

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 258

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS

A Covenant Deep Dive into Bible Translations, the Oldest Hebrew Witnesses, and the *netivot olam* (ancient paths) of the Written Text

Many Religious Organizations Claim to Have the Best Translation of the Bible. Which Text Is the Source, What Do the Oldest Writings Show, and What Must the Religious World Return To in Order to Find the Truth in the Text? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✠ ISLAM
Judaism received and guarded the Hebrew text itself. The Masoretic scribes counted its letters and noted its every irregularity, and the Leningrad Codex (1008) is the oldest complete copy. English Jewish translations divide: the JPS Tanakh (1985) translates the Masoretic text with scholarly footnotes, while the ArtScroll Stone Edition (1996) renders the text through Rashi and the rabbinic commentators. The Name is read aloud as <i>Adonai</i> (Lord) or <i>HaShem</i> (the Name).	Every Christian Bible is a translation, and every translation stands on a chosen base text. Most Protestant and many Catholic Old Testaments now translate the Masoretic Hebrew; Eastern Orthodoxy reads the Greek Septuagint; the King James-Only movement holds the 1611 English as uniquely preserved. The New Testament itself reads from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:17) and points to <i>"the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms"</i> (Luke 24:44).	The Qur'an says of the Torah, <i>"We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light"</i> (Q. 5:44), and also speaks of those who <i>"distort words from their places"</i> (Q. 4:46; 5:13). Islam holds that its own revelation is the Qur'an only in Arabic; every translation is an <i>"interpretation of the meanings."</i> That principle — the source language governs the translation — is the principle this study applies to the Tanakh.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one question with many parts: among the many translations that claim to be the best, which text is the source, what do the oldest surviving writings show about it, and what must the religious world return to? **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations and their English meanings appear together in ***bold italic*** at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English versions; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew — itself a translation, and subject to the same test this document applies to every other. Findings from the Tanakh are graded **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Findings about manuscripts and publishers are graded by the same standard applied to historical evidence: **Corroborated** (two or more independent sources), **Single source**, or **Not established**. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, church documents, the Qur'an, and publishers' own statements appear only as historical and comparative reference. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The first interpreter; the covenant written by command; the Name as memorial; the priestly blessing; the ban on adding or subtracting; the law made plain; the text laid beside the ark as witness; the midwives who feared Elohim
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 1 Samuel, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Habakkuk, Zephaniah	The book lost and found; the lying pen of the scribes; the burned scroll rewritten; the ancient paths; the famine of the word; the pure language; the warning about kings
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Ezra, Nehemiah, 2 Chronicles	The refined word; do not add to His words; the letter translated into Aramaic; the law read distinctly with the sense given; children who lost the Hebrew tongue; Asa and the Chronicler's verdict

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Ancient manuscripts	Ketef Hinnom silver scrolls; Nash Papyrus; Dead Sea Scrolls (1QIsa-a, 4QJer-b, 4QJer-d, 4QDeut-j, 4QSam-a); Judean Desert scrolls from Masada, Murabba'at, and Nahal Hever; Aleppo Codex; Leningrad Codex	What the oldest surviving witnesses show about the Hebrew text
Ancient translations	Septuagint (Papyrus Fouad 266; Greek Minor Prophets Scroll 8HevXIIgr; 4Q120; Codex Vaticanus; Codex Sinaiticus); Samaritan Pentateuch; Jerome's Latin Vulgate	How early translations and parallel text forms compare with the Hebrew
New Testament	Matthew 5:18; Luke 4:16–20; 24:44; Acts 15:21; 2 Timothy 3:15	The New Testament's own pointing back to the written Hebrew scriptures

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Qur'an	Q. 2:75; 4:46; 5:13; 5:44; 12:2	The Torah as guidance and light; the charge of distortion; revelation bound to its own language
Church documents and printed Bibles	Bancroft's Rules for the King James translators (1604); "The Translators to the Reader" (1611); Council of Trent, decree on the Vulgate (1546); Bomberg Second Rabbinic Bible (1524–25); Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1977)	How the base texts and rules of the major translations were set
The Geneva Bible	Geneva New Testament (1557); Geneva Bible (1560; 1599 edition); William Barlow, account of the Hampton Court Conference (1604)	The English Bible the King James Version replaced, and the notes the King objected to
Modern publishers' own statements	House of Yahweh (The Book of Yahweh , 1987); Watch Tower Society (New World Translation, 1950–2013); Institute for Scripture Research (The Scriptures); Assembly of Yahweh (The Word of Yahweh); Yahweh's Restoration Ministry; A. B. Traina (Holy Name Bible); ArtScroll (Stone Edition); Jewish Publication Society (1985; 2023)	Each group's claim for its own translation, tested in Section VI
Modern textual scholarship	Emanuel Tov, <i>Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible</i> and related studies; Gabriel Barkay and the 2004 Ketef Hinnom re-examination; Israel Museum (Shrine of the Book) descriptions	Classification and dating of the manuscripts

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — WHO HAS THE BEST TRANSLATION?

I-A. The Claims as They Are Made

Walk into any bookstore and the question answers itself with a wall of choices. Nearly every major translation is promoted as the best at something, and several religious bodies go further: they claim that their own edition is the most correct Bible on earth, or the only one that can be trusted. The table below sets out how the leading translations are presented by their own publishers or their most committed users.

PUBLISHER OR GROUP	TRANSLATION	HOW IT IS PRESENTED
The Lockman Foundation	<i>New American Standard Bible</i> (NASB)	The most literal, word-for-word English translation
Crossway	<i>English Standard Version</i> (ESV)	Word-for-word accuracy joined to literary beauty
Biblica / Zondervan	<i>New International Version</i> (NIV)	The original authors' message in clear, contemporary English
Tyndale House	<i>New Living Translation</i> (NLT)	Thought-for-thought translation for everyday reading
Lifeway / Holman	<i>Christian Standard Bible</i> (CSB)	"Optimal equivalence" — faithful and readable at once
National Council of Churches	<i>New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition</i> (NRSVue)	The standard of modern critical scholarship
King James-Only movement	<i>King James Version</i> (1611/1769)	The only divinely preserved English Word of God
Watch Tower Society	<i>New World Translation</i> (NWT)	Accurate and faithful, with the divine name "restored" in both testaments
House of Yahweh (Abilene, Texas)	<i>The Book of Yahweh</i>	"The most correct and accurate translation of the Holy Scriptures that is available today"
A. B. Traina	<i>Holy Name Bible</i>	The first complete Sacred Name Bible (1962–63)
Institute for Scripture Research	<i>The Scriptures</i>	The Name kept in Hebrew letters throughout
Assembly of Yahweh (Michigan)	<i>The Word of Yahweh</i>	Sacred names restored in both testaments in plain English
Yahweh's Restoration Ministry	<i>Restoration Study Bible</i>	Restored names with the ministry's study notes
ArtScroll / Mesorah Publications	<i>Stone Edition Tanach</i>	The definitive Orthodox English Tanakh, faithful to Rashi and the classic commentators

PUBLISHER OR GROUP	TRANSLATION	HOW IT IS PRESENTED
Jewish Publication Society	<i>JPS Tanakh</i> (1985; revised 2023)	The standard modern English rendering of the Masoretic text
Messianic publishers	<i>Complete Jewish Bible; Tree of Life Version</i>	Hebrew terms and Jewish framing restored to the Christian Bible

Every one of these claims is a claim about a *translation*. None of them is a claim about the *text*. That is where the question has to be turned around.

I-B. The Question in the Tanakh's Own Terms

The prophet Jeremiah was sent to a generation that had many voices claiming to speak for **Yahweh** and very little memory of what **Yahweh** had actually said. His answer was not to choose the best of the new voices. It was to go back:

"Thus says Yahweh: Stand by the ways and see, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk in it." (Jeremiah 6:16)

The phrase is *netivot olam* (*ancient paths / everlasting paths*), נְתִיבוֹת עוֹלָם. The verb is *sha'al* (*to ask / inquire*), שָׁאַל. The ancient path is not discovered by novelty; it is found by asking what came first.

The question this Institution was asked is therefore reframed in four parts.

First: what does the Tanakh say about its own written text, and about translating and explaining it?

Second: what do the oldest surviving writings show about that text?

Third: how do the translations — including the ones that claim to be the best — stand when measured against it?

Fourth: what, then, must the religious world return to?

This document builds on **Doc 151** (*The King James Deception*), which examined the political origins of the King James Version; on **Doc 246** (*Cush Shall Stretch Out Her Hands*), which compared the Ethiopian Bible with the Hebrew text; on **Doc 210** and **Doc 255** (*This Is My Memorial*), which examined the Name; and on **Doc 251** (*The Place He Chooses*), which tested groups that claim to be the one place **Yahweh** chose.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS ABOUT WRITING AND TRANSLATING

The Tanakh has its own vocabulary for writing the word, guarding it, explaining it, and carrying it into another language. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>sefer</i> (book / scroll), סֵפֶר	H5612	A written document; the form in which the covenant was laid up as witness	Deuteronomy 31:24–26
<i>katav</i> (to write), כָּתַב	H3789	To write down; Moses wrote the words of Yahweh by command	Exodus 24:4; 34:27
<i>sofer</i> (scribe), סֹפֵר	H5608	A writer and copyist of documents; the trade through which the text passed	Jeremiah 8:8; 36:32
<i>et sheqer</i> (lying pen), עֵט שֶׁקֶר	H5842 / H8267	A stylus used to produce falsehood; the prophet's charge against the scribes	Jeremiah 8:8
<i>yasaf</i> (to add) and <i>gara</i> (to diminish), יָסַף, גָּרַע	H3254 / H1639	The two forbidden acts against the commanded word	Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32
<i>melits</i> (interpreter), מְלִיצִי	H3887	One who stands between two languages; the first interpreter in the Torah	Genesis 42:23
<i>ba'ar</i> (to make plain / explain), בָּאֵר	H874	To set out clearly; used of Moses explaining the law and of writing it plainly	Deuteronomy 1:5; 27:8; Habakkuk 2:2
<i>meturgam</i> (translated), מְתוּרְגָּם	H8638	Rendered into another language; the root of <i>targum</i> (translation)	Ezra 4:7
<i>meforash</i> (distinctly / clearly), מְפֹרָשׁ	H6567	Read distinctly, section by section, with the sense given	Nehemiah 8:8
<i>shem</i> (name) and <i>zekher</i> (memorial), שֵׁם, זִכָּרוֹן	H8034 / H2143	The Name and its remembrance through every generation	Exodus 3:15

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>emet (truth / faithfulness),</i> אֱמֶת	H571	What is firm and reliable; the sum of His word	Psalms 119:160
<i>safah berurah (pure language / clear speech),</i> שָׁפָה בְּרוּרָה	H8193 / H1305	The purified speech Yahweh promises to the peoples	Zephaniah 3:9

Three lexical observations govern what follows.

First, the Tanakh knows translation. The word *meturgam (translated)* appears in **Ezra 4:7**, where a letter to the Persian king is written in Aramaic and rendered into Aramaic. The *melits (interpreter)* stands between Joseph and his brothers in **Genesis 42:23**. Translation is not foreign to the covenant world; it is an ordinary service.

Second, the Tanakh prizes making plain. The verb *ba'ar (to make plain / explain)* describes Moses himself on the plains of Moab — "*Moses began to explain this law*" (**Deuteronomy 1:5**) — and the command to write the law on the stones "very plainly" (**Deuteronomy 27:8**). Explanation serves the written words; it does not replace them.

Third, the Tanakh knows that the same pen that preserves can also corrupt. The *sofer (scribe)* who copied the text faithfully could also, in the prophet's words, wield an *et sheger (lying pen)*. That is why the text itself carries a standing rule against adding and diminishing.

III. WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS ABOUT ITS OWN TEXT

III-A. Written by Command and Laid Up as a Witness

The covenant did not begin as oral custom later written down by chance. It was written at **Yahweh's** command:

"And Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh." (**Exodus 24:4**)

"Write these words, for according to these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." (**Exodus 34:27**)

When the writing was finished, the book was placed where it could be checked:

"When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book, to their very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, saying: Take this

book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your Elohim, that it may be there as a witness against you." (Deuteronomy 31:24–26)

The king himself was to write his own copy "*from that which is before the priests, the Levites*" and read it all the days of his life (Deuteronomy 17:18–19). A copy was measured against the laid-up original. That is the Torah's own model of textual accountability.

III-B. Guarded Against Addition and Subtraction

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim which I command you." (Deuteronomy 4:2)

"Whatever I command you, be careful to do it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." (Deuteronomy 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1])

"Every word of Eloah is refined; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you and you be found a liar." (Proverbs 30:5–6)

These commands bind every hand that touches the text: the scribe, the editor, the translator, the publisher, and the group that prints its own edition. A translation that inserts what no manuscript contains, or that quietly removes what every manuscript contains, stands under Deuteronomy 4:2.

III-C. The Text Can Be Lost, Burned, and Falsified

The Tanakh does not pretend its text has never been in danger. It records three kinds of danger.

Neglect — In the days of Josiah, the high priest Hilkiah reported, *"I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahweh"* (2 Kings 22:8). The text had been in the Temple the whole time; the nation had stopped reading it.

Destruction — King Jehoiakim cut Jeremiah's scroll with a scribe's knife and burned it column by column (Jeremiah 36:23). The word was not lost: Jeremiah dictated it again to Baruch, *"and there were added besides to them many like words"* (Jeremiah 36:32). The Tanakh itself records a prophetic book written twice, the second time longer.

Falsification — The prophet charged the learned men of his day:

"How can you say, We are wise, and the law of Yahweh is with us? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie." (Jeremiah 8:8)

And again: *"you have perverted the words of the living Elohim, of Yahweh of hosts, our Elohim"* (Jeremiah 23:36). Having the text is not the same as keeping it. A person can hold the scroll and still be ruled by what the scribes have made of it.

Finding — The Tanakh presents its own text as written by command, laid up as a witness, guarded against addition and subtraction, and yet exposed to neglect, destruction, and scribal falsification. **Corroborated** (Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:2; 31:24–26; 2 Kings 22:8; Jeremiah 8:8; 36:23, 32).

III-D. Translation and Explanation — Lawful, and Always Subordinate

The most important Tanakh scene for this study is the public reading after the return from Babylon. The people had lived for a generation in an Aramaic-speaking empire. Ezra read the Hebrew scroll aloud from a wooden platform, and the Levites went among the people:

"And they read in the book, in the law of Elohim, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (Nehemiah 8:8)

The word *meforash* (*distinctly / clearly*), מִפְּרָשׁ, describes the reading.

Three things happen in order: the text is read, the sense is given, and the people understand. The explanation follows the reading; it does not replace it. The scroll stays in the center.

Nehemiah also records what happens when the source language is lost. Of the children of mixed marriages he writes that they

"spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah" (Nehemiah 13:24).

A generation that can no longer read the source is at the mercy of whoever explains it to them.

Finding — Translation and explanation are lawful and even commanded when they make the written text plain (Genesis 42:23; Deuteronomy 1:5; 27:8; Ezra 4:7; Nehemiah 8:8; Habakkuk 2:2). In every case the source text remains the thing read, and the explanation serves it. **Corroborated.** That any translation may stand in the place of the source text is **Not in the text**.

IV. THE OLDEST WRITINGS — WHAT HAS SURVIVED

The request behind this study was plain: prove from the oldest writings which book a person must have to understand the Tanakh. That requires knowing what the oldest writings are. The table sets out the principal witnesses, oldest first.

WITNESS	DATE	LANGUAGE	WHAT IT CONTAINS AND SHOWS
Ketef Hinnom silver scrolls	Late 7th – early 6th century BCE, before the destruction of 586 BCE	Hebrew (paleo-Hebrew script)	Two tiny rolled silver amulets from a Jerusalem burial cave carrying a form of the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24–26 and the Name YHWH — the oldest surviving text of any passage in the Tanakh
Nash Papyrus	About 2nd – 1st century BCE	Hebrew	The Ten Commandments and the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–5) on a single sheet from Egypt
Septuagint (earliest fragments)	Torah translated in the 3rd century BCE in Alexandria; earliest fragments 2nd – 1st century BCE	Greek	A translation — the first of the whole Torah into another language
Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran)	About 250 BCE – 68 CE	Hebrew and Aramaic (a few Greek)	About 230 biblical manuscripts, covering every book of the Tanakh except Esther; the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa-a) contains the whole of Isaiah
Judean Desert scrolls outside Qumran (Masada, Murabba'at, Nahal Hever)	1st century BCE – early 2nd century CE	Hebrew	About 25 biblical texts in near-complete consonantal agreement with the medieval Masoretic text
Samaritan Pentateuch	Text form attested by related scrolls at Qumran; surviving manuscripts are medieval	Hebrew (Samaritan script)	The five books of Moses only, in the Samaritan community's edition
Aleppo Codex	Early 10th century CE	Hebrew with Masoretic vowels and notes	The most authoritative Masoretic codex; about 40 percent, including most of the Torah, missing since the 1947 riots in Aleppo

WITNESS	DATE	LANGUAGE	WHAT IT CONTAINS AND SHOWS
Leningrad Codex	1008 CE	Hebrew with Masoretic vowels and notes	The oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible; the base of <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> (1977), and through it of most modern translations

IV-A. Ketef Hinnom — The Name Written in Jerusalem Before the Exile

In 1979, excavations led by Gabriel Barkay at Ketef Hinnom, across the valley from Mount Zion, recovered two silver scrolls from a burial chamber. When they were unrolled and read, they carried a form of the blessing **Yahweh** gave to Aaron:

"Yahweh bless you and keep you; Yahweh make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; Yahweh lift up His face toward you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24–26)

The amulets are not word-for-word identical to the later Masoretic text — they are a shortened form of the blessing — but the three invocations of the Name and the order of the blessing are the same. A 2004 re-examination confirmed a date before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. Two points follow. The priestly blessing of the Torah was already being written and worn in Jerusalem in the days of the kings. **And the Name was written out — YHWH, not a title — in the oldest scriptural text yet found.**

IV-B. The Dead Sea Scrolls — A Thousand Years Closer to the Source

Before 1947 the oldest complete Hebrew manuscripts were the medieval codices. The scrolls from Qumran moved the evidence back more than a thousand years. What they show must be stated honestly, because both the defenders and the critics of the Masoretic text overstate it.

The textual scholar Emanuel Tov, editor-in-chief of the scrolls' official publication, sorted the biblical scrolls into groups. In his early classification about 60 percent were proto-Masoretic — the text that later became the Masoretic text — with smaller groups resembling the Samaritan Pentateuch (about 5 percent), resembling the Hebrew behind the Septuagint (about 5 percent), and not aligned with any known text (about 10 percent). His later editions lowered the proto-Masoretic share to under half and raised the non-aligned share. In the Torah alone, he counts 24 of 46 analyzable Qumran texts as proto-Masoretic.

Outside Qumran the picture is sharper. The roughly 25 biblical texts from Masada, Wadi Murabba'at, and Nahal Hever — the scrolls of the communities connected with the Jerusalem Temple — agree with

the consonants of the Leningrad Codex to about 98 percent, with differences in spelling and small details. The consonantal text of the Masoretic tradition existed, in the hands of the Temple community, more than a thousand years before the codex that preserves it complete.

The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran, copied in the second century BCE, gives the widest comparison: all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah. It agrees in substance with the Masoretic Isaiah, while carrying many differences of spelling, scribal slips, and corrections, and a smaller number of genuine variant readings.

Finding — The oldest Hebrew witnesses show that the consonantal Hebrew text preserved in the Masoretic tradition is ancient and has been transmitted with remarkable care. **Corroborated** (the Judean Desert scrolls outside Qumran, the proto-Masoretic scrolls at Qumran, and the Great Isaiah Scroll). That every letter of the medieval Masoretic text is identical to what the prophets first wrote is **Not established:** the scrolls show that other Hebrew text forms circulated alongside it before the first century.

V. THE SEPTUAGINT, THE SAMARITAN TORAH, AND THE HONEST DIFFERENCES

V-A. What the Septuagint Is

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures made by Jews in Egypt, beginning with the Torah in the third century BCE and continuing with the other books over the following two centuries. It is the Old Testament of the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the New Testament writers often quote it. Some groups today claim it is older and purer than the Hebrew, and that the Masoretic text was altered later.

The first thing to say is the simplest: the Septuagint is a translation. It is a witness to a Hebrew text — often a valuable one, because it was made from Hebrew manuscripts older than any surviving codex — but it is not the Hebrew. Where it differs from the Masoretic text, the question is always what Hebrew text lay behind the Greek, and whether the difference comes from the translator or from his source.

V-B. Where the Hebrew Scrolls Side with the Greek

The Dead Sea Scrolls settled one old argument. Before 1947, many assumed that every place the Greek differs from the Hebrew was the translator's freedom or error. The scrolls showed that in some places the Greek faithfully translates a different Hebrew text. Three examples are well known.

Jeremiah — The Greek Jeremiah is about one-eighth shorter than the Masoretic Jeremiah, roughly 2,700 words, and places the oracles against the nations in a different order. Two Hebrew scrolls from

Qumran (4QJer-b and 4QJer-d) support the shorter form; others (4QJer-a and 4QJer-c) support the longer. Most scholars hold that the shorter Hebrew edition is the earlier. The Tanakh itself records that Jeremiah's words were written twice, the second time with *"many like words"* added (Jeremiah 36:32). Whether that event explains the two editions cannot be proven; it is a **Single witness** suggestion, not a finding.

Deuteronomy 32:8 — The Masoretic text reads that the Most High fixed the boundaries of the peoples *"according to the number of the sons of Israel."* A Hebrew scroll from Qumran (4QDeut-j) reads *"the sons of Elohim,"* and most Greek manuscripts read *"the angels of God."* Some scholars hold the Masoretic reading to be a later scribal clarification; others defend it as original or read *"sons of Elohim"* as Israel itself. Both readings are presented here. On either reading the next verse governs the meaning: *"For Yahweh's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance"* (Deuteronomy 32:9), and the same song declares, *"there is no god with Me"* (Deuteronomy 32:39).

1 Samuel 17:4 — The Masoretic text gives Goliath's height as *"six cubits and a span."* The Qumran scroll 4QSam-a and the Greek read *"four cubits and a span."* The Hebrew scroll and the Greek are two independent witnesses to the shorter figure.

None of these differences touches a covenant commandment, and none changes who **Yahweh** is or what He requires. But they are real, and a study that promises the truth must say so.

V-C. The Name in the Earliest Greek

Later Christian copies of the Septuagint, from the fourth century CE onward, render the Name as *kyrios (Lord)*. The earliest Jewish copies are different. Papyrus Fouad 266, a first-century-BCE copy of Deuteronomy, leaves the Greek running text and writes the Name in square Hebrew letters, יהוה. The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever writes it in the old paleo-Hebrew letters. A Qumran copy of Leviticus (4Q120) transliterates it in Greek as *Iao*. Scholars still debate whether the original translators wrote the Name or *kyrios*; some hold the Hebrew letters were a later Jewish revision. What is not in doubt is that Jewish copies of the Greek scriptures from before the Christian era preserved the Name in the text.

V-D. The Samaritan Pentateuch — A Parallel Text with a Sectarian Addition

The Samaritan community preserves its own Hebrew Torah. It differs from the Masoretic text in some six thousand places, most of them spelling. Scrolls found at Qumran share its harmonizing style but not its sectarian readings. Those readings go to the heart of **Doc 251**. Where Deuteronomy speaks of *"the place which Yahweh your Elohim will choose"* (Deuteronomy 12:5), the Samaritan text reads

"has chosen," and after the Ten Commandments it adds a command to build an altar on Mount Gerizim. **A community that believed it already stood in the chosen place wrote that belief into its Torah. It is the clearest ancient example of the danger Deuteronomy 4:2 guards against.**

Finding — Ancient translations and parallel text forms are useful witnesses for finding where copying went wrong, and in a few places they preserve an older Hebrew reading. **Corroborated.** That the Septuagint, or any translation, outranks the Hebrew text it translates is **Not established** and runs against the Tanakh's own order in **Nehemiah 8:8**. That the Masoretic text should be set aside wholesale in favor of the Greek is **Not established**: the Hebrew scrolls side with the Masoretic text far more often than with the Greek.

VI. HOW TRANSLATIONS ARE MADE — AND WHY NONE IS "THE BEST"

VI-A. Every Translation Makes Two Choices Before It Writes a Word

Before any translator writes a sentence, two choices have already been made.

The first is the base text: which Hebrew edition will be translated.

The second is the method: whether to follow the Hebrew word by word (formal equivalence), sense by sense (dynamic equivalence), or freely (paraphrase). A reader who does not know those two choices does not know what he is holding.

TRANSLATION	OLD TESTAMENT BASE TEXT	METHOD AND THE NAME
King James Version (1611)	The Second Rabbinic Bible printed by Daniel Bomberg in Venice, edited by Jacob ben Chayyim (1524–25), with the Bishops' Bible as the required starting English	Formal; the Name rendered "LORD" , with "Jehovah" in a handful of places
NASB, ESV, NIV, NLT, CSB, NRSVue	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> — the Leningrad Codex — consulting the Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint in places	Formal (NASB, ESV) to dynamic (NIV, NLT); the Name rendered "LORD"
JPS Tanakh (1985)	The Masoretic text; variant readings and uncertain renderings noted in footnotes	Idiomatic, from the Hebrew; the Name as "LORD" ; the 2023 revision uses "GOD" in small capitals

TRANSLATION	OLD TESTAMENT BASE TEXT	METHOD AND THE NAME
ArtScroll Stone Edition (1996)	The Masoretic text	Translation guided by Rashi and the rabbinic commentators; the Song of Songs rendered only as allegory
New World Translation (1961; 2013)	The Hebrew of Kittel's and later editions of <i>Biblia Hebraica</i>	Formal to moderate; " Jehovah " nearly 7,000 times in the Old Testament and 237 times in the New
Holy Name Bible; The Word of Yahweh	The King James text, with names and titles changed	Formal (inherited from the KJV); " Yahweh ", " Elohim ", and " Yahshua " substituted
The Scriptures (ISR)	The Masoretic text as printed in Kittel's <i>Biblia Hebraica</i>	Formal; the Name printed in Hebrew letters, יהוה
Everett Fox , <i>The Five Books of Moses</i> (1995); Robert Alter , <i>The Hebrew Bible</i> (2018)	The Masoretic text	Close to the Hebrew's own rhythm and wordplay; Fox prints the Name as " YHWH ", Alter as " LORD "

The table shows something the advertising does not. Most of the Bibles on the wall in Section I translate the *same* Hebrew text — the Masoretic text — and differ mainly in method and in their policy on the Name. Several of the Sacred Name Bibles are not new translations at all; they are the King James text with names changed. Restoring the Name in a King James Bible restores one thing and inherits everything else the King James translators chose, including the Bancroft rules **Doc 151** examined.

VI-B. The Claims That Say Too Much

Some claims go beyond "*accurate*" or "*readable*" and assert that one edition alone is the true word. Those claims are tested here by the witnesses already set out.

The King James-Only claim — The King James translators themselves did not make it. Their preface, "*The Translators to the Reader*," defends placing alternative renderings in the margin and states, quoting Augustine, that "*variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures.*" Although Bancroft's sixth rule restricted marginal notes, the 1611 edition was printed with thousands of them, many recording other possible readings. The men who made the

King James Version did not believe it ended the need to consult the Hebrew. **Not established** as a claim about the KJV; contradicted by its own makers.

The New World Translation claim — The Watch Tower Society's Old Testament use of the Name has a basis in the Hebrew, though in the hybrid form "*Jehovah*." Its New Testament is a different matter. It places "*Jehovah*" 237 times in the Greek Scriptures, while no known Greek manuscript of the New Testament contains the Tetragrammaton; the Society relies on much later Hebrew translations of the New Testament. Putting a word into a text where no manuscript has it is an addition under **Deuteronomy 4:2**, however good the intention. **Not established.**

The Book of Yahweh claim — The House of **Yahweh** first published *The Book of Yahweh* in 1987 and calls it "*the most correct and accurate translation of the Holy Scriptures that is available today.*" It is not a translation from a named Hebrew edition by named translators working in the open; it is a group's own revision, edited under its founder. A 1997 *Texas Monthly* report described members being handed a new rendering of Isaiah 43 to paste into their copies after events did not unfold as the group's prophecy had taught. That report is the one published source available online. The author of this document was a member of the House of Yahweh when the revised page was issued and is a second, independent witness to it; the matter is therefore graded **Corroborated**. But the pattern it describes — a text revised to protect a leader's claims — is exactly what **Jeremiah 8:8** calls the lying pen of the scribes, and it is the same pattern the Samaritan Torah shows at Mount Gerizim. **Any translation whose distinctive readings consistently favor the group that publishes it has failed the test of Deuteronomy 4:2, whatever name it prints.**

The rabbinic-lens claim — **The Stone Edition** is careful with the Hebrew and honest about its method: it states that it follows Rashi and the classic commentators. That is precisely its limit. Where the commentary decides the translation — the Song of Songs rendered only as allegory is the plainest example — the reader receives the tradition's reading rather than the text's. The Tanakh places the scroll before the explanation (**Nehemiah 8:8**). **Not established** as a claim to be the text itself.

Finding — **No translation is "*the best*" in the sense of replacing the source.** Each is a witness of greater or lesser faithfulness, and each must be read with knowledge of its base text and method. **Corroborated** (**Nehemiah 8:8**; **Deuteronomy 4:2**; and the KJV translators' own preface). The claim of any group that its own edition alone is the true word of **Yahweh** is **Not in the text.**

VI-C. The Geneva Bible — The People's Bible the Crown Replaced

No study of the claim to the "*best translation*" is complete without the English Bible that the King James Version was made to replace. **Doc 151** told the story from the Crown's side. This section

examines the Geneva Bible on its own terms and tests it by the same standard applied to every other translation in this document.

Who made it, and where — When Queen Mary I restored Roman Catholic rule in England (1553–1558), hundreds of English Protestants fled to the Continent. A group of them gathered in Geneva. William Whittingham led the work, with Anthony Gilby, Thomas Sampson, and others; Miles Coverdale and John Knox are often named among the circle. Whittingham's New Testament appeared in 1557, and the complete Bible in 1560, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I. A revised New Testament by Laurence Tomson (1576) and the notes of Franciscus Junius on Revelation were joined to it in later editions, most familiarly the edition of 1599.

What it was built on — The translators worked from the Hebrew and Greek, consulting the earlier English Bibles, above all Tyndale's, and the best scholarly editions of their day. Their Old Testament was revised against the Hebrew. It was not a new text; it was a translation of the same Hebrew text that underlies the other Bibles in Section VI.

What Was New in the Geneva Bible

FEATURE	WHAT IT DID FOR THE READER
Verse numbers throughout	The first complete English Bible divided into numbered verses, so that any reader could find and check a passage
Roman type	Printed in a clear roman face instead of heavy black-letter, in a size and price a household could own
Italics for supplied words	Words the translators added for English sense, with nothing behind them in the Hebrew or Greek, were set in a different type — telling the reader what was translation and what was text
Marginal notes	Alternative renderings, literal meanings, cross-references, and explanations of hard passages
Aids to study	Book arguments, chapter summaries, maps, illustrations, and tables of names

The italics deserve particular notice. **By setting the translators' own words apart, the Geneva Bible practiced the principle of Deuteronomy 4:2 on the printed page: the reader could see what had been added for sense and what stood in the source.** The King James Version kept the practice. So does every honest translation.

The Notes — and Why the King Objected

The notes made the Geneva Bible the first English study Bible, and they made it dangerous to the throne. According to the published account of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 by William Barlow, King James called the Geneva notes *"very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits."* Two notes were singled out.

Exodus 1:19 — The Hebrew midwives refused Pharaoh's order to kill the male children. The Geneva note said of them: *"Their disobedience herein was lawful, but their dissembling evil."* James objected that the note allowed disobedience to kings.

2 Chronicles 15:16 — King Asa removed his mother Maachah from her position as queen mother because she had made an idol. The Geneva note said that Asa *"lacked zeal"*, for *"she should have died both by the covenant ... and by the law of God,"* but he *"gave place to foolish pity."* James objected that the note faulted a king for sparing his mother.

James's objection was political, and the record of his own writings shows why (**Doc 151, Section I**). But this Institution does not stop at the king's motive. The notes themselves are commentary, and commentary is tested by the text.

On the midwives, the Hebrew text settles the first half of the note.

"The midwives feared Elohim, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them" (Exodus 1:17)

"Elohim dealt well with the midwives ... and because the midwives feared Elohim, He made them households" (Exodus 1:20–21).

The text approves their refusal. The note's judgment that their disobedience was lawful is **Corroborated** by the chapter itself. Its judgment that their answer to Pharaoh was "evil" is Not in the text; the Torah records their words and Elohim's blessing, and no rebuke.

On Asa, the note appeals to the covenant the people made in that same chapter:

"whoever would not seek Yahweh, the Elohim of Israel, should be put to death" (2 Chronicles 15:13).

But the Chronicler gives his own verdict on Asa in the very next verse:

"the heart of Asa was whole all his days" (2 Chronicles 15:17).

The note faults a king whom the text commends. Its charge that Asa *"lacked zeal"* is **Not in the text.**

The lesson cuts both ways. The Crown was wrong to fear a Bible that let the text judge kings; the text does judge kings (Deuteronomy 17:18–20; 1 Samuel 8). But the Geneva annotators were also men with a system — the Reformed theology of Geneva — and in places their margin said more than the text. A study note in the margin is still a note, not the word. The order of **Nehemiah 8:8** governs: the text is read first, and the sense is given under it, never over it.

The Name, the Assembly, and the Canon in the Geneva Bible

The Name — The Geneva Bible followed the same practice as the Bibles before and after it, printing "LORD" where the Hebrew has the Name. In a few places it printed the Name itself in the form "*Iehouah*," as at **Exodus 6:3** and **Psalms 83:18**. On the Name, the Geneva Bible does not differ materially from the King James Version.

Church or congregation — Tyndale translated the Greek *ekklesia* (*assembly*) as "*congregation*." The Geneva New Testament, like the Bishops' Bible and the King James Version after it, generally used "*church*". The choice that Bancroft's third rule enforced was already the Geneva translators' choice.

The Apocrypha — The 1560 Geneva Bible printed the Apocrypha, set apart in its own section with a preface stating that these books were not to be used to prove any point of doctrine except as they agreed with the other scriptures. Some later editions omitted them.

How the Geneva Bible Was Received — and Replaced

The people chose it. It went through well over a hundred editions between 1560 and 1644, and dozens of them appeared after 1611. Once printing was allowed in England, from 1575–76, it became the household Bible of the English-speaking Protestant world. It is the Bible quoted by Shakespeare in many of his plays, the Bible of John Bunyan and the young John Milton, and the Bible the Pilgrims carried to New England.

Its influence on the King James Version was direct. Bancroft's fourteenth rule named the Geneva Bible among the translations to be used where they agreed better with the text than the Bishops' Bible, and the King James translators drew heavily on it. Their own preface, "*The Translators to the Reader*," quotes scripture in the Geneva wording rather than their own. Printing of the Geneva Bible in England ended around 1616, and Archbishop William Laud later acted against the import of copies printed abroad. The Geneva Bible was not defeated by a better reading of the Hebrew; it was displaced by the authority of Crown and Church and by the quiet disappearance of its notes.

Finding — The Geneva Bible was a faithful and careful translation of the same Hebrew text as the other Bibles in this study, and it gave the common reader three tools of lasting value: numbered verses to check the text, italics to mark what translators added, and margins that admitted other possible

renderings. **Corroborated.** Its study notes, like all commentary, sometimes said more than the text, as at **Exodus 1:19** and **2 Chronicles 15:16**. The claim that the Geneva Bible is "*the true Bible*" that the King James Version corrupted is **Not established: it too printed "*LORD*" for the Name and "*church*" for the assembly**, and it stands under the Hebrew exactly as every other translation does. What it teaches the religious world is not which Bible to own, but how to read one: with the source in view and the commentary kept in its place.

VII. THE NAME IN TRANSLATION — THE CHANGE EVERY READER CAN SEE

One difference between the Hebrew text and most translations can be seen on almost every page. **The Tetragrammaton, יהוה, appears roughly 6,800 times in the Hebrew Tanakh.** Most English Bibles print "**LORD**" in its place. The Hebrew says what the Name is for:

"Yahweh, the Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations." (Exodus 3:15)

"I am Yahweh, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another." (Isaiah 42:8)

"That they may know that You, whose name alone is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth." (Psalms 83:18 [Hebrew 83:19])

The witnesses of Section IV agree with the Hebrew text on this point. The Name is written in the Ketef Hinnom scrolls before the exile, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in Hebrew letters inside early Jewish copies of the Greek. The custom of not pronouncing it, and then of not printing it, is later than the text. **Doc 255 (*This Is My Memorial*)** examined the reasons given for that custom; this study adds the manuscript evidence.

The same standard cuts both ways. Removing the Name from about 6,800 places where the Hebrew has it departs from the text. Inserting it in places where no manuscript has it — as in the New World Translation's New Testament, or in Sacred Name editions that substitute names by a group's own rules — also departs from the text. The measure is not preference but the written witness.

Finding — The Name belongs in the text wherever the Hebrew writes it. **Corroborated** (Exodus 3:15; Isaiah 42:8; Psalms 83:18; and the Ketef Hinnom, Qumran, and early Greek witnesses). Its replacement by a title is a later custom, **Not in the text.** Its insertion where no manuscript has it is **Not in the text** and adds to the word against **Deuteronomy 4:2.**

VIII. WHAT THE RELIGIOUS WORLD MUST RETURN TO

VIII-A. The Source, Not a Publisher

The answer to the question is not a brand of Bible. It is the text all the Bibles translate: the Hebrew (and, in parts of Daniel and Ezra, Aramaic) Tanakh. It is the one body of scripture that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each acknowledge as given by **Yahweh**. The New Testament points back to it — Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue (Luke 4:16–20), and the book of Acts says *"Moses has been read in the synagogues every Sabbath"* (Acts 15:21). The Qur'an calls the Torah *"guidance and light"* (Q. 5:44). Every later tradition, by its own citations, sends its reader back to the older book.

The prophet's word is exact:

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isaiah 8:20).

The law and the testimony are the written text. Every translation, every commentary, and every group's edition is tested by it.

VIII-B. The Best Available Form of the Text

Returning to the source does not mean pretending one medieval codex fell from heaven, nor exchanging the Hebrew for the Greek. It means reading the text the way the witnesses themselves require, under the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard.

#	WITNESS	HOW IT IS USED
I	The Hebrew consonantal text of the Masoretic tradition (Aleppo and Leningrad Codices)	<u>The primary text: the fullest, best-preserved Hebrew, confirmed as ancient by the scrolls</u>
II	The older Hebrew witnesses (Ketef Hinnom, the Nash Papyrus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Judean Desert scrolls)	The check on the primary text; where they differ, the difference is reported openly, not hidden
III	The ancient translations and parallel forms (Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch)	Secondary witnesses to what Hebrew texts once read — never a replacement for the Hebrew
IV	Modern translations	Doorways into the text for those who do not read Hebrew; read two or three together, one of them literal

VIII-C. The Reader's Plumb Line — Five Practices

The covenant believer who does not read Hebrew is not shut out. The Torah was written *"very plainly"* (Deuteronomy 27:8) and read aloud to men, women, children, and the stranger (Deuteronomy 31:11–12; Joshua 8:34–35). *"The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it"* (Deuteronomy 30:14). Five practices put the reader back on the ancient path.

First: Read two or three translations side by side, at least one of them literal. This is the two-or-three-witness rule applied to translations. Where they agree, the sense is secure; where they differ, the Hebrew is the judge.

Second: Know what each translation is standing on. Look for the preface. A translation that does not tell you its base text and method has not earned your trust.

Third: When a doctrine rests on a verse, go to the Hebrew. Free tools make this possible for every household: a Hebrew-English text such as Sefaria.org, an interlinear, Strong's numbers, and the lexicons of Brown-Driver-Briggs and Gesenius.

Fourth: Put the Name back where the Hebrew has it, and nowhere else. Where an English Bible prints *"LORD"* in capitals, the Hebrew reads **Yahweh**. Where it prints *"GOD"* in capitals — as in the phrase Lord GOD — the Hebrew also reads **Yahweh**.

Fifth: Test every group that claims to own the only true Bible. Ask where its distinctive readings come from. If they come from no manuscript, and if they happen to favor the group that prints them, the reader has met the *et sheger* (lying pen) of Jeremiah 8:8.

VIII-D. The Same Test Applied to This Institution

Miqdash Bethel renders scripture in its documents in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. That rendering is a translation too. It carries no authority of its own and is offered to be checked, line by line, against the Hebrew and against the translations named above. No teacher, this Institution included, stands between the reader and the written text.

Finding — The religious world is called to return, not to a publisher's Bible or a group's edition, but to the written Hebrew text of the Tanakh, read openly, checked against its oldest witnesses, and made plain in translation without addition or subtraction. Corroborated (Jeremiah 6:16; Isaiah 8:20; Deuteronomy 4:2; 27:8; 31:11–12; Nehemiah 8:8).

IX. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE TEXT AND ITS TRANSLATIONS

The table sets the three traditions against the findings of this study. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Practice today	Reads the Hebrew text in the synagogue; the Masoretic scribes preserved the consonants, vowels, and accents with notes counting letters and words. English readers choose between scholarly (JPS) and rabbinic-lens (ArtScroll) translations. The Name is not pronounced.	Reads almost entirely in translation. Protestants and, since the mid-twentieth century, many Catholics translate the Masoretic Hebrew; Orthodox churches read the Septuagint; the Council of Trent (1546) declared the Latin Vulgate <i>"authentic"</i> ; the KJV-Only movement elevates one English translation.	Holds the Qur'an to be revelation only in Arabic (Q. 12:2) and calls translations <i>"interpretation of the meanings."</i> Affirms that the Torah was sent down as <i>"guidance and light"</i> (Q. 5:44), while charging that some <i>"distort words from their places"</i> (Q. 4:46; 5:13).
Covenant strength	Preserved the Hebrew text itself for the whole world. The Judean Desert scrolls show the Temple community's consonantal text copied with about 98 percent agreement across a thousand years.	Put the scriptures into the languages of the nations. Jerome went back to the <i>"Hebrew truth"</i> for his Latin Old Testament rather than translating only from the Greek; modern translations footnote variant readings openly.	Its principle that the source language governs every translation is the principle of this study. Its insistence on the original wording guards against the drift of translation.
Covenant departure	Lets the rabbinic tradition govern translation (the Song of Songs rendered only as allegory in the Stone Edition), and withholds the Name the text writes about 6,800 times.	Treats a translation as final — the KJV for some, the Septuagint for others; removes the Name from about 6,800 places; and, in the New World Translation, inserts it 237 times where no manuscript has it.	Where the charge of distortion is taken to mean that the Torah's written text is lost, the manuscript evidence does not support it: the Ketef Hinnom scrolls and the Dead Sea Scrolls, centuries older than the Qur'an, carry the Torah substantially as it reads today. Some early

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
			commentators themselves understood the charge as distortion of meaning rather than of the written text.
Covenant witness	The Masoretic text is the fullest witness to the Hebrew; read with the scrolls, it answers the claim that the Hebrew has been lost.	Read from the Tanakh outward, the New Testament's " <i>not one jot or tittle</i> " (Matthew 5:18) is a witness for the Hebrew letters, not for any one translation.	Q. 5:44 invites the Muslim reader to the Torah itself — which means to the Hebrew text that the oldest witnesses show.

X. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE TEXT AND ITS TRANSLATIONS

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The written Tanakh in its original Hebrew and Aramaic is the covenant text. Every translation is a witness to it, never its master.	Exodus 24:4; 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:24–26; Isaiah 8:20
II	No hand may add to the word or take from it — not the scribe, the translator, the publisher, or the group that prints its own edition.	Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5–6
III	Translation and explanation are lawful when they make the text plain, and only while the text remains the thing read.	Genesis 42:23; Deuteronomy 1:5; 27:8; Ezra 4:7; Nehemiah 8:8
IV	The text can be neglected, burned, and falsified by scribes; therefore every reader is called to test what he is given.	2 Kings 22:8; Jeremiah 8:8; 23:36; 36:23, 32

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
V	The oldest Hebrew witnesses confirm that the text has been substantially preserved; where witnesses differ, the differences are weighed openly, not hidden.	Deuteronomy 19:15; Psalms 12:6–7; Isaiah 40:8
VI	The Name belongs in the text wherever the Hebrew writes it. Removing it, or inserting it where no manuscript has it, departs from the written word.	Exodus 3:15; Isaiah 42:8; Psalms 83:18; Deuteronomy 4:2
VII	The religious world returns not to a publisher's Bible but to the ancient paths: the written text, read openly before all the people.	Jeremiah 6:16; Deuteronomy 31:11–12; Zephaniah 3:9

XI. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question of translations there is usually a person who has been told that his Bible is corrupt and that only one group's edition can save him — or a person who simply wants to know which book to trust. The Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: stop asking which English Bible is best, and start asking what the Hebrew says. Every translation on the wall is someone's reading of the same older text. *"Ask for the ancient paths"* (Jeremiah 6:16).

Second: read with two or three witnesses. Keep a literal translation beside a readable one, and let the Hebrew settle what they disagree on (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Third: honor the Name where the text writes it. *"This is My name forever"* (Exodus 3:15). A capitalized **"LORD"** is a signpost telling you **Yahweh** stands in the Hebrew.

Fourth: beware any group that owns the only true Bible. When a group's readings exist in no manuscript and favor its own leaders, the prophet has already named it: *"the lying pen of the scribes"* (Jeremiah 8:8).

Fifth: read it aloud in your own household. The covenant was never meant to be locked in a scholar's room or a publisher's catalog. *"Assemble the people — men, women, and little ones, and the stranger within your gates — that they may hear and learn"* (Deuteronomy 31:12). The ancient path is not far away. *"The word is very near you"* (Deuteronomy 30:14).

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REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
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"Thus says Yahweh: Stand by the ways and see, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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