

Manuscript Hebrew Sefer Torah Scroll

Call number **SCMRB.21.36**

Russia, circa 1870's

Manuscript in Hebrew comprising the Torah, or Pentateuch -- the Five Books of Moses *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy* - the first five books of the Jewish Bible (Tanakh).) Follows the Ashkenazi Ktav Ari Z"al script. Typical Ashkenazi writing of the late 19th and 20th century. The Torah Scroll hand written on genuine calf parchment with no coating of any kind. (Not Mashuach). The Torah is complete with no missing sections hand written by one scribe and not put together from several scrolls. 1 replacement sheets from a later same time. The parchment is in good condition and all section sewn with natural animal string called "Giddin" which is made from the leg sinews of a kosher animal.

The Scroll is written on 57 calf skins (Panels) measuring Total Length approx. 104 feet. The scroll is approx. 25 inches in height and the text height is approx. 21 inches. 52 Lines per column and consist of 192 columns

Creasing and wear in many areas with major cracking, popping and flacking of ink, when rolled the ink flakes off and leaves only an impression of the letter or word.. Occasional erasures with corrected text written over. Text in minor places are not readable.

Catalog #: SCMRB.21.36
Date & Provenance: First half of 19th c. Germany(?)
Type: Ashkenaz
Skin: klaph
Sewing style: sinew, short running stitch, unidirectional fold
Ink type: black iron sulphate

Measurements

Total length: 104 ft 2 1/8 in (3175.32 cm)
Height (avg.): 25 in (63.5 cm)
Text Height (avg): 21 in (53.3 cm)
Line Height (avg): 3/8 in (0.95 cm)
Lines per column: 52
Letters per line (avg): 36
Total # of Panels: 57
Total # of Columns: 192

Paleography

Tagin: most are beaded; consecutive crowning of tagin; 3 tagin on sha'atnez gatz letters, single taga on chet; rolled peh; 3-tagin peh, 6-tagin peh, curled qoph, 2-tagin lamed

Script type: Beis Yosef with Eastern (Arizal) influence
Beis Yosef tsade, lamed; Old Beis Yosef peh; but flat-bottom shin, Arizal chet (waw-zayin)

Characteristics:

Spacing: 4 blank lines between books, Masoretic paragraphing
22/35 enlarged letters; 11/13 suspended letters; 1/2 modified nuns; 10/10 puncta passages; 14/14 specially-formatted passages + 3 extra

Traditional letters:

Colophons: none

Sofer marks: pencil circles in margins between columns

Corrections: several cutout corrections, a few erasure corrections

Repairs:

Overall Condition

Text: very good for age: moderate ink flaking, minor oxidation (browning)
Seams:
Parchment: no replacement panels, some cutout corrections with newer klaph

Notes: a variety of Sefer Tagin letters; dilated aleph, teyt, khaph, mem, mem-sophit, samekh, ayin, peh, qoph, shin; extra passages arranged with special formatting

Analysis done by: BT



God's Ancient Library

Manuscript Research Group

**Suggested Handling Procedures and
Basic Guidelines for the Care of Your Torah**

Torah Talking Points

Scott Carroll, Ph.D., Executive Director 616-405-3710 | HeyDoc@gmail.com

Denise Carroll, General Manager 616-405-8886 | DeniseCarroll@gmail.com

Grant Morgan, Business Manager 616-780-6647 | Grant.E.Morgan@gmail.com

Chelsea Ferwerda, Curator 734-276-8717 | Chelsea.Ferwerda@yahoo.com

Brian Tice, Senior Researcher 616-570-8924 | rebbe.tice@gmail.com

20 TORAH TALKING POINTS

1. Torah is the first 5 books of the Bible in scroll format (it also known as the Pentateuch when it's in book form).
2. The words of every Torah are identical because they are copied exactly.
3. There are 304,805 letters and 5,845 verses found in each Torah.
4. A 4-line break signals the end of one book and the beginning of the next book.
5. Notice the elongated letters used to "justify" the margins.
6. Spaces within the lines or between them indicates daily readings.
7. Hebrews is written from right to left.
8. English is written on top of the lines; Hebrews is written *under* the lines, so the letters appear to hang from them. For English readers, this can give the appearance that the document is upside down!
9. There are no vowels, punctuation marks, chapters or verses in a Torah.
10. There are only slight spaces between the words.
11. None of the Hebrew letters are permitted to touch.
12. A Torah typically takes around 1-year to write.
13. A Torah is usually written on calf skin but, occasionally, on deer skin or even goat. In all instances, however, the animal must be kosher.
14. Each skin is specially treated and stretched to make it thin enough to be used for writing and, once completed, rolling it closed.
15. Each sheet of parchment is then scored with an implement called a sargel that is essentially a wooden dowel with a thorn affixed on the end.
16. Ink is made from organic materials (tar, oil, gall nut juice, honey, sap, etc).
17. Thread that holds each skin together is called sinew or gidin and is made from the gut of a kosher animal. After the Torah is completely written, it is sewn together.
18. Any mistake made while writing a Torah is quickly corrected employing a variety of methods:
 - a. If found while the ink is still wet, it can be carefully wiped away with a clean rag.
 - b. If found after-the-fact, a sharp implement might be utilized to gently scrape away the mistake.
 - c. Occasionally, a correction is made by cutting away the problem area and inserting a piece of vellum from the back side of the scroll and writing the correction on top of the new piece of vellum.
19. If a complete skin contains numerous corrections, it may be necessary to replace the entire panel, probably taken from another Torah that is no longer in use.
20. Even today, a Torah is written by a scribe (aka a *sofer*) using a goose or turkey feather because they are kosher birds and their quills are very hard.

SUGGESTED HANDLING PROCEDURES and BASIC GUIDELINES for the CARE of YOUR TORAH

We are pleased to provide you with some basic guidelines related to the care and treatment of your Torah scroll. With gentle, respectful care, the task of maintaining this extraordinary gift should be straightforward.

Perhaps the most important part of owning a *pasul* (no longer kosher) sefer Torah is to treat it as the Jews would treat a kosher Torah. This means handling it carefully, with reverence and thoughtfulness. If showcasing the Torah in a public forum, even in a classroom setting, please be cognizant that an audience member may take offense to a non-Jew handling it. In addition, if pictures are posted to social media of the scroll being touched or handled, recipients of those images will not be aware of its *pasul* status. Therefore, as a general rule, we discourage such pictures. On the other hand, however, pictures of the Torah thoughtfully being presented on a table or being handed to someone are probably acceptable. Know your audience and recall Emily Post's famous saying that, "Manners are a sensitive awareness to the feelings of others."

If opening the Torah on a table, make sure that the surface is clean and dry. You might also consider laying down a clean tablecloth before placing the Torah on a table.

Just as the scribe that penned this scroll had to approach his work with a holy attitude, it would be wise to consider his method! Whenever one touches, holds, or works with the Torah, best practices include having clean hands that are free of lotions or perfumes.

At this point, you may be asking yourself, "What about wearing gloves?" As a general rule, our organization does *not* wear gloves for the following reasons:

- Since the Torah is written on animal skin, the natural oils from the hands are actually beneficial to its longevity.
- Depending on the process used in the preparation of the skins, the Torah may be soft like suede or quite stiff. Gloves frequently catch or snag on the seams and at the tops and bottoms of each skin, particularly those of the stiffer variety.
- The Torah is fairly heavy, and one is more prone to it slipping from gloved hands than from bare hands.

The leading museums, universities, and related organizations around the world differ on this question. Ultimately, the decision of whether gloves are worn rests with the special collections librarian or the guidelines that are in place at your institution.

When handling the Torah, try to avoid touching the ink. One of the major reasons a Torah is withdrawn from use in a liturgical service is deterioration of the ink. It can easily fade, turn brown, or flake off, possibly changing the meaning of a word or phrase. Although a Torah can be "re-inked," it is a difficult, expensive, tedious, and time-consuming process. Consider using a *yad* (Torah pointer) or holding the scroll only at the seams or between columns.

Never use ink near the Torah. One stray drop or smudge can permanently damage your beautiful Torah. Use only lead pencils around your scroll.

Avoid eating or drinking anywhere near the Torah. While this may sound like common sense, it is easy to become lax and place a bottle of water or cup of coffee at your work station while studying. **DON'T DO IT!** We have seen empty glasses that had condensation on them *drip* onto the Torah and cause the ink to immediately **S P R E A D**, forever damaging the scroll. Best to avoid the situation altogether. This holds true for food as well since even the odor of foods can cling to a scroll.

Rolling a scroll can be quite tricky. Whatever process was used to treat the hides in your scroll will determine the level of difficulty.

- Scroll rolling is typically a two-person process.
- Start the rolling at one end, keeping it tight.
- Try your best to keep the top and bottom even. This may necessitate each person standing the scroll upright and gently pushing the scroll from the top onto the hard surface of the table.
- You may find it necessary to pull the scroll from the inside of the roll (think of opening a telescope), and as gently as possible twisting it to tighten. Don't over-tighten since that runs the risk of damaging the ink and the seams.
- For longer storage, it is recommended that the scroll be wound into one roll.
- Once you've rolled the scroll closed, secure it with the included stretch band.
- If using the scroll each day, it is acceptable to roll it from both ends. In this instance, the stretch band will not work to hold it closed. Consider a neutral, stretchy material to secure it but *never tighten this more than necessary*. Tying it too tightly can damage the scroll.

Every new Torah is sewn with sinew from a kosher animal. Because the cost of such a product is quite expensive, your Torah has been conserved with artificial sinew or heavy thread. Should any seams need mending in the future, you may wish to ship the Torah to our offices in Michigan where we can make the necessary repairs. Depending on the extent of the work, the anticipated costs should be very reasonable.

We are often asked about the ideal climate in which a Torah should be housed. The most important considerations are:

Stable temperatures – ideally 65 - 73°

Humidity – ideally 35 - 55%

For both temperature and humidity, the lower end of the numbers above is best. As you may know, because Torahs are written on vellum, they are quite resilient and tolerate environmental changes fairly well.

The desire of your donors, Ken and Barbara Larson, is that you will use your Torah on a regular basis. Because that will most likely involve handling it, we caution you to use extra care at the sewn seams. These points in the scroll seem to be the most vulnerable to stress when moving it from place to place.

If your institution intends to display the Torah, we recommend rolling it to different passages, perhaps on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. It is good for the Torah to be opened regularly and rolled to different passages. This helps maintain the supple nature of the membrane, as well as reduce the potential of damage to a certain area from extended exposure to light.

Speaking of light, if you intend to display the Torah, please keep in mind the damaging effects of sunlight. It is certainly best to have it in a place that is out of direct sunlight but still in a place where it can be easily seen and appreciated.

If your Torah will be stored, please consider opening the plastic bag it came in as well as the fabric bag, if one was included. This will enable it to "breathe" when it is in storage. The plastic bag is to keep the scroll from water damage when moving it from building to building or shipping it. Water is an enemy of your scroll!

Should you think of additional questions regarding the care and handling of your Torah, please do not hesitate to contact us.

About Dr. Scott Carroll

Dr. Scott Carroll holds an M.A. in Church History from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a Ph.D. in Ancient Studies from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. His specialty is the history of the Bible and ancient languages, particularly those found in classical and biblical works.

Dr. Carroll has taught at a number of institutions over his 30-year career. He currently holds a Distinguished Academic Post at Jos University in Nigeria and his most recent academic affiliation in the US was at Baylor University. He has also taught for the past 8 years for Asian Biblical Theological Seminary.

Over the last 25 years, Dr. Carroll has had the privilege of organizing the two largest privately-held collections of biblically-related materials in the world, including the core of the Green Collection which is the foundation for the Museum of the Bible slated to open in November in Washington, D.C.

In addition, he has established research and ministry initiatives around the world as well as exhibitions seen by tens of thousands annually. He organized and directed an exhibition in conjunction with the Vatican Library that was held in St. Peter's Square. Most recently, he created the INSPIRED Exhibit hosted at historic St. Andrew's Church in Kowloon, Hong Kong where it was on display during Lent earlier this year. The next stop for INSPIRED Exhibit is Russia, where it will be displayed near Red Square, as well as St. Petersburg and Minsk, Belarus.

Dr. Carroll directs a non-profit organization called Manuscript Research Group (MRG). MRG works with an international team of scholars analyzing Hebrew manuscripts and maintaining an extensive database that captures a wide-range of features. In this capacity, Dr. Carroll has worked with thousands of scrolls. MRG has thoroughly analyzed Torahs in the Larsons' collection providing detailed analyses of each one including basic information about its date and provenance as well as its unique features. Dr. Carroll and MRG enthusiastically support the Larsons' work with institutions receiving a Torah and help to educate and mentor the organizations in the proper use and care of the Torah. MRG also directs an annual collaborative research project on a select scroll of significance open to participating institutions.

He and his wife, Denise, have been married for 39 years and travel together extensively for their business as well as for the work of the ministry. They have four adult children and a growing number of grandchildren.

The Pritchett family (the developers and owners of Logos Bible Software and Faithlife Ministries) has donated along with another family, over 130 historic Torahs on Christian campuses in the US and abroad. They have been doing this for 6 years.

Manuscript Research Group
16893 Buchanan St
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
616-405-3710
heydoc@gmail.com

From Dr. Scott Carroll

I direct a research center that works with items in private collections and helps to direct these donations. We provide a detailed analysis of the scrolls and thoroughly conserve them for use. We also provide support to recipients, commonly an online orientation seminar for pertinent staff and faculty.

The scrolls being donated this year are between 150 and 300 years old and are in spectacular condition. Their pre-appraised values range in excess of \$100,000. It is a very generous gift.

The gift comes without any expectations or strings attached. They simply hope that it might be used in and out of the classroom to celebrate God's Word and to give a deeper appreciation for it.

I have copied below a summary basic brief description of a Torah that will be gifted along with a description of its provenance, standards of care and use and a few pictures from related scrolls. This a sample to give you an idea for the sort of scroll being offered by the Pritchetts.

Provenance or Chain of Ownership

The Torah is owned by Dan Pritchett from Bellingham, WA of Faithlife Corporation and Logos Bible Software. The scroll was acquired by Dan Pritchett in 2018 from the Ben David Collection, the largest private collection of scrolls in the world, located in Jerusalem. The Ben David Collection works in close consultation with staff from the National Library in Israel and with the Israel Antiquities Authority. According to Israeli law, any scroll 300 years or younger can be freely exported. Scrolls older than 300 years require permission by the Israel Antiquities Authority. The scrolls were exported in full compliance with Israeli and international law governing the sale and export of such items and is the rightful property of Dan Pritchett.

The scroll is pasul (meaning not fit for liturgical use). This is a very important term. The scroll doubtlessly survived because it was not in kosher use and had been hidden away in a storage place called a genizah. When Israel became a nation, immigrants abandoned their synagogues and arrived in Israel with manuscripts from their former genizahs. Manuscripts were sold to the government, large synagogues and collectors to provide start-up capital for the immigrants. This is how these Torahs found their way to collections in Israel. This scroll was acquired by the Ben David Collection in Jerusalem in 2010.

Standards of Care and Use

My organization has had the privilege to work with over ten thousand Torahs and many more related manuscripts. These opportunities have allowed us to refine skills on how to care for and use Torahs. As I had mentioned, they are an extremely stable and resilient manuscript. Most have survived very difficult times. The most important thing is to keep the scroll in a place where the temperature and humidity is relatively stable. It does not require any special precautions.

Many institutions have built simple display cases. Others have kept the scroll in the archives. Several have built more elaborate viewing stations. There are no directed expectations by the donor. If you had the proper place, I think you might want to display the Torah but in such a way that you have access to periodically scroll to different passages and to remove it and use it with students.