psalms 1–8	Identical numbering
Psalm 9	Psalm 9 (combined)	MT 9+10 = LXX 9
Psalms 10–112	Psalms 9–111	LXX = MT minus 1
Psalm 113	Psalm 112	
Psalms 114–115	Psalm 113 (combined)	

MT 114+115 = LXX 113

Psalm 116

Psalms 114–115 (split)

MT 116 = LXX 114+115

Psalms 117–146

Psalms 116–145

LXX = MT minus 1

Psalm 147

Psalms 146–147 (split)

MT 147 = LXX 146+147

Psalms 148–150

Psalms 148–150

Identical numbering

—

Psalm 151

LXX only (not in MT)

The standard critical edition is **Rahlfs-Hanhart** (2006). For detailed textual work, the Göttingen Septuagint *Psalmi cum Odis* (edited by Alfred Rahlfs, 1931; 3rd ed. 1979) is essential.

English translation: Brenton (1851, public domain) for the LXX text. The NETS translation (*A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Oxford, 2007) is the scholarly standard.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Psalter (DSS)

The Psalms are the most abundantly attested biblical book in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Fragments of the Psalter appear in **at least 36 manuscripts** from Caves 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 11 at Qumran. Of these, the most important are:

Signum

Cave

Psalms Covered

Character

11QPsalms^a (11Q5)

Cave 11

Psalms 101–151+

Revolutionary alternative order

11QPsalms^b (11Q6)

Cave 11

Psalms 77–78; 141–144; 118

MT-aligned

4QPsalms^a (4Q83)

Cave 4

Psalms 5–69 (fragmentary)

Largely MT-aligned

4QPsalms^b (4Q84)

Cave 4

Psalms 91–118 (fragmentary)

Largely MT-aligned

4QPsalms^c (4Q85)

Cave 4

Psalms 16; 18; 27

MT-aligned

4QPsalms^d (4Q86)

Cave 4

Psalms 103; 112

MT-aligned

4QPsalms^e (4Q87)

Cave 4

Psalms 76; 77; 78; 81; 86; 88

MT-aligned

4QPsalms^f (4Q88)

Cave 4

Psalms 22; 107; 109; and non-canonical material

Mixed

1QPsalms^a (1Q10)

Cave 1

Psalms 86; 92; 94; 95; 96; 114; 116

MT-aligned

MasPsalms^a

Masada

Psalms 81–85

MT-aligned

MasPsalms^b

Masada

Psalm 150

MT-aligned

The critical edition for the Psalms scrolls is **DJD IV** (1965, Psalms from Cave 4 and Cave 11, by J.A. Sanders), **DJD XVI** (2000, Psalms from Cave 4, by P.W. Skehan, E. Ulrich, P. Flint), and the **editio princeps** of 11QPsalms^a by J.A. Sanders (*The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11*, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan IV, 1965).

The accessible scholarly edition is Peter Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (Brill, 1997), and the relevant chapters of Abegg, Flint, Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (HarperOne, 1999), pp. 507–589.

Part One: The Numbering Divergence — MT Psalms 9 and 10

The Problem

MT Psalm 9 and MT Psalm 10 are treated as **two separate psalms** in the MT but as **a single psalm** in the LXX (LXX Psalm 9). This combination/separation creates the one-number offset that runs through most of the Psalter.

The evidence that they were originally one psalm is substantial:

1. **Acrostic Structure**: MT Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 together form an **incomplete acrostic** on the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 9 covers the letters Aleph through Kaph; Psalm 10 covers Lamedh through Taw (with several letters missing). Neither psalm alone completes the alphabet; together they form a single though irregular alphabetic poem.

2. **Absence of Superscription**: MT Psalm 10 has **no title or superscription** — the only psalm in Book I (Psalms 1–41) without one. The absence of a title is itself evidence of original unity with Psalm 9, which does have a superscription.

3. **Thematic Continuity**: Both psalms address the same enemy (the wicked who prey on the poor) and appeal to the same God (who sees, who judges, who reigns from Zion). The theology and vocabulary are continuous.

4. **LXX and Syriac Peshitta**: Both the LXX and the Syriac Peshitta treat them as a single psalm, suggesting that the separation into two psalms is a later development in the MT tradition.

MT Psalm 9 / LXX Psalm 9 (first half)

MT (ASV) — Psalm 9:1–10: I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and exult in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High. When mine enemies turn back, They stumble and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my just cause; Thou sittest in the throne judging righteously.

Thou hast rebuked the nations, thou hast destroyed the wicked; Thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever. The enemy are come to an end, they are desolate for ever; And the cities which thou hast overthrown, Their memorial is perished with them.

But Jehovah sitteth as king for ever: He hath prepared his throne for judgment; And he will judge the world in righteousness, He will minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness.

Jehovah also will be a high tower for the oppressed, A high tower in times of trouble; And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; For thou, Jehovah, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 9:1–10: I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will recount all thy wonderful works. I will be glad and exult in thee: I will sing to thy name, O thou Most High.

When mine enemies are turned back, they shall be feeble and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my cause and my right; thou satest on the throne, that judgest righteousness.

Thou hast rebuked the heathen, and the ungodly one has perished; thou hast blotted out their name for ever, even for ever and ever. The swords of the enemy have failed utterly; and thou hast destroyed cities: their memorial has perished with a noise. But the Lord endures for ever: he has prepared his throne for judgment.

And he will judge the world in righteousness, he will judge the nations in uprightness. The Lord also is become a refuge for the poor, a seasonable help in affliction. And let them that know thy name hope in thee: for thou, O Lord, hast not forsaken them that diligently seek thee.

DSS: 4QPsalms^a (4Q83) contains fragments of Psalm 9 but they are too small to determine whether the scroll treated 9 and 10 as one or two psalms.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT 9:6: *"thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever"* — LXX adds: *"The swords of the enemy have failed utterly"* before the name-blotting phrase. This additional clause in the LXX has no Hebrew equivalent in the MT at this point. - **[VAR]** MT: *"a high tower for the oppressed"* (*misgâb laddâk*) — LXX: *"a refuge for the poor."* The Hebrew

misgâb (high refuge/fortress) is rendered *kataphygē* (refuge) in Greek. The Hebrew *dâk* (oppressed/crushed) is rendered *ptōchos* (poor) — a meaningful shift from the oppressed to the economically poor. - **[ORTH]** The acrostic structure in MT demonstrates that Psalms 9 and 10 form one poem; the LXX's combining them into a single psalm preserves this original unity.

MT Psalm 10 / LXX Psalm 9 (second half)

MT (ASV) — Psalm 10:1–11: Why standest thou afar off, O Jehovah? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued; Let them be taken in the devices that they have conceived. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, And the covetous renounceth, yea, contemneth Jehovah. The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, saith, He will not require it. All his thoughts are, There is no God.

His ways are firm at all times; Thy judgments are far above out of his sight: As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them. He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved: I who am to all generations shall not be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression: Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages; In the secret places doth he murder the innocent.

He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; He hideth his face; he will never see it.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 9:22–32: Wherefore does the ungodly provoke God? he has said in his heart, He will not require it. Thou seest it; for thou dost observe trouble and grief, to deliver them into thy hands: the poor has been left to thee; thou wast a helper to the orphan.

Break thou the arm of the sinner and evil person: his sin shall be sought for and not be found. The Lord is King for ever and ever: the nations have perished out of his land. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the poor: thine ear has inclined to the preparation of their heart; to judge the orphan and humble man, that man may no more boast upon the earth.

DSS: No fragment sufficient for analysis.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT 10:1: *"Why standest thou afar off, O Jehovah? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?"* — This is the famous cry of divine hiddenness (*Deus absconditus*), one of the most theologically raw verses in the Psalter. The LXX renders the substance but with different emotional emphasis. - **[VAR]** MT 10:4: *"All his thoughts are, There is no God"* (*'êyn 'Élohim kol-mĕzimmôtâyw*) — LXX: a somewhat different formulation. This is the closest the Psalter comes to attributing practical atheism to the wicked — not philosophical denial of God's existence but functional denial of God's moral governance.

Part Two: The 11QPsalms^a Scroll — A Different Psalter

Overview and Significance

The Great Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 (11QPsalms^a, also designated 11Q5) is one of the most important and most debated biblical manuscripts found at Qumran. First published by J.A.

Sanders in 1965, it contains **41 compositions** — 39 of which are also found in the MT Psalter and 2 of which are known from elsewhere but not in the MT Psalter (Psalm 151 from the LXX and a previously unknown composition called the Apostrophe to Zion). Several additional compositions in the scroll are not found in any other canonical collection.

The scroll dates paleographically to approximately **50 C.E.** — making it roughly contemporary with the period of the New Testament. It is written on a single long sheet of skin measuring approximately 4.3 meters (14 feet) in length, preserved in three columns of text.

The Order of Psalms in 11QPsalms^a

The compositions appear in the following order (MT numbering where applicable):

Column	Compositions
I–II	MT Ps 101; 102; 103
III	MT Ps 109
IV	MT Ps 118
V	MT Ps 104; 147:1–11
VI	MT Ps 105:1–11
VII	MT Ps 146; 148
VIII	MT Ps 121; 122; 123; 124; 125; 126; 127; 128; 129
IX	MT Ps 130; 131
X	MT Ps 132; 119:1–8
XI	MT Ps 119:15–28
XII	

MT Ps 119:37–49

XIII

MT Ps 119:59–73

XIV

MT Ps 119:82–96

XV

MT Ps 119:105–120

XVI

MT Ps 119:128–142

XVII

MT Ps 119:150–164

XVIII

MT Ps 119:171–176; 135; 136

XIX

Catena (non-MT compilation); MT Ps 145

XX

MT Ps 154 (from Syriac Psalter); *Plea for Deliverance* (non-MT)

XXI

MT Ps 139; 137; 138

XXII

Sirach 51:13–30 (Ben Sira); MT Ps 93; 141; 133; 144

XXIII

MT Ps 155 (from Syriac Psalter); MT Ps 142; 143

XXIV

MT Ps 149; 150

XXV–XXVI

Hymn to the Creator (non-MT); MT Ps 2:1–8; *David's Compositions* (prose); MT Ps 151A; 151B

XXVII

MT Ps 140; 134; 151

The Scholarly Debate: Liturgical Collection or Authoritative Psalter?

The discovery of 11QPsalms^a sparked an immediate and still-unresolved debate about the canonical status of the Psalter in the first century:

Position 1 — Gerald Wilson (*The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 1985) and **Peter Flint** (*The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls*, 1997) argue that **11QPsalms^a represents a genuine alternative edition of the Psalter**. Psalms 90–150 (the latter part of the MT Psalter) were still "open" — not yet fixed in order — in the first century B.C.E./C.E. The scroll represents the authoritative Psalter of the Qumran community, not merely a liturgical anthology. Evidence: - The scroll is a carefully produced formal manuscript, not a private notebook - Its order is systematic, not random - It includes the prose section "David's Compositions" (listing 4,050 psalms, 52 songs for weekly sabbaths, 30 songs for festivals, and 4 songs for the stricken) — a canonical claim, not a liturgical one - Multiple copies of this alternative order exist at Qumran (11Q5, 11Q6, and 4Q83 may show alternative ordering)

Position 2 — Shemaryahu Talmon, **Moshe Goshen-Gottstein**, and **Emanuel Tov** (in his earlier work) argued that **11QPsalms^a is a liturgical collection, not an alternative Psalter**. The MT's 150-psalm order was already fixed by the first century, and the Qumran scroll represents a secondary anthological use of psalms for worship, not a competing canonical arrangement. Evidence: - The first 60 psalms (Books I–III) at Qumran consistently follow the MT order in all known Cave 4 fragments - The alternative ordering affects only Psalms 90–150 - The inclusion of non-canonical compositions (Sirach, the *Plea for Deliverance*, the *Apostrophe to Zion*) suggests a liturgical rather than canonical purpose

Current Consensus (Flint, Ulrich): The evidence is most consistent with a period of **relative openness** in the ordering and boundaries of the latter portion of the Psalter (roughly Psalms 90–150) during the Qumran period. The first 89 psalms appear to have been fixed in order before the Qumran period; the arrangement of Psalms 90–150 was still fluid. 11QPsalms^a represents a genuine textual tradition of the latter Psalter, not merely a liturgical anthology.

The Non-Canonical Compositions in 11QPsalms^a

Three compositions in 11QPsalms^a deserve particular attention because they are not found in any canonical Psalter:

The Plea for Deliverance (11QPsalms^a Column XX)

A previously unknown psalm, found only in 11QPsalms^a. It appears between Psalm 154 and Psalm 139 in the scroll's order. The text (translated from the Hebrew):

Surely a maggot cannot praise thee nor a grave-worm recount thy loving-kindness. But the living can praise thee, even those who stumble can laud thee.

In revealing thy kindness to them and by thy righteousness thou dost enlighten them. For in thy hand is the soul of every living thing; the breath of all flesh hast thou given.

Deal with us, O Lord, according to thy goodness, according to thy great mercy, and according to thy many righteous deeds.

The Lord heard the voice of those who love his name and did not deprive them of his loving-kindness.

This composition is theologically consistent with canonical psalms and shows no sign of being sectarian (specifically Essene) in character. Its presence in the scroll alongside canonical psalms is part of the evidence for Flint's position that the scroll's boundaries were not yet fixed.

The Apostrophe to Zion (11QPsalms^a Column XXII)

A poem of mourning for and yearning toward Zion, in the tradition of Lamentations and the Zion psalms (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122). It has some affinities with later Jewish liturgical poetry (*piyyutim*). Excerpt:

I remember thee for blessing, O Zion; with all my might I have loved thee. May thy memory be blessed for ever! Great is thy hope, O Zion; that peace and thy longed-for salvation will come.

Generation after generation will dwell in thee and generations of the pious will be thy splendour.

David's Compositions (11QPsalms^a Column XXVII — Prose)

This remarkable prose passage claims that David composed 3,600 psalms (*tehillim*) and 446 songs of various liturgical types, for a total of **4,050 compositions**. The passage reads:

And David, the son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and literate, and discerning and perfect in all his ways before God and men. And the Lord gave him a discerning and enlightened spirit. And he wrote 3,600 psalms; and songs to sing before the altar over the whole-burnt perpetual offering every day, for all the days of the year, 364; and for the Sabbath offerings, 52 songs; and for the Sabbath offerings of the new moons and for all the Solemn Assemblies and for the Day of Atonement, 30 songs. And all the songs that he spoke were 446. And songs for making music over the stricken, 4. And the total was 4,050. All these he composed through prophecy which was given him from before the Most High.

The claim that David's authorship is **4,050 compositions** — compared to the MT's 150 psalms — is theologically startling. The passage explicitly grounds David's composition in **prophecy** (*nevuah*), making him a prophetic author rather than merely a royal poet. This is the most explicit claim of prophetic inspiration for Davidic authorship anywhere in ancient Jewish literature.

Part Three: Psalm 151 — The Psalm the MT Excludes

Status and Manuscripts

Psalm 151 is present in: - The **LXX** — as the 151st psalm, with the superscription *"This psalm was personally written by David, outside the number [of the canonical psalms], when he fought Goliath in single combat"* - The **11QPsalms^a scroll** (Cave 11) — in two versions designated **151A** and **151B**, preserved in Hebrew - The **Syriac Peshitta** — though in a different form - The **Old Latin** versions derived from the LXX

Psalm 151 is **absent from the MT**, from all rabbinic canonical lists, and from all Protestant and Jewish canons. It is included in the deuterocanonical scriptures of Eastern Orthodox Christianity and some Catholic traditions.

The Two Hebrew Versions from 11QPsalms^a

The most important discovery regarding Psalm 151 is that 11QPsalms^a contains **two Hebrew psalms** (151A and 151B) that correspond to what the LXX combines into a single Psalm 151. The 11QPsalms^a versions are longer and may represent an earlier form of the tradition.

11QPsalms^a — Psalm 151A (DSS Hebrew, translated):

Hallelujah of David the Son of Jesse.

I was smaller than my brothers and the youngest of the sons of my father, and he made me shepherd of his flock and ruler over his kids.

My hands have made a pipe and my fingers a lyre, and I have rendered glory to the Lord; I said within myself:

The mountains will not witness to him, nor will the hills proclaim: the trees have cherished my words, and the flock my deeds.

For who will proclaim and who will speak and who will recount the deeds of the Lord? God has seen all, God has heard all and attended.

He sent his prophet to anoint me, Samuel to make me great. My brothers went out to meet him, handsome of figure, beautiful of appearance: Although they were tall of stature and handsome by their hair, the Lord God chose them not.

He sent and took me from behind the flock and he anointed me with the holy oil and made me leader of his people and ruler over the sons of his covenant.

11QPsalms^a — Psalm 151B (DSS Hebrew, translated):

The beginning of David's prowess after the prophet of God had anointed him.

Then I saw a Philistine uttering defiance and, drawing upon foreign gods, he defied the armies of the Lord. But I drew his own sword and beheaded him, and removed reproach from the children of Israel.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 151: This psalm is a genuine psalm of David, though supernumerary, composed when he fought in single combat with Goliath.

I was small among my brethren, and youngest in my father's house: I tended my father's sheep.

My hands formed a musical instrument, and my fingers tuned a psaltery.

And who shall tell my Lord? the Lord himself, he himself hears.

He sent forth his angel, and took me from my father's sheep, and he anointed me with the oil of his anointing.

My brothers were handsome and tall; but the Lord did not take pleasure in them.

I went forth to meet the Philistine; and he cursed me by his idols.

But I drew his own sword, and beheaded him, and removed reproach from the children of Israel.

DSS confirms: The Hebrew 11QPsalms^a version (151A and 151B) is longer and more detailed than the LXX. The LXX represents a condensed form of the tradition.

Variance Notes — DSS vs. LXX: - **[ADD by DSS]** 11QPsalms^a 151A contains an extended nature-poetry section (*"the mountains will not witness to him / nor will the hills proclaim / the trees have cherished my words"*) that has no parallel in the LXX. This appears to be an earlier expansion that the LXX tradition condensed. - **[VAR]** 11QPsalms^a: *"He sent his prophet to anoint me, Samuel to make me great"* — LXX: *"He sent forth his angel and took me from my father's sheep."* The DSS names Samuel; the LXX replaces Samuel with "his angel" — possibly a theological interpretation that mediates the divine contact through an angelic figure rather than a human prophet. - **[ORDER]** The DSS has two separate compositions (151A: David's anointing; 151B: David and Goliath). The LXX combines them into one psalm. The DSS form is almost certainly more original — it reflects the natural division between two separate events (the anointing and the combat) and is longer and more detailed. - **[THEOL]** The LXX's superscription — *"though supernumerary"* (*exōthen tou arithmou*) — is itself remarkable: the translator acknowledges that this psalm is outside the canonical count of 150. This is the LXX's own explicit recognition of a boundary it is nonetheless crossing.

Part Four: Selected Verbal Variants in Individual Psalms

Psalm 2 — The Royal/Messianic Psalm

Psalm 2 is one of the most extensively cited psalms in the New Testament and one of the most theologically significant in the entire Psalter. Its verbal variants between MT and LXX repay careful attention.

Psalm 2:7 — "Thou Art My Son"

MT (ASV): I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; This day have I begotten thee.

LXX (Brenton): The Lord said to me, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.

DSS: 4QPsalms^a (4Q83) contains a fragment at this area but the exact verse is not clearly preserved.

NT Usage: Psalm 2:7 is cited at Acts 13:33 (Paul's sermon at Antioch); Hebrews 1:5; 5:5. The NT follows the LXX reading. The phrase *"this day have I begotten thee"* became central in early Christological debate — some early Christians (*adoptionists*) used it to argue that Jesus became the Son of God at his baptism or resurrection rather than from eternity. The Greek *"to-day have I begotten thee"* is identical in MT and LXX; the debate was therefore not a MT/LXX issue but a question of interpretation.

Variance Notes: - MT and LXX agree verbatim in the key phrases. Minor differences in the introductory line ("I will tell of the decree" vs. "The Lord said to me") but these are translation conventions rather than textual variants.

Psalm 2:11–12 — Kiss the Son

MT (ASV): Serve Jehovah with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, For his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him.

LXX (Brenton): Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in him with trembling. Accept correction, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and ye should perish from the righteous way: whensoever his wrath shall be suddenly kindled, blessed are all they that trust in him.

DSS: No clear fragment for this verse.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** This is one of the most debated textual variants in the Psalter. MT: *"Kiss the son"* (*nashĕqû-bar*) where *bar* is the Aramaic word for "son." LXX: *"Accept correction"* (*draxasthe paideias*) — not "kiss the son" at all, but an exhortation to discipline/correction. These are completely different readings.

The problem with the MT here is that *bar* (son) is an **Aramaic** word, unusual in Hebrew poetry. The Hebrew word for "son" is *ben*. The Aramaic *bar* appears occasionally in Hebrew poetry (Proverbs 31:2; Psalm 2:12) but its presence here has long puzzled scholars.

Three explanations have been offered: 1. **MT is original:** The psalmist uses the Aramaic *bar* for "son" — perhaps as a loanword or a deliberate archaism — and the LXX translator misread the consonants and translated a different word (*birra*, "purely/correctly") as "instruction/correction." 2. **LXX is original:** The Hebrew Vorlage read *birru* (be pure/correct) or *bar* meaning "instruction" in a different semantic range, and the MT's *bar* (Aramaic "son") arose by scribal confusion. 3. **Both reflect genuine but different traditions:** The MT and LXX may go back to two different Hebrew traditions for this verse.

Theological significance: The MT's "Kiss the son" — if *bar* means "son" — creates a direct messianic exhortation parallel to verse 7 ("Thou art my son"). The LXX's "Accept correction" is more generically sapient. The MT reading has been the basis for messianic and Christological

interpretations of Psalm 2 throughout Christian tradition; the LXX reading is less explicitly messianic.

Psalm 8 — The Dignity of Man

MT (ASV) — Psalm 8:5: For thou hast made him but little lower than God (*Elohim*), And crownest him with glory and honor.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 8:6: Thou madest him a little less than angels (*angelōn*), And hast crowned him with glory and honour.

DSS: 4QPsalms^a fragment at this psalm, but the specific verse is not clearly preserved.

NT Usage: Hebrews 2:7 quotes this verse and applies it to Jesus: *"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels."* The author of Hebrews follows the LXX reading (*angels*), not the MT reading (*Elohim* / God).

Variance Notes: - **[VAR/THEOL]** This is the most famous single translation difference in the entire Psalter and one of the most consequential for NT interpretation. The Hebrew *Elohim* can mean: (a) God (the divine being); (b) divine beings/gods in a general sense; (c) angels (as the LXX understands here). The LXX translators chose *angeloi* (angels), which is a defensible reading of *Elohim* in some contexts but is not its primary meaning. The MT's *Elohim* places man just below God himself — an exalted anthropology. The LXX's *angelōn* places man below the angelic hierarchy — a slightly less exalted reading. The Hebrews author's argument requires the LXX reading: he argues that Jesus was temporarily made lower than angels (in the incarnation) before being exalted above them.

Psalm 16 — The Resurrection Psalm

MT (ASV) — Psalm 16:8–11: I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; My flesh also shall dwell in safety. For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy; In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 15:8–11: I foresaw the Lord always before me; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.

Therefore my heart rejoiced and my tongue exulted; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt fill me with joy with thy countenance: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

DSS: 4QPsalms^c (4Q85) contains fragments of Psalm 16. The fragments do not clearly resolve the key textual questions.

NT Usage: Peter quotes Psalm 16:8–11 at Acts 2:25–28 as a proof-text for the resurrection of Jesus; Paul quotes verse 10 at Acts 13:35. Both NT quotations follow the LXX.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"my flesh also shall dwell in safety"* (*yishkôn lâbetach*); LXX: *"my flesh shall rest in hope"* (*kataskēnōsei ep' elpidi*). The MT has the body dwelling in security (during life); the LXX has the body resting in hope (anticipating resurrection). The LXX reading carries a stronger eschatological sense. - **[VAR]** MT: *"thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol"* — LXX: *"thou wilt not leave my soul in hell."* The MT's *Sheol* (the underworld of the dead) is rendered by the LXX as *hadēs* (hell/underworld). The difference is slight but the LXX *hadēs* is the term the NT uses when quoting this psalm (Acts 2:27). - **[THEOL]** The key NT argument (Acts 2:29–31) is that David died and was buried, so the psalm cannot be about David's own body not seeing corruption. Therefore it prophesies of the Messiah whose body did not see corruption. This argument works equally with the MT and LXX readings, but the LXX's *"rest in hope"* and *"see corruption"* (Greek *diaphthoran*) are the specific terms the NT argument builds on.

Psalm 22 — The Passion Psalm

MT (ASV) — Psalm 22:1, 16, 18: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?

[v.16] For dogs have compassed me: A company of evil-doers have inclosed me; **They pierced my hands and my feet** (*ka'ărû yâdaî wĕraglây*).

[v.18] They part my garments among them, And upon my vesture do they cast lots.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 21:1, 16, 18: O God, my God, attend to me: why hast thou forsaken me? the account of my transgressions is far from my salvation.

[v.16] For many dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked doers has beset me round: **they pierced my hands and my feet** (*ōryxan cheiras mou kai podas*).

[v.18] They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

DSS: The Nahal Hever Psalms scroll (5/6HevPs) contains Psalm 22 but the crucial verse 16 is not preserved. The most important DSS manuscript for this question is the Psalms Scroll from Cave 4 (4QPsalms^a), which also does not clearly preserve verse 16.

Variance Notes — The Most Debated Verse in the Psalms: - **[VAR — Critical]** MT Psalm 22:16b is textually one of the most contested verses in the entire Old Testament. The phrase translated *"they pierced my hands and my feet"* in both the ASV (from MT) and the LXX rests on different Hebrew readings:

The MT consonantal text reads *ka'ărû* — which is the form *ka'ari* (like a lion), meaning *"like a lion [at] my hands and my feet."* This is grammatically awkward but possible: the wicked surround the psalmist like a lion.

The LXX reads *ōryxan* (they dug/pierced) — suggesting a Hebrew Vorlage with *kâ'ărû* (they dug/pierced), from the root *kûr* (to dig). This one-letter difference (Waw/Yod distinction in Hebrew: כארו vs. כאר) produces the "pierced" vs. "like a lion" difference.

Dead Sea Scrolls evidence: The Nahal Hever scroll (5/6HevPs) does not preserve this line. However, a manuscript designated **4QPsalms^f (4Q88)** — which does contain Psalm 22 — has a reading that appears to support the "pierced" tradition, though the fragment is damaged at the critical point.

The **Syriac Peshitta** and the **Vulgate** both follow the "pierced" reading. A medieval Hebrew manuscript (not from Qumran) has been cited as reading *kâ'ărû* (pierced).

Current scholarly assessment (Tov, Flint): The textual evidence is genuinely uncertain. The LXX "pierced" reading is at minimum ancient and may represent a legitimate alternative Hebrew tradition. The MT's "like a lion" is the *lectio difficilior* (harder reading) — a criterion that often favors the MT — but "like a lion" is grammatically difficult and may itself be a corruption of "pierced." The question cannot be definitively resolved with current evidence.

NT usage: Psalm 22 is the psalm most extensively cited or alluded to in the Passion narratives. Jesus's cry from the cross (*"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"*, Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) is a quotation of v.1. The division of garments and casting of lots (v.18) is fulfilled in John 19:24. The "pierced" reading of v.16 is cited in John 20:25 (Thomas's request to see the nail-prints) and implied in Luke 24:39 and John 19:37 (quoting Zechariah 12:10 about looking on "him whom they pierced"). The NT authors work within the LXX tradition throughout.

Psalm 40:6 — Ears or Body?

MT (ASV) — Psalm 40:6: Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; **Mine ears hast thou opened** (*'oznayim kârîtâ lî*): Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 39:7: Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; but **a body hast thou prepared for me** (*sōma de katērtisō moi*): whole-burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin thou didst not require.

DSS: 4QPsalms^b (4Q84) contains Psalm 40 but the fragment does not clearly preserve verse 6.

NT Usage: Hebrews 10:5 quotes Psalm 40:6 in the LXX version: *"a body hast thou prepared for me"* — and builds its argument about the incarnation on this reading. The author of Hebrews interprets the "prepared body" as the physical body of Jesus Christ, prepared for the sacrifice that replaces all animal sacrifice.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR — Major]** MT: *"mine ears hast thou opened"* (*'oznayim kârîtâ lî*, literally "ears thou hast dug/bored for me"); LXX: *"a body hast thou prepared for me."* These are entirely different readings. The MT speaks of God opening ears for hearing/obedience — a Hebrew idiom for making someone receptive to instruction (compare Exodus 21:6, the boring of the ear of the permanent servant). The LXX has "body" (*sōma*) instead of "ears" (*'oznayim*).

Several explanations have been proposed: 1. The LXX translator may have read *'ôzen* (ear) as related to a different root and produced a paraphrase. 2. The LXX Vorlage may have had a

different Hebrew text. 3. The LXX may represent an interpretive translation: since God "dug" or "prepared" the ears (= the whole person), the translator rendered this as "prepared a body."

The theological significance is enormous: the MT teaches obedience through open ears; the LXX (and Hebrews) teaches the incarnation through a prepared body. Two entirely different theological claims rest on the same Hebrew consonants.

Psalm 110 — The Lord Said to My Lord

MT (ASV) — Psalm 110:1: Jehovah saith unto my lord (*la'adoni*), Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 109:1: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

DSS: 11QPsalms^a contains Psalm 110 (as part of its collection) but the fragment is small. 4QPsalms^a contains fragments of this area.

NT Usage: Psalm 110:1 is the most frequently quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament, cited or alluded to at least 33 times (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42–43; Acts 2:34–35; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13; and many others). Jesus himself uses it in the Temple dispute over David's son (Matthew 22:41–46 = Section 150 of the Gospel harmony).

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** MT: *"unto my lord"* (*la'adoni*) — the Hebrew *adoni* (my lord, human address) vs. *Adonai* (divine LORD). The MT uses the human form (*adoni*, "my lord"), suggesting the psalmist addresses a human king. The LXX renders it *tō Kyriō mou* ("to my Lord") — the same Greek word used for God, blurring the distinction. The NT's theological argument about the Messiah rests on the ambiguity: if David calls his descendant "my lord," how can the Messiah be merely David's son? (Matthew 22:43–45). This argument works better with the LXX reading (where both parties seem divine) than with the MT (where the distinction is preserved).

Psalm 118:22 — The Cornerstone

MT (ASV) — Psalm 118:22: The stone which the builders rejected Is become the head of the corner.

LXX (Brenton) — Psalm 117:22: The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.

DSS: 11QPsalms^a contains Psalm 118 (in its alternative ordering, placed between Psalm 104 and the Songs of Ascents). The relevant verse is preserved.

Variance Notes: - MT and LXX agree closely. The DSS 11QPsalms^a text also agrees with the MT at this verse. - **[NT]** Psalm 118:22 is cited by Jesus at Matthew 21:42 (Section 145 of the Gospel harmony, in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants), by Peter at Acts 4:11, and by 1 Peter 2:7. Paul alludes to it at Romans 9:33 combined with Isaiah 28:16. The consistent citation across all four

Gospel accounts and throughout the NT epistles makes this one of the most broadly attested OT citations in the NT.

Part Five: The Psalter's Doxologies and Book Structure

The Five Doxologies

The MT Psalter's five-book structure is demarcated by formal closing doxologies. The LXX preserves these doxologies with minor variations:

Book I Doxology — MT Psalm 41:13:

MT (ASV): Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, From everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

LXX (Brenton): Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. So be it, so be it.

Variance Note: MT: *"Amen, and Amen"* (*'âmên wĕ'âmên*) — the double Amen. LXX: *"So be it, so be it"* (*genoito genoito*). The LXX translates the Hebrew liturgical formula rather than transliterating it (as is done in the NT, where *amēn* is transliterated). The DSS texts preserve the Hebrew *'amen* at this point in the manuscripts where the doxology is present.

Book IV Doxology — MT Psalm 106:48:

MT (ASV): Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye Jehovah.

LXX (Brenton): Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting: and all the people shall say, Amen, Amen. This is the Alleluia of Aggaeus and Zacharias.

Variance Note — [ADD in LXX]: The LXX adds an attribution: *"This is the Alleluia of Aggaeus and Zacharias"* — associating the closing doxology with the post-exilic prophets Haggai (*Aggaeus*) and Zechariah. This addition has no counterpart in the MT and reflects a tradition of associating certain psalms with specific prophets during the Second Temple period.

Appendix A: Summary of Psalter Structural Divergences

Feature	MT	LXX	DSS (11QPsalms^a)
Total psalms	150	151	41 compositions (latter Psalter)
Psalm 151	Absent	Present	Present (as 151A + 151B)
Psalms 9–10	Two psalms		

One psalm (LXX Ps 9)

Unclear

Psalms 114–115

Two psalms

One psalm (LXX Ps 113)

Unclear

Psalms 116

One psalm

Two psalms (LXX 114–115)

Unclear

Psalm 147

One psalm

Two psalms (LXX 146–147)

Unclear

Order of Ps 90–150

Fixed MT order

Follows MT

Substantially different

Non-canonical compositions

None

None

3+ (Plea for Deliverance, Apostrophe to Zion, Sirach 51, etc.)

David's Compositions claim

Not in Psalter

Not in Psalter

4,050 compositions (prose section)

Appendix B: Key Verbal Variants Summary Table

Psalm	Verse	MT Reading	LXX Reading	NT Citation	Significance
2	12	“Kiss the son” (*bar*)	“Accept correction”	Not directly cited	Messianic vs. wisdom reading
8					

5

“lower than God” (*Elohim*)

“lower than angels” (*angelōn*)

Hebrews 2:7

NT follows LXX

16

9

“flesh shall dwell in safety”

“flesh shall rest in hope”

Acts 2:26

LXX carries eschatological sense

22

16

“like a lion [at] my hands”

“they pierced my hands”

John 20:25 implied

Most contested verse in Psalter

40

6

“ears hast thou opened”

“body hast thou prepared”

Hebrews 10:5

NT builds incarnation theology on LXX

110

1

“my lord” (*adoni*, human)

“my Lord” (*Kyrios*, divine)

Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:34

NT Christological argument rests on LXX

118

22

“stone builders rejected”

“stone builders rejected”

Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11

MT and LXX agree; NT cites both

Appendix C: The Psalms and the New Testament — An Accounting

The Psalter is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. The following are the psalms most frequently cited in the NT, with the tradition followed:

Psalm (MT)

NT Citations

Tradition Followed

110:1

33+ times

LXX (primarily)

118:22–23

Multiple

MT and LXX agree

22:1, 7–8, 16, 18

Throughout Passion narratives

LXX (primarily)

2:7

Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5

MT and LXX agree

16:8–11

Acts 2:25–28; 13:35

LXX

8:4–6

Hebrews 2:6–8

LXX (*"angels"* not *"God"*)

40:6–8

Hebrews 10:5–7

LXX (*"body"* not *"ears"*)

69:9

John 2:17; Romans 15:3

LXX (primarily)

31:5

Luke 23:46

LXX (*"into thy hands I commend my spirit"*)

Conclusion: The New Testament authors, working primarily in Greek and writing for Greek-speaking audiences, consistently draw on the **LXX Psalter** rather than the MT. In several theologically critical passages (Psalm 8:5; 16:9; 40:6; 110:1), the NT's argument **requires** the LXX reading. This means that the LXX's variant translations — whether they arose from a different Hebrew Vorlage or from interpretive translation choices — have had a determinative influence on the shape of New Testament Christology.

Appendix D: Essential Scholarship for the Psalms

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