A HARMONY OF SAMUEL IN THREE TRADITIONS

The Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and 4QSamuel^a — Phase 2B of the MT/LXX/DSS Textual Harmony Project

Independent Scholarly Research

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Preface

This volume presents Phase 2B of the MT/LXX/DSS Textual Harmony Project, focusing on the books of Samuel — specifically the textual tradition represented by **4QSamuel^a** (4Q51), the most significant biblical manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls for understanding the relationship between the Hebrew Bible's textual traditions and their Greek translation.

If Jeremiah presented the most dramatic **literary-structural** divergence between the MT and LXX (two complete literary editions of a prophetic book), and the Psalms presented the most dramatic **compositional** divergence (alternative psalm orders and boundaries), Samuel presents the most dramatic **narrative divergence** — cases in which the three traditions tell the same stories with significantly different details, numbers, sequences, and theological emphases.

The book of Samuel in the LXX is substantially longer than the MT in some passages, shorter in others, and contains readings that were long dismissed as errors by the Greek translator until 4QSamuel^a demonstrated that many of them faithfully reflect ancient Hebrew texts now lost from the MT tradition. The discovery of 4QSamuel^a at Qumran Cave 4 in 1952 — and its painstaking publication by Frank Moore Cross, Donald Freedman, and Eugene Ulrich over the subsequent decades — fundamentally revised the scholarly understanding of the MT's textual history.

This harmony focuses on five narrative complexes where the three traditions diverge most significantly:

The Missing Paragraph Before 1 Samuel 11 — A passage about Nahash the Ammonite present in 4QSamuel^a and the LXX but absent from the MT

The Goliath Narrative (1 Samuel 16–17) — The LXX is 39 verses shorter than the MT; 4QSamuel^a evidence examined

The Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10) — Significant verbal variants between the traditions

The Reign of Saul and the Court History of David — Selected passages with major textual divergence

The Death of Saul (1 Samuel 31 / 2 Samuel 1) — Contradictory accounts and manuscript evidence

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The Three Traditions for Samuel

The Masoretic Text of Samuel

The MT of Samuel is preserved in:

Codex Leningradensis (L, 1009 C.E.) — the basis of BHS and BHQ

Codex Aleppo (A, c. 920 C.E.) — partially preserved for Samuel

Codex Cairensis (C, 895 C.E.) — the oldest dated Hebrew biblical manuscript; contains portions of Samuel

The MT of Samuel is widely regarded by textual critics as one of the **least well-preserved** books in the Hebrew Bible. The MT of Samuel contains numerous internal difficulties — grammatical awkwardness, apparent haplographies (scribal omissions caused by similar line endings), and readings that are contextually difficult — that suggest the MT tradition for Samuel suffered transmission problems not evident in better-preserved books.

The Septuagint of Samuel

The LXX of Samuel presents particularly complex textual problems because two substantially different Greek translations exist:

LXX^B (Codex Vaticanus type) — the Old Greek translation, likely made in the second century B.C.E.

LXX^L (Lucianic recension) — a later revision attributed to Lucian of Antioch (d. 312 C.E.) that has been shown to often preserve ancient Hebrew readings

The relationship between LXX^B, LXX^L, and the MT is triangular and complex. In some passages LXX^B agrees with 4QSamuel^a against the MT; in others LXX^L agrees with 4QSamuel^a against both MT and LXX^B. The standard critical edition is the Göttingen Septuagint, *Regnorum I–IV* (edited by N. Fernández Marcos, *Reges I et II* [Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum VIII/1, 2011]).

4QSamuel^a (4Q51)

4QSamuel^a is the longest and most significant of three Samuel manuscripts found at Qumran. It is:

Written in a **Hasmonean hand** dating to approximately 50–25 B.C.E.

One of the largest biblical scrolls from Cave 4 — originally comprising at least 57 columns

Preserved in approximately 190 fragments covering portions of 1 Samuel 1–2 Samuel 24

Publication history: Fragments were first published by Frank Moore Cross in 1953 (*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 132). The complete critical edition appeared as **DJD XVII** (E. Ulrich, F.M. Cross, et al., *Qumran Cave 4: Samuel*, Oxford University Press, 2005). An accessible discussion is in Abegg, Flint, Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, pp. 213–292.

Character of 4QSamuel^a: The scroll is not simply a variant of the MT or simply a proto-LXX text. It represents a **third textual tradition** — one that sometimes agrees with the MT against the LXX, sometimes agrees with the LXX against the MT, and sometimes presents readings found in neither. Its most significant contribution is that it confirms, against long-standing scholarly skepticism, that many LXX readings in Samuel reflect **genuine ancient Hebrew texts** that were replaced or lost in the tradition that produced the MT.

Part One: The Missing Paragraph — 1 Samuel 10:27b–11:1

The Problem

In the MT, 1 Samuel 11 begins abruptly:

MT (ASV) — 1 Samuel 11:1: Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

The transition from 1 Samuel 10 is jarring. At the end of chapter 10, Saul has just been publicly confirmed as king by lot. Then immediately — without any narrative bridge — an Ammonite king attacks a Israelite city. Who is Nahash? Why is he attacking? The MT provides no context.

The 4QSamuel^a Reading

4QSamuel^a (4Q51) preserves a paragraph of text **between** 1 Samuel 10:27 and 11:1 that is entirely absent from the MT. The passage (translated from the Hebrew of 4Q51, following Cross's editio princeps) reads:

Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.

About a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and encamped against Jabesh-gilead…

The LXX Reading

The LXX (Brenton) at the same point reads:

And it came to pass about a month after, that Naas the Ammanite came up, and encamped against Jabis Galaad…

The LXX has the temporal marker — *"about a month later"* — which signals that it is continuing from something that preceded this verse. But the LXX does not have the full paragraph that 4QSamuel^a preserves; it has only the connective phrase.

The Josephus Parallel

The Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, VI.5.1) describes Nahash oppressing the Transjordanian tribes before the Jabesh-gilead incident — confirming that a tradition about Nahash's earlier cruelty was known in the first century C.E. Josephus's description closely matches the 4QSamuel^a paragraph, suggesting that Josephus had access to a text type similar to 4QSamuel^a rather than the MT.

Variance Notes: - **[ADD by MT]** The missing paragraph in the MT is almost certainly the result of **haplography** — a scribal copying error in which the scribe's eye skipped from one occurrence of a phrase to another, causing the intervening text to be omitted. The paragraph is genuine; its loss is a MT scribal accident. - **[DSS]** 4QSamuel^a confirms the reading and provides the fuller Hebrew text. The LXX preserves only the temporal connective (*"about a month later"*) without the full paragraph — suggesting the LXX Vorlage had an intermediate form of the text. - **[THEOL]** The missing paragraph transforms the narrative. With it, Nahash is a known villain whose systematic brutality against Israel has been ongoing. His attack on Jabesh-gilead is the final provocation that triggers Saul's first act as king. Without it (MT), Nahash appears from nowhere. The MT is narratively inferior; the 4QSamuel^a text is narratively superior. This is not subjective judgment — it is the same criterion textual critics use when the "harder reading" (the more difficult one) is considered more likely to be a scribal alteration of something simpler.

Part Two: The Goliath Narrative — 1 Samuel 16–17

Overview

The narrative of David and Goliath is the most extensively studied textual problem in the books of Samuel. The MT and the LXX present **substantially different versions** of the story. The LXX is **39 verses shorter** than the MT — an omission of approximately one-fifth of the MT's total text for these chapters.

MT Chapters 16–17 contain: - 16:1–13: Samuel anoints David - 16:14–23: David enters Saul's court as a musician (harp player) - 17:1–11: The Philistine challenge; Goliath's description - 17:12–31: David's visit to the battlefield; his brothers' reaction - 17:32–40: David volunteers; Saul's initial skepticism; the sling - 17:41–54: The combat; David's victory; the flight of the Philistines - 17:55–58: Saul asks who David is (apparently not knowing him, despite 16:14–23) - 18:1–5: Jonathan's covenant with David

LXX Chapters 16–17 (LXX^B) lack: - 17:12–31 (David's visit to the battlefield; his brothers' conversation) - 17:41, 48b, 50 (certain combat details) - 17:55–58 (Saul's question about David's identity)

The Internal Contradiction in the MT

The MT of 1 Samuel contains what appears to be a direct internal contradiction:

In **16:14–23**, David enters Saul's service as a musician. Saul loves him greatly: *"Saul loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer"* (16:21). Saul knows David, knows his father Jesse, and has formally taken David into royal service.

In **17:55–58**, immediately after the Goliath combat — which presumably follows from chapter 16 — Saul sees David go out to fight Goliath and asks his general Abner: *"Whose son is this youth?"* (17:55). When David returns with Goliath's head, Saul asks him directly: *"Whose son art thou, young man?"* (17:58). David answers: *"I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."*

The problem: Saul has already met David and brought him into royal service (16:21). How can he now not know who David is?

The LXX solves this problem by **omitting** 17:12–31 and 17:55–58 — the material that creates the contradiction. In the LXX, there is no second introduction of David; Saul's question about his identity does not appear.

The Three Scholarly Explanations

Explanation 1 — The LXX reflects the original text (Short Text Theory): P. Kyle McCarter (*I Samuel*, Anchor Bible, 1980), Emanuel Tov, and most critical scholars argue that the LXX preserves the earlier, shorter form of the narrative. The MT's additional material (17:12–31; 17:55–58) represents **secondary expansion** — later additions that filled in backstory (David's family, his visit to the battlefield) but inadvertently created an internal contradiction with 16:14–23.

Under this view, the original narrative knew only one story of David's introduction to Saul. The expansions were added by a later editor who either did not know or did not notice the contradiction with chapter 16.

Explanation 2 — The MT reflects the original text (Long Text Theory): Traditional harmonists and some critical scholars (John Mauchline, David Tsumura) argue that the MT represents two originally independent traditions that were editorially combined: (a) David as court musician (16:14–23) from one source and (b) David as shepherd-warrior (17:12–31; 17:55–58) from another. The editor who combined them allowed the apparent contradiction to stand because both traditions were authoritative. The LXX then omitted the duplicate material.

Explanation 3 — Two parallel editions (Tov's revision): In his later work, Emanuel Tov (*Textual Criticism*, 3rd ed., pp. 341–344) concludes that the MT and LXX represent **two different editorial stages** of a growing narrative: the shorter LXX form is earlier; the MT represents a later expanded edition incorporating additional folk traditions about David's youth.

The 4QSamuel^a Evidence

4QSamuel^a (4Q51) preserves fragments of 1 Samuel 17. The critical question: does 4QSamuel^a have the material that the LXX lacks?

The answer is complex. 4QSamuel^a's fragments for chapters 16–17 are fragmentary, but the evidence available suggests:

4QSamuel^a preserves some of 17:3–6 (Goliath's description) — present in both MT and LXX

The fragments do not clearly preserve 17:12–31 — the contested passage

Some fragments may align with the MT's longer text at certain points

The 4QSamuel^a evidence for the Goliath narrative is **inconclusive** — the scroll is too fragmentary at this point to determine definitively whether it had the short or long form. This is itself significant: the three-tradition harmony cannot be completed for this passage with current evidence.

The Full Parallel Text

Goliath's Physical Description — 1 Samuel 17:4–7

MT (ASV): And there went out a champion from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was **six cubits and a span** [approximately 9 feet 9 inches / 2.97 meters]. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was clad with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was **five thousand shekels of brass** [approximately 125 lbs / 57 kg]. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a javelin of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed **six hundred shekels of iron** [approximately 15 lbs / 6.8 kg]: and his shield-bearer went before him.

LXX (Brenton): And there went forth a mighty man out of the army of the Philistines, Goliath by name, of Geth, **four cubits and a span** [approximately 6 feet 9 inches / 2.06 meters] was his height. And he had a helmet on his head, and he wore a breastplate of chain armour; and the weight of his breastplate was **five thousand shekels of brass**. And he had greaves of brass on his legs, and a brazen spear between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear weighed **six hundred shekels of iron**: and his shield-bearer went before him.

DSS (4QSamuel^a): The fragment does not clearly preserve this verse. However, a fragment at **Josephus** (*Antiquities* VI.9.1) describes Goliath as *"of vast bulk, for he was **four cubits and a span** in height"* — aligning with the LXX against the MT.

Variance Notes — Goliath's Height: - **[VAR — Famous]** MT: *"six cubits and a span"* (~9'9"); LXX: *"four cubits and a span"* (~6'9"). This is the most famous numerical variant in the narrative and one of the most discussed in popular biblical scholarship.

Which is correct? Several lines of evidence favor the LXX/Josephus reading of **four cubits and a span**:

The Septuagint: LXX^B consistently reads "four cubits and a span" — not a single Greek manuscript reads "six cubits."

Josephus: Writing in the first century C.E. from a text tradition he describes as authoritative, gives "four cubits and a span."

Human anatomy: A height of approximately 6'9" (2.06 m) is exceptionally tall but within human biological range — a warrior of this height would be a formidable opponent but physically plausible. A height of approximately 9'9" (2.97 m) exceeds the biological maximum

for human height by approximately one meter. No confirmed human being in recorded history has exceeded 8'11" (2.72 m).

The MT tradition of gigantism: The MT already contains references to other giant Philistine warriors in 2 Samuel 21:15–22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4–8 — a tradition that may have progressively enlarged Goliath's dimensions as his legendary status grew.

Scribal error: In Hebrew, "four" (*'arba'*) and "six" (*shesh*) are visually dissimilar, making scribal confusion unlikely. However, a copyist influenced by the tradition of Goliath's exceptional size may have changed "four" to "six" deliberately.

Frank Moore Cross concluded that the LXX's "four cubits and a span" is the earlier reading. The MT's "six cubits" represents an exaggeration that developed in the MT tradition.

David's Introduction to Saul — The Contradiction Examined

MT Only — 1 Samuel 16:14–23 (Present in both MT and LXX)

MT (ASV): Now the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, that are before thee, to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp; and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person; and Jehovah is with him.

Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, who is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favor in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took the harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

LXX (Brenton): [Substantially parallels the MT in this passage]

DSS (4QSamuel^a): Fragments of this passage exist and largely agree with the MT, though with minor textual variants.

MT Only — 1 Samuel 17:55–58 (ABSENT from LXX)

MT (ASV): And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is.

And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

LXX (Brenton): *[This entire passage — vv. 55–58 — is ABSENT from the LXX]*

DSS (4QSamuel^a): The relevant fragment is not clearly preserved at this point.

Variance Notes: - **[ADD by MT or OMIT by LXX]** The contradiction created by the presence of both 16:14–23 (David in Saul's court) and 17:55–58 (Saul not knowing David) is the most significant internal narrative inconsistency in the MT of Samuel. The LXX eliminates the contradiction by lacking 17:55–58.

The most historically significant implication: If the LXX's shorter text is original (as most critical scholars now believe), then the MT of 1 Samuel 17 represents an **editorially expanded narrative** — a later stage of the book's composition that added folk-tradition material about David's youth without fully harmonizing it with the earlier court-musician narrative. The contradiction in the MT is evidence of editorial seams in the composition of the book, not scribal error.

Part Three: The Song of Hannah — 1 Samuel 2:1–10

Overview

The Song of Hannah is one of the oldest and most important poems in the Hebrew Bible, closely related in structure, vocabulary, and theology to Psalm 113 and to the Magnificat of Mary in Luke 1:46–55 (which explicitly echoes it). It is among the best-preserved passages in Samuel across the three traditions — which makes the variants that do exist particularly significant.

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1 Samuel 2:1–10 — Full Parallel Text

MT (ASV): And Hannah prayed, and said:

My heart exulteth in Jehovah; My horn is exalted in Jehovah; My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; Because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none holy as Jehovah; For there is none besides thee, Neither is there any rock like our God.

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth; For Jehovah is a God of knowledge, And by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty are broken; And they that stumbled are girded with strength.

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; And they that were hungry have ceased to hunger: Yea, the barren hath borne seven; And she that hath many children languisheth.

Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up.

Jehovah maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, he also lifteth up.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, To make them sit with princes, And inherit the throne of glory: For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, And he hath set the world upon them.

He will keep the feet of his holy ones; But the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness; For by strength shall no man prevail.

They that strive with Jehovah shall be broken to pieces; Against them will he thunder in heaven: Jehovah will judge the ends of the earth; And he will give strength unto his king, And exalt the horn of his anointed.

LXX (Brenton): And Anna prayed and said:

My heart is established in the Lord; my horn is exalted in my God; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; I have rejoiced in thy salvation.

For there is none holy as the Lord; and there is none righteous as our God; there is none holy beside thee.

Boast not, and talk not high things; let not high-sounding words come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and God prepares his own designs.

The bow of the mighty has been made weak, and the weak have girded themselves with strength.

They that were full of bread are brought low; and the hungry have forsaken the earth; for the barren has borne seven, and she that abounded in children has been made weak.

The Lord kills and makes alive; he brings down to Hades and brings up.

The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and lifts up.

He raises the poor from the earth, and lifts the needy from the dunghill; to seat him with the mighty of the people, and causing them to inherit a throne of glory: giving the vow to the vower, and he blessed the years of the righteous.

For by strength shall no man prevail.

The Lord shall make his adversary weak; the Lord is holy.

Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man boast in his strength, and let not the rich man boast in his wealth; but let him that boasts boast in this, to understand and know the Lord, and to execute judgment and justice in the midst of the earth.

The Lord has gone up to the heavens and thundered; he shall judge the ends of the earth, and give strength to our kings, and shall exalt the horn of his Christ.

DSS (4QSamuel^a): Fragments of the Song of Hannah are preserved in 4QSamuel^a. The DSS fragments align more closely with the MT than with the LXX at several key points. Specifically, the extended LXX passage (the wisdom-boasting section, *"Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom"*) does not appear in 4QSamuel^a, suggesting it may be a LXX expansion rather than a reflection of its Hebrew Vorlage.

Variance Notes:

- **[VAR]** MT: *"There is none holy as Jehovah; For there is none besides thee, Neither is there any rock like our God"* — LXX: *"there is none holy as the Lord; and there is none righteous as our God; there is none holy beside thee."* The LXX adds *"there is none righteous as our God"* — a phrase absent from the MT. The MT's *"rock"* (*tsûr*, a common Hebrew divine epithet) is entirely absent from the LXX.

- **[ADD in LXX]** The LXX contains an extended passage after *"neither let the mighty man boast in his strength"* (approximately verses equivalent to MT vv. 9–10) that draws heavily on Jeremiah 9:22–23 (*"let him that boasts boast in this, to understand and know the Lord"*). This passage has no Hebrew counterpart in the MT or in 4QSamuel^a. It appears to be a **LXX expansion**, incorporating the Jeremiah passage into Hannah's song.

- **[VAR — Theologically Significant]** MT: *"And he will give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed"* — LXX: *"and shall exalt the horn of his Christ"* (*Christou autou*). The LXX renders Hebrew *mĕshîchô* (his anointed one) with the Greek *Christos* (the anointed one / Christ) — the same word used throughout the NT for Jesus. This is the first occurrence of the word *Christos* in the LXX Psalms and Samuel material that the NT will develop into its central Christological title. Hannah's song ends with a reference to "his Christ" — understood by the early church as a prophecy of the Messiah.

- **[Magnificat Connection]** The Song of Hannah and Luke's Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) share the following

parallel themes, most of which are closer to the LXX than the MT formulation:

Hannah's Song

Magnificat

Tradition

"My heart exulteth / is established in the Lord"

"My soul doth magnify the Lord"

Both

"My horn is exalted in my God"

"my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"

Both

"he that were full have hired out for bread / They that were full are brought low"

"The hungry he hath filled with good things; And the rich he hath sent empty away"

LXX closer

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust"

"He hath put down princes from their thrones, And hath exalted them of low degree"

Both

"he will give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed"

"He hath holpen Israel his servant"

Both

Luke's Mary almost certainly draws on the LXX form of the Song of Hannah. The Magnificat is structured as a Greek poem drawing on Greek OT vocabulary, suggesting Luke (or his source) was working from the LXX tradition.

Part Four: The Ark Narrative and the Reign of Saul

1 Samuel 13:1 — The Age of Saul

MT (ASV): Saul was **[one year old]** when he began to reign; and he reigned **two years** over Israel.

LXX (Brenton): [The LXX (LXX^B) **entirely omits** 1 Samuel 13:1]

DSS (4QSamuel^a): The fragment does not preserve this verse.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR — Textual Corruption]** 1 Samuel 13:1 in the MT is universally acknowledged by all textual critics and all major English translations as **corrupt in the MT**. The Hebrew reads literally: *"A son of one year [was] Saul in his becoming king, and two years he reigned over Israel."* A one-year-old king reigning two years is historically impossible. The formula is the standard regnal introduction used throughout Kings (*"X years old was [king] when he began to reign, and Y years he reigned"*), but the numbers have been lost or corrupted in transmission. The LXX (LXX^B) simply omits the verse, having found it already corrupt in its Vorlage.

The **Acts 13:21** gives Saul's reign as **forty years**. Many English translations bracket the verse or supply the missing numbers: ESV: *"Saul was [thirty] years old when he began to reign, and he reigned [forty] years over Israel."* These supplied numbers are conjectural and are not found in any extant Hebrew manuscript, the LXX, or the DSS.

4QSamuel^a does not preserve this verse. This is one of the clearest cases in which the MT's text is demonstrably corrupt and the LXX's omission is the most honest response to the problem.

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1 Samuel 17:50 — Did David Kill Goliath with the Sling or the Sword?

MT (ASV) — 17:50–51: So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. And David ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of its sheath, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith.

LXX (Brenton): [The LXX **omits** verse 50 — *"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David"*]

And David ran, and stood over him, and took his sword, and slew him, and cut off his head.

DSS (4QSamuel^a): Fragmentary at this point; unclear.

Variance Notes: - **[ADD by MT]** The MT has verse 50 immediately followed by verse 51, producing a sequence in which David first *"slew him"* with the stone (v.50) and then *"slew him"* again with the sword (v.51) — a redundancy. The LXX omits v.50, leaving only the sword beheading in v.51. This is consistent with the LXX's generally shorter form of chapter 17.

[VAR — 2 Samuel 21:19] A further complication: **2 Samuel 21:19** (MT) reads: *"Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim the Bethlehemite slew Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a*

weaver's beam." The identical description of the spear staff connects this passage to the Goliath of 1 Samuel 17. If Elhanan killed Goliath in 2 Samuel 21:19, who killed him in 1 Samuel 17? The Chronicler resolves this (1 Chronicles 20:5) by saying Elhanan killed "Lahmi the brother of Goliath" — but this appears to be an editorial harmonization. The LXX and DSS do not clearly resolve the underlying question of whether two separate giant warriors named Goliath existed, or whether the traditions are in tension.

Part Five: The Death of Saul — 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 1

The Internal Contradiction

The death of Saul is narrated twice in the MT of Samuel — and the two accounts contradict each other:

Account 1 — 1 Samuel 31:3–5 (MT and LXX substantially agree):

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers overtook him; and he was greatly distressed by reason of the archers. Then said Saul to his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took his sword, and **fell upon it**. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell upon his sword, and died with him.

Account 2 — 2 Samuel 1:6–10 (The Amalekite's Report):

And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance to be upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul was leaning upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. And he said unto me, Stand, I pray thee, beside me, and slay me; for anguish hath taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood beside him, and slew him, because I knew that he could not live after that he had fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

MT and LXX: Both the MT and LXX preserve both accounts without harmonizing them.

DSS (4QSamuel^a): The scroll is fragmentary at this point.

Variance Notes:

- **[VAR — Internal Contradiction]** Account 1 (1 Samuel 31) states that Saul **fell on his own sword** and died before any enemy reached him. Account 2 (2 Samuel 1) has an Amalekite claiming that **he personally killed Saul** at Saul's request. David executes the Amalekite for the killing (2 Sam 1:15–16), accepting the report as true.

  The scholarly question is whether one account is historical and one is fiction, or whether both are editorial inclusions from different source traditions:

1. **The Amalekite lied**: The traditional harmonistic reading — the Amalekite found Saul already dead or dying and fabricated the story of the mercy killing to gain David's favor. This is narratively plausible and is the reading adopted by most traditional commentators (Calvin, Matthew Henry) and many critical ones (Alter, McCarter).

2. **Two independent traditions**: Some scholars (Rost, Noth) see 2 Samuel 1 as reflecting an independent tradition about Saul's death that was not harmonized with 1 Samuel 31. Both traditions were included because both were considered authoritative. This is the same model used to explain the Goliath contradiction.

3. **The Chronicler's solution**: 1 Chronicles 10:1–14 follows 1 Samuel 31 (Saul falls on his sword) and omits the Amalekite's report entirely — an implicit editorial judgment that 1 Samuel 31 is the authoritative account.

The MT and LXX both preserve the contradiction without resolution. Neither the MT nor the LXX harmonizes the two accounts. 4QSamuel^a is too fragmentary to contribute to this specific question.

Part Six: 4QSamuel^a's Most Significant Individual Contributions

2 Samuel 6:3–4 — The Ark Narrative

MT (ASV): And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was in the hill, with the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

4QSamuel^a: The scroll here preserves a slightly longer text that clarifies the grammar of the MT, which has an awkward repetition (*"the house of Abinadab… the house of Abinadab"* in consecutive clauses). 4QSamuel^a appears to have a smoother reading that the MT may have compressed.

LXX (Brenton): And they put the ark of the Lord on a new wagon, and brought it out of the house of Aminadab that was in the hill; and Oza and his brethren the sons of Aminadab drove the new wagon with the ark. And his brethren went before the ark.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** The LXX reads *"his brethren"* rather than *"Ahio"* — a difference that reflects either a different Hebrew reading or an interpretation of the Hebrew *'achyô* as "his brothers" (from *'ach*, brother) rather than as a personal name (Ahio).

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2 Samuel 8:3 — The Extent of David's Empire

MT (ASV): And David smote Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his dominion unto the River.

4QSamuel^a: The scroll reads *"to restore his hand upon the Euphrates"* — a slightly more explicit geographic reference than the MT's unspecified "the River."

LXX (Brenton): And David smote Adraazar the son of Raab king of Suba, as he went to extend his power to the river Euphrates.

Variance Notes: - **[VAR]** The LXX and 4QSamuel^a both have *"Euphrates"* explicitly; the MT has only "the River" (*nâhâr*) — which in context clearly means the Euphrates but leaves the name unstated. This is a minor variant with no theological significance; the geographic reference is the same.

Appendix A: Summary of Major Samuel Divergences

Passage

MT

LXX

DSS

Type

Significance

Before 11:1

Missing paragraph

Connective only

Full paragraph

[ADD in DSS/LXX]

DSS restores lost context

13:1

Numerically corrupt

Omitted

Not preserved

[CORRUPT in MT]

All traditions acknowledge the problem

17:4

Goliath: 6 cubits

Goliath: **4 cubits**

Not preserved

[VAR]

Josephus confirms 4 cubits

17:12–31

Present

Absent

Unclear

[ADD by MT]

Shorter LXX text likely earlier

17:50

David kills with stone AND sword

Stone verse absent

Unclear

[ADD by MT]

MT redundancy; LXX smoother

17:55–58

Saul doesn't know David

Absent

Unclear

[CONTRADICTION in MT]

LXX eliminates contradiction

2:10

"his anointed"

"his Christ"

MT-aligned

[THEOL/VAR]

First *Christos* in Samuel

31 vs. 2 Sam 1

Suicide; Amalekite both

Same contradiction

Unclear

[INTERNAL CONTRADICTION]

Unresolved in all traditions

Appendix B: 4QSamuel^a and the Reliability of the Septuagint

The publication of 4QSamuel^a (DJD XVII, 2005) fundamentally revised scholarly understanding of the LXX of Samuel. Before its discovery, the many readings in LXX Samuel that differed from the MT were routinely attributed to: (a) the Greek translator's errors; (b) deliberate Greek theological interpretation; (c) Greek stylistic smoothing.

After 4QSamuel^a, a different picture emerges. Many of the LXX's distinctive readings in Samuel are now confirmed by 4QSamuel^a to reflect **genuine ancient Hebrew texts** — older readings

that survived in the LXX tradition but were lost from (or replaced in) the tradition that produced the MT.

The implications, stated by Frank Moore Cross (*The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 3rd ed., 1995, pp. 132–177):

1. **The MT of Samuel is a relatively late and imperfect textual tradition.** It preserves the text faithfully in many places but shows signs of scribal corruption, haplography, and editorial harmonization that the 4QSamuel^a / LXX tradition does not share.

2. **The LXX of Samuel is not a "free" translation.** In many of the passages where it differs from the MT, it is translating a Hebrew text faithfully — a Hebrew text that differs from the MT. The LXX translators of Samuel were more faithful to their source than had been supposed.

3. **Neither the MT nor the LXX/4QSamuel^a tradition is simply "original."** Both represent **authentic ancient textual traditions** of the book of Samuel. The eclectic task of the textual critic is to evaluate each variant on its own terms — using internal criteria (grammatical coherence, narrative logic, the lectio difficilior principle) alongside external criteria (manuscript support, versional evidence, parallel passages).

Appendix C: The Goliath Tradition in Jewish and Christian Interpretation

The Goliath narrative has been interpreted theologically across three traditions:

Jewish Interpretation (Midrash, Talmud): The Midrash Samuel describes Goliath as a warrior of supernatural origin, interpreting his armament allegorically. The Talmud (*Sotah* 42b) discusses the Elhanan/Goliath problem but resolves it by suggesting that Elhanan and David are the same person. The MT's larger Goliath (six cubits) is the standard in rabbinic tradition.

Christian Interpretation: The early church read the David-Goliath narrative typologically — David as a type of Christ, Goliath as a type of Satan or death, the smooth stone as a symbol of Christ's purity. Augustine (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* on Psalm 144) develops the typology at length. The NT does not directly cite the Goliath narrative, though 1 Corinthians 1:27 (*"God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty"*) echoes its theological pattern.

Qumran Interpretation: No specifically sectarian interpretation of the Goliath narrative survives. 4QSamuel^a's preservation of the text is transmission rather than interpretation. The War Scroll (1QM) does describe eschatological battles in terms that echo the Goliath pattern (the small versus the mighty, the divine warrior fighting for the weak) but does not explicitly cite 1 Samuel 17.

Appendix D: Essential Scholarship for Samuel

Primary Text Editions

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Fernández Marcos, N., ed. *Reges I et II*. Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum VIII/1. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011. [LXX critical edition]

Ulrich, E., F.M. Cross, et al. *Qumran Cave 4: Samuel*. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XVII. Oxford University Press, 2005. [4QSamuel$^{a–c}$ editio princeps]

English Translations

Brenton, L.C.L. *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*. 1851. Public domain.

Abegg, M., P. Flint, and E. Ulrich. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*. HarperOne, 1999. Pp. 213–292.

Commentaries

McCarter, P.K. *I Samuel*. Anchor Bible 8. Doubleday, 1980. [Essential; extensive textual apparatus]

McCarter, P.K. *II Samuel*. Anchor Bible 9. Doubleday, 1984.

Tsumura, D.T. *The First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Eerdmans, 2007.

Alter, R. *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*. Norton, 1999. [Literary emphasis; sensitive to textual problems]

Anderson, A.A. *2 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary 11. Word, 1989.

Textual Criticism of Samuel

Cross, F.M. *The Ancient Library of Qumran*. 3rd ed. Fortress, 1995. Pp. 132–177. [Foundational study of 4QSamuel^a]

Cross, F.M. “The Ammonite Oppression of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben.” In *History, Historiography, and Interpretation*. Ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld. Magnes Press, 1983. [On the missing Nahash paragraph]

Ulrich, E. *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*. Scholars Press, 1978. [Foundational monograph on 4QSamuel^a and Josephus]

Tov, E. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd ed. Fortress, 2012. Pp. 337–344. [Samuel section]

Flint, P.W., and E. Ulrich. “Samuel.” In *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, pp. 213–292.

On the Goliath Narrative Specifically

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Rofé, A. "The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology." In *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*. Ed. J. Neusner et al. Fortress, 1987.

Stoebe, H.J. *Das erste Buch Samuelis*. Kommentar zum Alten Testament VIII/1. Gütersloh, 1973.