



## The Shapira Scroll was an Authentic Dead Sea Scroll

Shlomo Guil

To cite this article: Shlomo Guil (2017) The Shapira Scroll was an Authentic Dead Sea Scroll, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 149:1, 6-27, DOI: [10.1080/00310328.2016.1185895](https://doi.org/10.1080/00310328.2016.1185895)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00310328.2016.1185895>



Published online: 15 Mar 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 117



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# THE SHAPIRA SCROLL WAS AN AUTHENTIC DEAD SEA SCROLL

SHLOMO GUIL

“The tendency of showing great scholarship by detecting a forgery is rather great in our age”

Wilhelm Shapira in a letter addressed to Edward Augustus Bond, principal librarian of the British Museum, 28 of August 1883.

*Wilhelm Shapira astonished the European academic world in 1883 by offering for sale fifteen or sixteen leather fragments of an ancient Hebrew scroll containing parts of Deuteronomy, but in a version that deviated from the Masorah. The script of the scroll, known to us today as paleo-Hebrew, is an archaism of the pre-exilic Hebrew script. The sale offer was made to the British Museum and the asking price was one million British pounds. The British museum was willing to consider the offer and appointed Christian David Ginsburg to ascertain the authenticity of the scroll.*

*Ginsburg analyzed the fragments of the Shapira scroll for almost three weeks but it was Charles Clermont-Ganneau, the renowned French scholar, who publicly announced on 21 August 1883 that the scroll is a forgery. On the following day, Ginsburg wrote to Bond, the director of the British Museum, that the manuscript is in fact a forgery.*

*This article attempts to demonstrate that the Shapira scroll was an authentic manuscript by presenting circumstantial evidence in favour of the scroll. The evidence focuses upon physical characteristics of the scroll as well as upon paleographic aspects.*

*Keywords: Shapira fragments, Dead Sea Scrolls, paleo-Hebrew, forgeries, British Museum, Palestine Exploration Fund*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Wilhelm Shapira committed suicide in hotel Willemsburg in Rotterdam (Sabo 2014), located at number 6 De Boompjes, an elegant street stretching along the Rotterdam wharf of the Maas river. The date was 9 March 1884. Wilhelm (Moses) Shapira, a converted Jew, was a successful antique dealer. His shop, located at present day 74–76–78 Christian street in the old city of Jerusalem (Guil 2012), served as a base for his international transactions with the Berlin museum, the British museum as well as private collectors. His business grew at a rapid pace. The discovery of the Mesha Stele in 1868 triggered significant interest in Moabite artefacts. Shapira consequently started to offer, together with his partner Selim el-Qari, large amounts of such items in order to keep up with growing demand. These items were later proved to be forgeries. Many scholars, particularly German scholars, were led to believe that these items were authentic despite the fact that the supposedly ancient Moabite text inscribed on these terracottas was totally illegible and meaningless.

In 1883 Shapira offered to the British Museum fifteen leather fragments on which was written text in an ancient Hebrew script. These leather strips of Deuteronomy included the

Email: shlomoguill@yahoo.com

Ten Commandments in a version that differs from that of the Masorah. The asking price was one million British pounds.

Finally it was Ch. Clermont-Ganneau, the well-known archaeologist, who declared the scroll to be a forgery. Clermont-Ganneau was also the scholar who in 1874 identified Shapira's Moabite terracottas as forgeries. Subsequently, C. Ginsburg of the British museum came to the same conclusion regarding the authenticity of these leather fragments.

For further details of the Shapira Affair and the Shapira scroll see [Allegro \(1965\)](#), [Reiner \(1995\)](#) and [Shanks \(2002\)](#).

## 2. THE FORGERIES OF THE MOABITE POTTERIES AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF GERMAN SCHOLARS

[Dupont-Sommer \(1974\)](#) provides a description of events that led to the declaration that the Shapira Moabite terracottas were forgeries: Soon after the discovery of the Mesha stele in 1868, so called Moabite terracottas started to appear in the market. In 1872 Clermont-Ganneau examined in the London premises of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) some drawings, made in Jerusalem, of clay vases, figurines and inscribed tablets. He was told that the originals belonged to a certain Moses Shapira and that the Berlin Museum was considering a purchase of these items. The drawings were made by Claude Conder and Tyrwhitt Drake on behalf of the PEF who were convinced that the items were authentic. Clermont-Ganneau suspected that they were forgeries. Based upon a favourable report by Professor Konstantin Schlottmann and other German scholars, the Prussian government decided to purchase not less than one thousand seven hundred 'Moabite' antiquities which were offered by Shapira. Clermont-Ganneau travelled to Jerusalem in 1873 in order to investigate the matter. He suspected that Selim el-Qari, who was the partner of Shapira, was behind the forgery. Clermont-Ganneau was familiar with Selim el-Qari as he was the one who assisted him when he tried to obtain the Mesha stele. After some research, Clermont-Ganneau succeeded in locating the workshop of the potter who produced the Moabite figurines for Selim el-Qari. Clermont-Ganneau presented a report of his findings to a committee of the PEF on 29 December 1873 ([Clermont-Ganneau 1874](#)), which was also published in the *Athenaeum* on 24 January 1874. But the matter could not stop there. Professor Schlottmann was not willing to admit his mistake. He even tried to demonstrate the falsity of the testimony gathered by Clermont-Ganneau. Only in 1876 did the German scholars Emil Friedrich Kautzsch and Albert Socin ([Socin and Kautzsch 1876](#)) publish a book in which they concurred with the conclusion of Clermont-Ganneau. They closed their detailed analysis of the authenticity of the Moabite figurines by stating 'the modern forger was limited to very inexpensive awkward shaping of the naked body, and wisely refrained from entering a testing ground on which he would face great difficulties' (Translation from German, 190).

Shapira defended himself by putting the blame on his partner Selim el-Qari. Shapira was actually never directly accused of having taken part in the production of the forgeries. Neither Clermont-Ganneau nor Schlottmann claimed that Shapira was aware that the items which he sold were in fact works of forgery. This enabled Shapira to continue his business specializing mostly in trade of Hebrew manuscripts. For further details concerning the involvement of Clermont-Ganneau in shedding light upon the Moabite forgeries see [Clermont-Ganneau \(1885, 121–83\)](#).

It is quite interesting to follow the analysis of Schlottmann in what concerns the Shapira Moabite potteries, which he considered perfectly authentic. Fig. 1 represents one of the items analysed by him ([Schlottmann 1872](#)). Schlottmann produced a transliteration of the inscription which appeared on this figurine to read as follows: עאלא דמנא שתו ונאל שאלו אמחרו חדמתר. He then explained the meaning of this text.

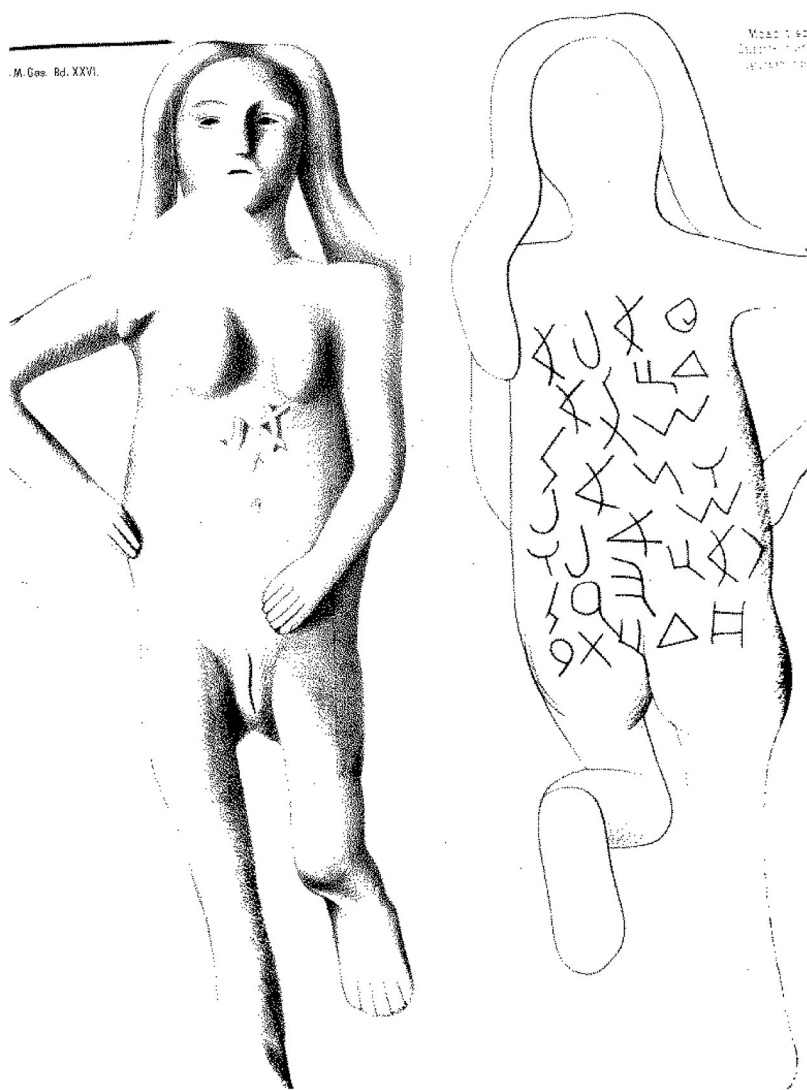


Fig. 1. A forged Moabite statuette offered by Shapira and analyzed by Schlottmann.

We shall end the discussion to this sad ordeal of Professor Schlottmann with a final note presented by Aloys Sprenger (PEQ 1876, 103): “On Thursday, 16 March 1876, on the occasion of the Lower House of the Prussian Diet resuming consideration of the estimates of the Education Department, attention was drawn to the inefficient administration of the Royal museums, and as an illustration, to the acquisition of the so called Moabite antiquities... The administration of the museums is to be completely reorganized, and, we suppose, the collection destroyed.”

## 3. THE SHAPIRA SCROLL

*“I am going to surprise you with a notice and a short description of a curious manuscript written in old Hebrew or Phoenician letters upon small strips of embalmed leather and seems to be a short unorthodoxical book of the last speech of Moses in the plain of Moab ... In July 1878 I met several Bedouins in the house of the well-known Sheque Mahmud el Arakat, we came of course to speak of old inscriptions. One Bedouin asserted that the antique brings blessedness to the place where it lays. And begins to tell a history to about the following effect. Several years ago some Arabs had occasion to flee from their enemies & hid themselves in caves high up in a rock facing the Moujib (the neues Arnon) they discovered there several bundles of very old rugs. Thinking they may contain gold they peeled away a good deal of Cotton or Linen & found only some black charms & threw them away; but one of them took them up & and since having the charms in his tent, he became a wealthy man having sheeps etc”.*

Those were the exact words of Wilhelm Shapira in a letter in which he described the finding of a manuscript. The letter was sent from Jerusalem, on 9 May 1883, addressed to Professor Hermann Strack of Berlin.

The Shapira scroll has been declared, in the late 19th century, to be a forgery. Given that the scroll disappeared in the beginning of the 20th century we are unable to directly prove the contrary. The only possible analysis can relate to epigraphic aspects of the text based upon the transcription prepared by Ginsburg and the transliteration prepared by Guthe. An indirect paleographic analysis is possible only by means of cross-reference between the transcription of Ginsburg and the paleo-Hebrew alphabetic table presented by Guthe, based on the assumption that these works can be considered to be sufficiently reliable. This implies that the only additional option is to bring forward some circumstantial evidence pertaining to the known external characteristics of the Shapira scroll.

So where is the Shapira scroll now? It has long been known that last to hold the Shapira fragments was Qauritch, a London antiquarian book dealer. Alan Crown (1970) suggested that the manuscript was acquired subsequently by Sir Charles Nicholson and perhaps destroyed in a fire in Nicholson's home near London in 1899. Crown could not substantiate his proposal but this narrative has been generally accepted ever since its publication and all hope to somehow retrieve the scroll was abandoned. Only very recently did Sabo (2014) present sufficient proof, having been assisted by Matthew Hamilton, a librarian residing in Sydney, Australia, that the buyer was in fact medical Dr. Philip Brookes Mason of Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, who bought the manuscript in 1888 or beginning of 1889. Mason exhibited the Scroll before the Burton-on-Trent Natural History and Archaeological Society on 8 March 1889. The whereabouts of the Shapira scroll after 1889 is unknown.

## 4. THE INITIAL PROCLAMATIONS OF FORGERY

Shapira wrote, in the above-mentioned letter addressed to Hermann Strack, that he prepared transcriptions of most of the fragments of his manuscript and sent them on September 1878 to Professor Schlottmann of Berlin. Schlottmann angrily replied on 7 October 1878 “How dare (you) to call this forgery the Old Test(ament) Could I suppose even for a moment that it is older than our unquestionable genuine Ten Commandments?” Shavit (1984, 186) presented a facsimile of the letter sent by Schlottmann to Shapira.

It is quite surprising that Shapira elected to send the fragments of his scroll first to Schlottmann. Only two years had passed since Schlottmann was put to public shame by having wrongly identified the Shapira Moabite terracottas as authentic antiquities. Shapira should have expected such a harsh reply from Schlottmann, who surely was hurt and unwilling to be involved in a new scandal.

Guthe was the first scholar to openly declare that the Shapira scroll is a forgery. He did not identify any external faults, unrelated to the text, which could possibly raise suspicion but rather focused his attention on epigraphic issues which pointed, according to his view, to errors, inconsistencies and unacceptable deviations from the Masorah (Guthe 1883, 68–93). Interestingly enough, as we shall see further on, Guthe did not come to a conclusion that the paleography of the fragments points to a forgery. Despite his negative conclusion he did take the trouble to prepare transliterations of the fragments and to compare them with the canonic biblical text. His final decision was (93) “The examination of the text has led to the understanding that the manuscript is forgery, which cannot be called clumsy despite all the mistakes”.

Next in line to consider the authenticity of the Shapira scroll was a special committee of German experts. An article appeared in *The Times* on 28 August 1883 concerning a German committee which was set up in July 1883 to study the authenticity of the Shapira scroll. The committee was set up in Berlin by Richard Lepsius, the keeper of the Royal Library. It included Prof. August Dillman, Prof. Eduard Sachau, Prof. Adolf Ermann and Dr. Moritz Steinschneider. The committee, which met on 10 July 1883, “spent exactly one hour and a half in a close and critical investigation into the character of the goatskin wares. At the end of the sitting they unanimously pronounced the alleged codex to be a clever and impudent forgery”.

The German committee consisted of senior scholars. Even though the members of this committee were not directly involved in the Moabite potteries farce, they surely must have been aware of the positive published analysis of Schlottmann and the decision of the Prussian government to purchase from Shapira 1700 Moabite items. None of these scholars criticised the purchase of these forgeries nor did they disagree with Schlottmann. Nevertheless, it took less than two hours for this committee to identify the Shapira scroll as a forgery. The rationale behind this unanimous decision was never published.

The decisive declaration in the 19th century that the Shapira scroll is a forgery is to be attributed first and foremost to Ch. Clermont-Ganneau, the French scholar who, several years earlier, correctly identified Shapira’s Moabite terracottas as forgeries. To be more specific, the coup de grace was primarily the letter which Clermont-Ganneau wrote to *The Times* on 21 August 1883 while Ginsburg was still analyzing the fragments. The letter was quite long and we shall therefore relate only to the important issues raised in this letter.

1. Clermont-Ganneau wrote “I only wished to concern myself with the external and material state of the fragments ... I was ready to bind myself to refrain from examining the text, properly so called, and from publishing anything whatsoever on the contents of the fragments.” The judgment of Clermont-Ganneau was therefore based solely upon the physical aspects of the fragments of the scroll. He refrained from analyzing the epigraphic aspects.
2. Clermont-Ganneau requested Bond, the principal librarian (director) of the British Museum, to submit to him the fragments but Bond replied that Shapira expressly refused his consent. Clermont-Ganneau never had the opportunity to inspect the scroll at close range. This did not stop him from passing judgment on the scroll. Clermont-Ganneau described how got a quick glance on the scroll: “I set to work with the meagre means of information which were at my disposal. (1). The hasty inspection of two or three pieces which M. Ginsburg had allowed me to handle for a few minutes on my first visit; (2). The examination of two fragments exposed to public view in a glass case in the manuscript department of the British Museum—a case very ill-lighted and difficult of approach, owing to the crowd of the curious pressing round these venerable relics.”

3. Clermont-Ganneau announced his conclusions: (A). "The fragments are the work of a modern forger. ... He took one of those large synagogue rolls of leather containing the Pentateuch ... The forger then cut off the lower edge of this roll ... He obtained in this way some narrow strips of leather with an appearance of comparative antiquity, which was still further heightened by the use of the proper chemical agents. On these strips of leather he wrote with ink, making use of the alphabet of the Moabite stone." (B). "The lines of the Moabitish writing are arranged in the shape of columns, separated by vertical creases in the leather—that is to say, by creases perpendicular to the general direction of the writing. On the right and left of each of these folds I had noticed two vertical straight lines, drawn with a hard point, as guides for the vertical margins, starting from the upper edge of the strip, and extending to the lower edge, which they do not always reach. The Moabitish forger had not paid much attention to these extremely fine lines, which have scratched the leather in an almost invisible but indelible manner; and the lines of Moabitish characters, instead of being confined by this drawing, have no relation to it. Sometimes they pass over the lines, sometimes they rest on the inner sides of them, both at their beginning and ending."

In summary, Clermont-Ganneau pronounced judgment declaring that the scroll is a modern forgery because the Shapira scroll consists of narrow leather strips which according to him can be explained as having been cut off from the lower edge of old Synagogue scrolls, because the script is identical to that of the Mesha stele and because the scroll contains hard point vertical ruling which were disregarded by the scribe. These conclusions were reached with hardly inspecting the manuscript.

On 22 August 1883, one day after the publication of the report by Clermont-Ganneau, Ginsburg wrote to Bond informing him of his conclusion in respect of the Shapira scroll. The letter was later published in *The Times* on August 27 and in the *PEF Quarterly Statement*, October 1883, pages 207–9. Ginsburg opened his letter to Bond by stating "The manuscript of Deuteronomy which Mr. Shapira submitted to us for examination is a forgery."

Ginsburg then explains the reasons for his rejection of the Shapira manuscript:

"(I). The narrow slips of leather on which it is written are cut off from the margin of synagogue scrolls".

"(II). The columns of these scrolls are bounded on the right and left by vertical lines drawn with a hard point. These lines not only extend from the top to the bottom of the written portion, but reach to the very end of the leather, right across the upper and lower margins. Now, the Shapira fragments exhibit these lines with the dry point, but not as boundaries to the margin, for the writing on them extends on each side beyond the lines, thus confirming the theory that they originally formed the ruled margins of legally written scrolls. What is still more remarkable is the fact that the uninscribed slip already mentioned has also these guiding lines, and that they correspond to the inscribed Shapira fragments".

"(III). Many of the Shapira slips are only ragged at the bottom, but straight at the top, thus plainly showing that they have been comparatively recently cut off from the scrolls, since they have not had time to become ragged at the top".

"(IV). Some of the slips show plainly that they have been covered by a frame which enclosed the writing, and that this frame was filled with chemical agents. The result of this is to be seen in the fact that while the inscribed part has thereby been rendered perfectly black and shiny, the part of the leather covered by the frame is of a different and fresher color, and exhibits the shape of the frame." He then adds, "There were no less than four or five different persons engaged in the production of the forgery, and that the compiler of the Hebrew text was a Polish, Russian, or German Jew.". Ginsburg then raises some epigraphic issues to which he refers as "internal evidence" and stipulates that the forger "imitated

closely the archaic writing of the inscription on the Moabite Stone". Ginsburg ends his report by explaining why according to him there were four or five persons involved in the forgery. "I conclude that there were two scribes employed in copying them. These, with the compiler of the Hebrew text and the chemist who manipulated the slips, account for my remark that there were four or five persons engaged in the forgery."

It seems that Ginsburg wrote his report under extreme pressure of time and maybe against his will. These issues were never raised by him prior to the publication of the report and some of them were never repeated afterwards.

Clermont-Ganneau was quite annoyed by Ginsburg's report which he claimed was an exact repeat of his conclusions but which was not sufficiently appreciated by the local press (Clermont-Ganneau 1885, 237). In his words "Les arguments qui dans ma bouche étaient sans valeur deviennent tout d'un coup sans réplique dans cette bouche plus autorisée."

The fact that Ginsburg condemned the Shapira scroll is quite surprising. Reiner (1995, 116) points out that four days earlier, on 18 August 1883, Ginsburg published in the *Athenaeum* a lengthy transliteration of one of Shapira's fragments, in which he "treats the manuscript as potentially legitimate". In fact Ginsburg ends his presentation in the article by stating "I have only to remark" that the writing on the scrolls is continuous, that the points after certain sentences are a kind of versicular division and that when a word could not be got into the line it is divided." In this presentation by Ginsburg there does not appear any doubt in respect of the authenticity of the scroll. Obviously something drastic occurred between the 18 and 22 of August 1883. It would be logical to conclude that the declaration made by Clermont-Ganneau on 21 of August was the traumatic event that forced Ginsburg to change his mind or to publish a condemnation against his will.

Allegro (1965, 34) indicates that Ginsburg published transliterations of the Shapira scroll in *The Times* on 10, 17 and 22 of August 1883. During all this time he gave no hint of any doubts.

It should be noted that on 17 August Bond, the director of the British Museum, wrote to Ginsburg, his subordinate, in reference to the Shapira scroll: "I also am of the opinion that the setting of the text in a widely separated columns between ruled lines is a later character than the period indicated by the writing" (Allegro 1965, 45). It is obvious that Bond has given Ginsburg the clearest possible hint on how he expected him to direct his judgment.

##### 5. EPIGRAPHY, ERRORS AND DEVIATIONS FROM THE MASORAH

There is no doubt that the Deuteronomy text of the Shapira scroll deviates significantly from the text of the Masorah and it does contain several mistakes. Allegro (1965, 115) claims that he would not invalidate ancient manuscripts which contain deviation from classical Hebrew. "Criticism leveled at the choice of words or grammatical constructions that do not conform to normal classical Hebrew usage seems to me to have little validity ... I myself should be inclined to count such features as points in favour of the document's authenticity than against it. A forger, after all, would have made his work far easier and more acceptable if he had simply copied a classical word or style from the Hebrew of the Bible." Allegro (1965, 118) further claims that the 19th century scholars rejected the Shapira scroll because they could not cope with those manuscripts. He writes "This basically, was the fault of the nineteenth-century pundits who condemned Shapira and his manuscript. They did not want to believe in it. It would have been inconvenient, and it would have raised questions they could not answer. It was far easier to condemn it outright.". Allegro concludes by declaring that "I cannot myself believe that it is a forgery." Silberman (1995, 37) stated that "The idea that the text of the Bible was fluid and not based directly and unerringly on God's revelation was an insult to many scholars' deepest religious faith."



In a talk given by Gabriel Barkay on 8 February 2012, on the subject of authenticity of ancient artefacts he said the following (Barkay 2012): “The existence of linguistic and paleographic anomalies is not a reason to dismiss inscriptions and to say that they are fakes or forgeries ... There are anomalies in provenanced inscriptions and every ancient inscription actually has some peculiar characteristics of its own, some of which do not fit the rules and laws of either linguistics or paleography. Every inscription is a human hands product of the human mind and as such it has its own peculiarities as we all have our own characteristics.”.

Tov (2004, 208) related to errors which appeared on the Dead Sea scrolls. He states that many of them were not recognised by the scribes or subsequent users. Tov then presents some examples of which one of them is 4QJub<sup>d</sup> in which the letter *he* was left out in ואלויכה which should have been ואלוהיכה. One could assume that had 4QJub been discovered in the 19th century it would have probably been declared to be a forgery considering that אלויכה is a typical phonetic pronunciation of the word by Yiddish-speaking Polish Jews.

Tov (2008, 119) concludes that the Dead Sea scribes made all the types of mistakes, including “omissions of small and large elements, duplication, writing of wrong words and letters and mistakes in matters of sequence”. Obviously, these mistakes did not lead to suspicions of forgery but were rather accepted as human errors integrated in authentic manuscripts. The same principle should also be applied to the Shapira scroll.

Sanderson (1986, 17) summarizes her overview on the diversity in text of the Dead Sea scrolls: “As has already become clear, the biblical scrolls in the caves at Qumran do not constitute a homogeneous group. Most are written in square script, thirteen in palaeo-Hebrew, a few are in Aramaic targumim, and six are in Greek. Of those in Hebrew, the orthography varies from very defective, i.e., with few or no *matres lectionis* to indicate vocalization, to extremely full, or *plene*. Corresponding to the diversity in language, script, and orthography is a great diversity in text ... There was certainly nothing near a consensus about the text of Scripture among the Qumran community.”

## 6. CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF AUTHENTICITY

The following analysis is focused upon the physical characteristics of the Shapira scroll and its paleography rather than on epigraphic aspects due the fact that the scholars of Shapira's time rejected his manuscript mainly on considerations of external aspects (Jefferson 1968, 399). The epigraphic aspects of the Shapira scroll have been sufficiently analyzed and defended by Mansoor (1958), by Allegro (1965), by Jefferson (1968), and not much can be added. The rejection of the Shapira scroll by the 19th century scholars was based upon several observations which may have been valid and logical at the time. However, the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, particularly the paleo-Hebrew scrolls, and current paleographic research have created a need to reconsider these observations and the conclusions which were drawn from them. This is the intent of the following analysis.

### *A. The text of the Shapira scroll was written on leather*

The great majority of the documents of Qumran were written on leather and so was the Shapira scroll. Had the Shapira scroll been a forgery it would not have been written on leather for the simple reason that scholars at that time were not aware of ancient Hebrew leather manuscripts, dating over two thousand years. A forger, in order to avoid drawing attention, would have forged text on stone, similarly to the Mesha Stele or the Siloam Inscription.

A general negative attitude towards the leather scroll was apparent from the day that the scroll came to the attention of the public. The Times published an article on 3 August 1883 (a few days after the arrival of Shapira and his scroll in London) in which it was stated that “In any

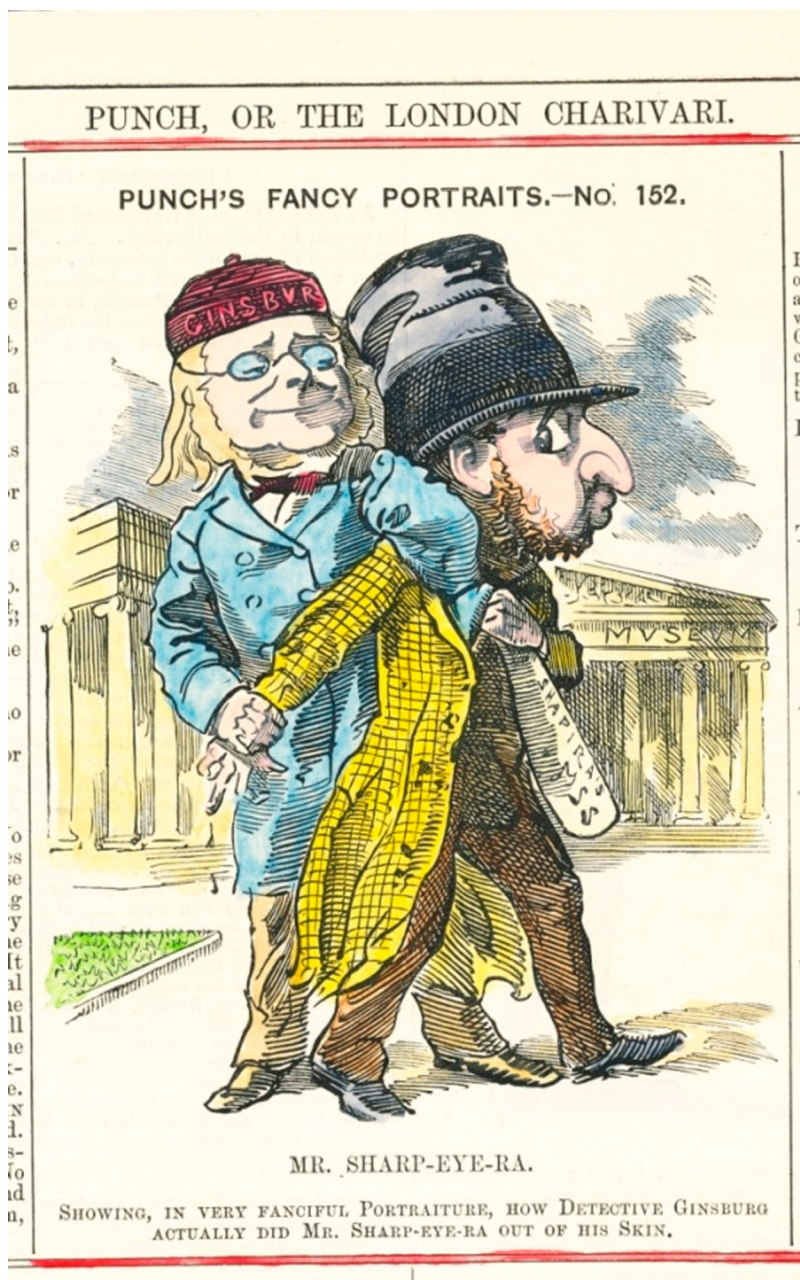


Fig. 2. Detective Ginsburg apprehends Shapira. Punch, 8 September 1883.

case the prima facie presumption must be held to be enormously against the genuineness of the fragment. Such a presumption rests on the improbability of finding manuscripts older by at least sixteen centuries than any extant manuscripts of the same text, on the comparative

ease with which such fragments can be forged, and on the powerful motives to such forgery attested by the price placed by Mr. Shapira on his property.”. Verdict was declared on the Shapira manuscript well before the verification process commenced.

Claude R. Conder wrote in *The Times* on 21 August 1883 “I do not think any archaeologist will suppose that leather, as limp and supple as that on which this manuscript is written, could exist for such a length of time in the damp atmosphere of a country which has a rainfall of 20 inches ... the difficulty of the great age which it is necessary to suppose leather to be able to attain without rotting in a damp cave is even more fatal to this clever forgery.”.

Archibald H. Sayce published a letter in *The Academy* on 13 August 1883 in which he stated that “It is really demanding too much of Western credulity to ask us to believe that in a damp climate like that of Palestine any sheepskins could have lasted for nearly 3,000 years.”.

Rabinowicz (1965, 7), a 20th-century scholar, tried to belittle the fact that the 19th century scholars raised doubts of authenticity based upon claims that leather cannot withstand time of over 2000 years. His motive was clearly an effort to minimize the significance of the claim of these scholars within the process leading to their announcements that the Shapira fragments are a work of forgery. Rabinowicz stated, “Apart from Prof. Archibald Henry Sayce none of the other scholars has said so.”. Nevertheless, he then added a footnote (7, footnote 17) saying that Claude Reignier Conder “also said so”. It should be noted that both Conder and Sayce were very well known and highly respected scholars. There is no doubt that their opinion had an influence both on their colleagues as well as on newspaper readers who were following the affair. Furthermore, Bond in a letter addressed to Ginsburg dated 17 August 1883 stated “For myself I regard the account of the first discovery of the fragments as altogether unsatisfactory and consider that the condition of the manuscript is incompatible with exposure to atmosphere for the long period indicated by the character of the writing.”. It is obvious that for Bond the unlikelihood that a leather scroll will endure over a period of two thousand years is a dominant factor in the determination of the authenticity of the scroll.

In reference to this aspect Cansdale (1997, 86) commented, “It is exactly this fact, that the manuscript was written on animal skins, which makes its genuineness more likely. As we know today, most of the scrolls discovered in the 1940s and 1950s in the Dead Sea caves were written on leather and have survived for over two thousand years.”.

Little surprise that in such an atmosphere Punch published on 8 September 1883 (after the scroll was declared to be a forgery) a caricature of Shapira being apprehended by Ginsburg in which some features leave no room for imagination. Note also Shapira’s right hand from which ink drips down from his *Digitus Medius* (Fig. 2).

Ginsburg, in his final Report on Shapira’s Manuscript of Deuteronomy commented “The compiler of the Hebrew text was a Polish, Russian, or German Jew”.

As noted above, Ginsburg observed “Many of the Shapira slips are only ragged at the bottom, but straight at the top, thus plainly showing that they have been comparatively recently cut off from the scrolls.”. This was one of his reasons for considering the Shapira scroll to be a forgery. However, there are at least two Dead Sea scrolls displaying a similar phenomenon. The first is the Deuteronomy scroll of cave 4, known as 4QDeut<sup>n</sup> (Ulrich *et al.* 1995, plates XXVIII and XXIX, White 1990, 195). The second is the Psalms scroll of cave 11, known as 11QP<sup>s</sup><sup>a</sup> where the top edge of the scroll is almost cut in a straight line while the bottom edge is completely deteriorated (Sanders 1965, plate II).

### *B. The Shapira scroll was discovered near the Dead Sea*

The circumstances described by Shapira leading to the discovery of his document in a cave near the Dead Sea are similar to those described, more than sixty years later, by the

Bedouin who found the first Dead Sea scrolls. The question arises whether Shapira could have been aware of similar reported incidents which occurred in antiquity.

Kahle (1959, 16) reports that “A letter written in the Syriac language by the Nestorian Patriarch of Seleucia Timotheus I (AD 726–819) to Sergius, Metropolitan of Elam the letter is not dated, but must have been written about A.D. 800 relates that trustworthy people had told him of a discovery of books about ten years earlier in a small cave in the rocks near Jericho.”. However, this letter was published by Oscar Braun of Würzburg, in Syriac Aramaic with a German translation, in *Oriens Christianus*, vol. i, 1901, 299–313, after Shapira’s death.

Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.16 1–3), writing in the beginning of the fourth century, repeated the report by Origen concerning the finding of a Greek scroll (one of the versions of the Psalms in Hexapla) which “was found at Jericho in a jar in the time of Antoninus the son of Severus” (Eusebius, 53).

Even if Shapira did have access to the book of Eusebius, the description in the book relates to a Greek document (not Hebrew), found at Jericho (not in a cave), in a jar (not wrapped in cotton or linen). Furthermore, the Eusebius text does not refer to a leather scroll.

The first Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in a cave, late 1946 or early 1947, by a group of Ta’amireh Bedouin. The cave was located near the Ain Feshka spring on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, close by to Khirbet Qumran. The finding included several scrolls and the cave was later named Cave I. Additional scrolls were discovered in other caves in this vicinity with subsequent numbering of the caves.

### *C. Shapira commented on apparent mistakes in the scroll*

There is no doubt that Shapira was an educated person with extensive understanding of the scriptures, Jewish studies, Hebrew scripts, etc. It is not known where he obtained his knowledge but surely an important part of it stems from his early youth when he studied and practiced the Jewish religion. Shapira left Kamenets-Podolsk (presently in Ukraine) at the age of twenty-five, on his way to Palestine. He converted to Christianity in Bucharest sometime during his voyage (Eliav 1973, 10).

One can be impressed by Shapira’s in depth analysis of certain Karaite Manuscripts which was published by The Athenaeum on 15 July and 22 July 1882.

Claude R. Conder reports on the PEF Quarterly of July 1881 that Shapira assisted in deciphering the Siloam inscription. Conder attributes to Shapira the initial understanding that the inscription stipulates that the Siloam Tunnel was cut simultaneously from both sides. He wrote (PEQ 1881, 198) “Mr. Shapira gives a different interpretation to the text, explaining it as referring to the cutting of the tunnel from the two opposite ends. This we know was really how the excavation was effected, and Mr. Shapira’s intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew idiom (as a Talmudist of 20 years education) seems to render his opinion worthy of consideration.”.

Shapira, in his letter to Bond, the principal librarian of the British Museum, dated 28 August 1883, presented an eight pages epigraphic critique in which he identified in his scroll numerous mistakes and deviations from the Masorah. Had he been the forger he would have surely avoided these mistakes. Furthermore, the scroll composed of sixteen relatively long fragments (Guthe 1883, 2). Any forger is aware that the longer his manuscript, the higher the probability that his forgery will be exposed. Had Shapira wanted to forge a Biblical manuscript, he would have probably opted for a short inscription inscribed in stone.

*D. The cloth wrapping of the Shapira scroll*

Strong objections to the Shapira scroll were raised because of Shapira's account concerning the linen wrapping of his manuscript (Mansoor 1958, 184). The Times Weekly published on 22 August 1883 an article in which it was stated "The mention of the linen seems somehow a mistake since even believers in leather can hardly be expected to assign equal staying power to mere flax."

Jefferson stated (1968, 399) that the fact that the Shapira scroll was said to have been wrapped in cloth and smeared with asphalt to preserve it is an argument for its genuineness. It is obvious, according to her, that a 19th century forger would not have known that the scrolls in Qumran Cave 1 were treated in the same way.

Cansdale noted (1997, 86) that Shapira claimed that the Deuteronomy manuscript had originally been wrapped in cloth when found by the Arabs as was the case with several Dead Sea scrolls. According to her, "This practice was not known to the archaeologists of his time, it makes Shapira's claim as to the authenticity of the manuscript more sustainable."

In fact, the discovery of Cave I in late 1946 or early 1947 by a group of Ta'amireh Bedouin near Ain Feshka, brought to light the Great Isaiah Scroll. With it were found two greenish bundles, wrapped in linen, and coated with black layer of what appeared to be pitch or wax (Ulrich and Flint 2010, 2). These were later identified as the Habakkuk Commentary or Habakkuk Peshier (1QpHab) and the Manual of Discipline, later called the Community Rule (1QS).

*E. Ruling in the Shapira scroll*

Almost all Qumran texts written on leather had ruled horizontal lines. Usually, vertical ruling was continuous, extending beyond the written text into the top and bottom margins as far as the edges of the leather. Tov (2004, 55) noted that the most frequently used system of vertical ruling was employed at both the beginning (right side) and end (left side) of the column. For some examples see 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, 4QpaleoGen-Exod<sup>1</sup> and 11QpaleoLev<sup>a</sup>. Tov also stated (55) that usually the vertical lines are more or less perpendicular to the horizontal lines, creating a rectangular shape. This rectangular shape may explain the observation of Ginsburg, in his final authenticity report, where he mentioned a "frame which enclosed the writing".

Burrows (1950, 20) reports on the Habakkuk Dead Sea scroll. "The scroll was made of two strips of soft leather sewed end to end with linen thread ... The smoothed surface was carefully ruled into lines and columns, with ruled margins between columns. The ruling was done with a sharp instrument, leaving a fine depression which is evident to touch as to sight."

Fragments of 4QpaleoGenesis-Exodus<sup>1</sup> contain vertical ruling to mark the width of the column and horizontal rulings for the lines (Skehan *et al.* 1992, 18). As to 4QpaleoExodus<sup>m</sup> (Skehan *et al.* 1992, 56) "The manuscript was ruled vertically for the right and left margins of each column, and lined horizontally across the columns and the margins between columns."

Skehan also indicates that many fragments of 4paleoDeuteronomy show that the ruling on this scroll, with a dry point, was strong to the extent that the manuscript often split along those lines (Skehan *et al.* 1992, 131). Furthermore, "Frg. 21 was cut, probably in antiquity, at the top and left along straight lines that do not coincide with the horizontal and vertical ruling ... In frg. 21 the leather has broken at the centre and bottom along both the vertical and the horizontal transcolumnar rulings."

Let us now relate to the vertical dry point rulings which, according to Clermont-Ganneu and Ginsburg, were not respected by the scribe of the Shapira scroll. Both Clermont-Ganneu and Ginsburg highlighted the fact that the text protrudes horizontally through the vertical rulings. Clermont-Ganneu also referred to vertical creases in the leather which resulted



from folding of the Shapira fragments. Ginsburg did not mention these fold creases but rather referred only to the vertical guidelines.

The British Library in London holds copies of the Shapira related documents (file number 41294). Among these documents is a drawing made by Ginsburg which includes a transcription in Paleo-Hebrew of a column in the Shapira Deuteronomy text in which the first row reads: **אנכ.אלהם.אלהכ.אשר.ההרתכ.מא**

Note that the last word (**מארצ**) is split in such a way that **מא** appears in the first line and **רצ** in the beginning of the second line (see also [Guthe 1883](#), 34). This split of words is totally in line with writing practices which appear on paleo-Hebrew scrolls of the Dead Sea. [Tov \(2004, 55\)](#) states “In texts written in the paleo-Hebrew script where words could be split between two lines, scribes were more consistent in not exceeding the left margin.”

Clermont-Ganneau, in his final report in which he declared the Shapira scroll to be a forgery (see section 4 above), differentiated between vertical folding creases and vertical ruling. Ginsburg, in his report, related only to vertical ruling, claiming that the text protrudes from these guidelines. The same claim was raised by Clermont-Ganneau. However, the Shapira file of the British Library includes a drawing by Ginsburg (Fig. 3) in which he clearly distinguishes between the fold lines and the vertical guidelines which he marked B-BB. On the upper slip he marked the folding line, which he placed directly on top of the ruling line, and he wrote on the bottom of the fold line “line of fold to correspond with BB.”. Underneath the lower slip, which is an exact copy of the upper slip, he wrote “rule in plain lines where rest of the text is to indicate dry point lines on M.S”. It is therefore obvious that Ginsburg was well aware of the existence of both fold lines and ruling lines.

Now let us observe in the drawing (Fig. 3) the vertical limits created by the fold lines and those drawn as rule lines. This is best noticed on the bottom slip of Fig. 3. The fold lines are those straight highlighted vertical lines while the vertical rule is the thinly drawn line marked as B-BB. The matching vertical rule line to appear on the left is the second vertical line from the left. It is immediately noticeable that the fold lines are

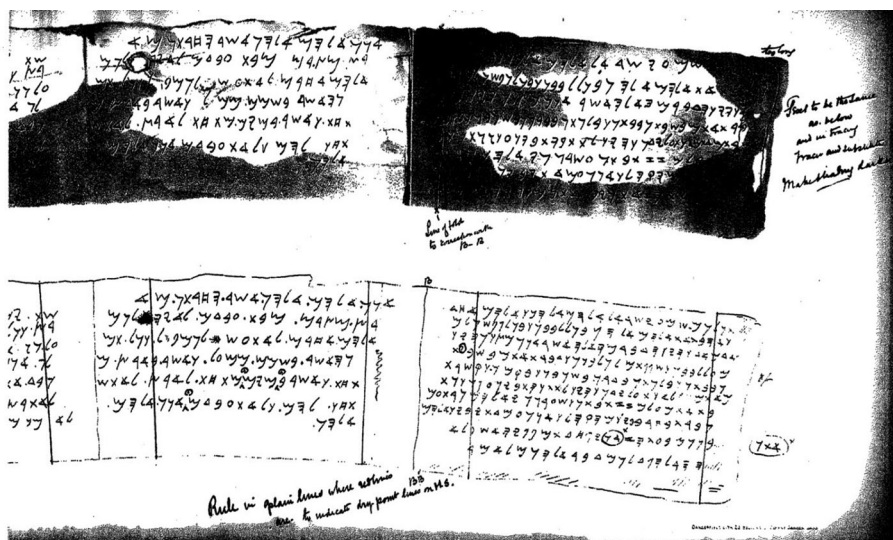


Fig. 3. Drawing of a Shapira scroll fragment by Ginsburg showing fold lines and vertical ruling.

drawn totally within the text while the rule lines are perfectly placed on the right and on the left of the text column.

This surprising observation implies that Clermont-Ganneau, who glanced at the Shapira fragments only for few minutes, confused the issue of fold lines and rule lines. Ginsburg, who was probably under pressure to end the saga, dropped the mention of the fold lines and instead only discussed the vertical rule lines, as if they represented the fold lines.

In summary, the declaration of both Ginsburg and Clermont-Ganneau, stating that the text in the Shapira fragments protrudes beyond the vertical traced guidelines, is misleading. This conclusion is based upon Ginsburg's drawing in which it can be seen that the text goes beyond the limit of the fold lines but not beyond the limits of the vertical ruling. This implies that the scribe who wrote the Shapira scroll did in fact respect the limits drawn by the vertical rule lines, contrary to the claims of both Ginsburg and Clermont-Ganneau, who raised this issue in order to prove that the forger of the Shapira scroll cut the lower blank margins from ancient Torah scrolls which were already traced by vertical ruling, but which were carelessly disregarded by the forger.

Let us now refer to the research of Hermann Guthe, the well-known German scholar. Guthe carried out an in-depth analysis of the Shapira fragments. He published the results of his research on 14 of August 1883 in a booklet of ninety-five pages which included the transliteration of the Shapira fragments. There is no doubt that he had the opportunity to closely inspect these fragments. Guthe (1883, 3) wrote that the scribe of this scroll did not respect the delimited area defined by the vertical ruling. Guthe then (4) explained what he meant by that statement: "Dennoch ist die Länge der Zeilen ganz gleichmäßig und ein auffallendes regelloses Heraustreten der ersten oder der letzten Buchstaben einer Reihe nirgends bemerkbar; der Schreiber hat also die freigewählte Zeilengrenze sicher inne gehalten." (Translation: "Nevertheless, the length of the rows is very uniform, and the remarkable nonconforming projections of the first or the last letter are hardly noticeable. The scribe has therefore respected the freely self imposed line boundary.") Guthe has in fact observed that in certain cases only a single letter protruded to the left or to the right side of the vertical ruling. This certainly was not the problem, which Clermont-Ganneau and Ginsburg presented as proof that the scribe totally disregarded the vertical guidelines. As far as it is known, neither Clermont-Ganneau nor Ginsburg were aware of this booklet, which was published amidst the commotion, which evolved in London.

It was noted above that Ginsburg, in his concluding letter which was published on 22 August 1883, stated "The columns of these scrolls are bounded on the right and left by vertical lines drawn with a hard point. These lines not only extend from the top to the bottom of the written portion, but reach to the very end of the leather, right across the upper and lower margins." Tov (2004, 54) when discussing the Dead Sea scrolls, states "Usually, vertical ruling was also continuous, extending beyond the written text into the top and bottom margins as far as the edges of the leather (see e.g. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>...)". No doubt that a 19th century forger would not be aware of this custom.

Neither Ginsburg nor Clermont-Ganneau detected horizontal ruling on the Shapira fragments. Guthe, likewise, did not mention any horizontal ruling. It is possible that there were no horizontal ruling on this scroll. Tov (2004, 54) stipulates that a few of the Qumran documents were not ruled. However, it is possible that the horizontal ruling on that scroll were simply not noticed due to the dark tone of the fragments. Even though the transcriptions of Ginsburg indicate that the text was written in reasonably straight lines, no conclusion can be reached from this.

Let us close this subject by mentioning again the letter of Bond to Ginsburg of 17 August 1883 concerning the Shapira fragments in which he stated "I also am of the opinion that the setting of the text in a widely separated columns between ruled lines is a later character than the period indicated by the writing." Bond refers here to "columns between ruled lines". He

does not draw attention to text protruding out of these vertical guidelines. This possibly implies that also Bond noticed that the text written on the Shapira scroll remained within the limits of the vertical rulings.

#### *F. The efforts of Ginsburg in deciphering the blackened fragments*

For almost three weeks Christian Ginsburg, the expert on behalf of the British Museum, published transcriptions and translations of the Shapira manuscript in the local press. A number of fragments of the scroll were put on public display and on 13 August, Mr. Gladstone, the British Prime Minister came to see them. Mansoor (1958, p.194) claimed that “Had the British Museum scholars been convinced that Shapira’s documents were a forgery, they would have neither displayed them to the public nor troubled the Prime Minister to come and inspect them.”

Reiner (1995, 120) presents the contents of a letter written by Ginsburg on 3 September 1883 to his daughter Ethel just after his declaration that the Shapira scroll is a forgery: “... I do not think that the month which I spent on the ms. is time thrown away though it is a forgery and though the deciphering of it has nearly blinded me ... I do wish you could come up to town to see it for it is so wonderfully clever. If I could afford it I would give £200 for it.”

Reiner comments (120) that If the manuscript was clearly a forgery, “why did Ginsburg spend a month working on it, when he was busy producing his volumes on the Masorah, his magnum opus. Given that deciphering the manuscript was difficult and taxing on his eyes, why did he bother to translate it, and publish it rather than just presenting his scholarly opinion that the work was a forgery?” Reiner further adds that Ginsburg’s comment to his daughter about desiring to purchase the manuscript for such a high amount is also curious.

Ginsburg complained, in his letter to his daughter, that the process of deciphering the Shapira fragments had nearly blinded him. The reason for this is that those strips were very dark and the recognition of the script was quite difficult. Reiner presents a photo which was taken when Ginsburg was working on those fragments in which the dark toning of the leather is very noticeable (Reiner 1997, 33).

The question arises why were these leather strips so dark? Is this phenomenon also apparent in the Dead Sea scrolls? In fact both paleo-Hebrew Genesis and paleo-Hebrew Leviticus of cave 6 are described to be “très noircie” (very blackened) (Baillet *et al.* 1962, 105–6). The text of columns 9–12 of 1QH<sup>a</sup> (Thanksgiving) is written on what appears to be very dark brown leather (Davies *et al.* 2002, 94). The sheet containing columns 13–16 is even darker. The matter could partially be related to the Iron Gall ink which has been found in the Qumran manuscripts. Poole and Reed (1962, 14) found Gallic acid in every sample they analyzed from Cave 4. Caldararo (1995, 23) points out that leather so degraded by Gallic acid when in contact with moisture will darken, in many cases, irretrievably. He then suggests that “This may partly explain the blackened appearance of the Shapira Scrolls.”

Walter Flight was requested by Bond of the British museum to investigate the black colouring of the Shapira fragments. Flight, in his report dated 4 of August 1883, stated that the black material which adheres to the fragments “does not appear to be asphaltum but rather wax”. This oily material may have been applied by the Bedouin who initially held the Shapira fragments, for the sake of preservation. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that upon the discovery of the *Habakkuk Pesher* (1QpHab) and the *Community Rule* (1QS) in Cave I, it was reported by the Bedouins who discovered those scrolls that the bundles were “coated with a black layer of what appeared to be pitch or wax” (Ulrich and Flint 2010, 2).



*G. The palaeography of the Shapira scroll and of the Mesha stele does not point to an identical script*

The presumed forger of the Shapira scroll was said to have imitated the Mesha stone. Ginsburg, in his final report stipulated that the forger “imitated closely the archaic writing of the inscription on the Moabite Stone.”

Guthe (1883, 65) who analysed the Shapira scroll suspected a paleographic similarity between the Shapira scroll and the Mesha stele. He also compared the paleography of the Shapira scroll with that of the Siloam inscription but this inscription could not have served as a paleographic source for the forger in consideration that Shapira already sent in 1878 a transcription of his fragments to Schlottmann. The Siloam Inscription was discovered by C. Schick in 1880, well after Schlottmann saw the transcription sent to him by Shapira.

Guthe (1883, 65) pointed out that at least seven Hebrew letters deviate from those inscribed on the Mesha inscription כ ך ם ן ף ץ נ ף).

Guthe (1883, 66) identifies three letters on the Shapira scroll which are in a new form, unknown to him at that time. The letters are ם כ ף.

Guthe prepared a paleographic table indicating the various letter forms which appear in the Shapira fragments (Fig. 4). The letter ם does not appear on the Mesha stele (Fig. 4) but it does appear on the Shapira fragments and in a very similar form on 4QpaleoGen as well as on 2QpaleoLev (McLean 1982, plate 3 and plate 6). The letter כ is somewhat similar to the same letter which appears on 11QpaleoLev (Freedman and Mathews 1985, 16) and the letter ף resembles, to a certain extent, the same letter which appears on 4QpaleoDeut as well as 6QpaleoGen.

It should be noted that the Paleo-Hebrew script of the various Dead Sea scrolls is not homogenous. Tov (2004, 232) indicated that “All texts written in the paleo-Hebrew script reflect a similar scribal approach, but the scribes of these texts often displayed their individuality in specific features.”

In consideration of the analysis of Guthe it is only logical to conclude that Ginsburg’s claim that the forger “imitated closely the archaic writing of the inscription on the Moabite Stone” cannot be substantiated.

Mansoor (1958, 216) claims that in the Shapira document the letters ם and כ are almost identical but this is not evident from the table presented by Guthe. A comparison can be made between the paleography table of Guthe and the script which appears on the transcription produced by Ginsburg. Most of the paleo-Hebrew letters which were drawn by Guthe are similar to those drawn by Ginsburg. There is however one letter which differs, the letter ם (Fig. 5. line 3). The form of that letter confirms the observation of Mansoor.

*H. The form of the Paleo-Hebrew Aleph in the Shapira scroll*

Both Ginsburg and Guthe, as shown above in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, have identified the Hebrew letter aleph on the Shapira scroll, to be in the cursive pointed V form rather than in the cursive “parallel” form (Guil 2013a, 2013b).

The parallel aleph form is most prominent in the paleo-Hebrew lapidary script and less so in the cursive script in which the Dead Sea scrolls were written. Surely it must have been difficult for the 19th century scholars to identify the exact form of this letter.

If the Shapira scroll is to be dated to the period of the Dead Sea scrolls then the parallel form would be expected rather than the V form which is the earlier form (Herr 1978: Fig. 46, Naveh 1987, 89–91, Guil 2013b). The following paleo-Hebrew Dead Sea scrolls clearly demonstrate the parallel aleph form in its cursive script: 4QpaleoGen, 4QpaleoExod, 4QpaleoDeut, 4QpaleoJob, 6QpaleoGen, 6QpaleoLev and 11QpaleoLev. For further details see McLean, 41–107, plates 3–6.



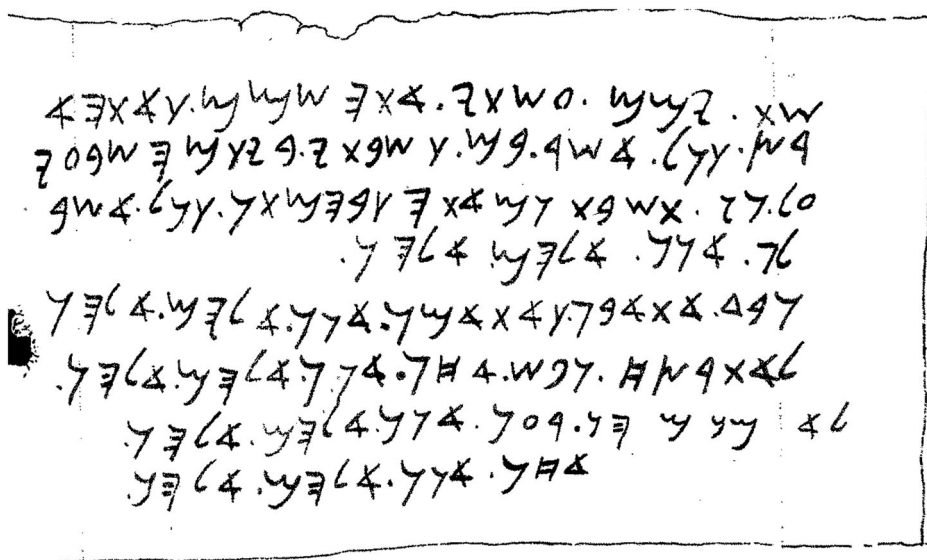


Fig. 5. A transcription of one of the Shapira fragments prepared by C. Ginsburg 1883.

Aleph as appears on the Mesha stele. However, [Guthe \(1883, 66\)](#) stipulates that “Die formen für א, ב, ג, ד, ה, finden sich auf hebräischen Münzen am treuesten wieder.” So if Guthe finds a similarity between the aleph of the paleo-Hebrew coins and that of the Shapira scroll it would imply that the form of the aleph on the Shapira scroll was in the parallel form, as it appears on those coins.

Furthermore, Guthe compares the paleography of the Shapira scroll with that of the Siloam Inscription. He arrives at the conclusion that the letters כ, מ, נ differ significantly in both texts. However he does not include the letter aleph in his list despite the fact that in the Siloam Inscription clearly appears the parallel form. This may indicate that the Shapira aleph was in the parallel form.

Chapter II in [Freedman and Mathews \(1985\)](#), which analyses the paleography of 11QpaleoLev, was written by Richard S. Hanson. Hanson opens his discussion by commenting that the Leviticus scroll was written in a hand so inconsistent and even careless that he (Hanson) was tempted to ascribe the manuscript to two or more scribes ([Freedman and Mathews 1985, 15](#)). Hanson then comments on each letter that appears on the scroll and when relating to the letter Aleph he writes: “The alep, in the mind of the scribe, was made with three strokes. In execution, however, the scribe moved with such a cursive flow from the upper to the lower horizontal line that he connected them and actually produced a form that is akin to the alep seen in the scripts of the eighth century B.C.E.”. This implies that Hanson has identified in 11QpaleoLev both the “parallel aleph” and the “V form aleph”. Hanson has drawn a clear distinction between the two forms ([Hanson 1985, 84](#)).

#### *I. The similarity between the Leviticus scroll (11QpaleoLev) and the Shapira scroll*

The Dead Sea scroll 11QpaleoLev, written in paleo-Hebrew script, comes from the Hasmonean period and is dated to the first century BCE ([Edge 1995, 321](#)). There are some characteristics which can be identified both in 11QpaleoLev and in the Shapira scroll.

### 1. *Content and script*

The Leviticus scroll (11QpaleoLev) contains parts of the final chapters (22–27) of Leviticus, the third book in the Pentateuch. This scroll is written in the paleo-Hebrew script. According to Mathews (1987, 49) the paleo-Hebrew script of the scroll imitates the archaic or “old Hebrew” script used during the seventh to sixth centuries BCE. He further states that a comparison of the paleo-Hebrew characters of the Leviticus Scroll with their seventh-century proto-types reveals that the characters evolved over time; the changes, however, are not substantive.

Similarly, the Shapira scroll was written in paleo-Hebrew. The text refers to parts of Deuteronomy, the fifth book in the Pentateuch, and includes the Decalogue. The text however diverts from the Masoretic version.

As noted, both scrolls were written in the paleo-Hebrew script and both contain text from the Torah. Tov (2004, 232) states “The preserved biblical fragments (of Qumran) written in the paleo-Hebrew script contain only texts of the Torah and Job, both of which are traditionally ascribed to Moses.”. Obviously, the Shapira scroll respects this norm.

### 2. *Writing material and measurements*

The writing surface of 11QpaleoLev is tanned leather. The colour of the scroll ranges from a light to dark brown. The 11QpaleoLev fragments include one continuous scroll of seven columns, coming from Leviticus 22–27, and seventeen disconnected fragments, ranging in content from Leviticus 4–21 (Mathews 1987, 46). The continuous scroll measures approximately 100 centimetres and its height at its present state is 7.5 centimetres. It consists of two sheets of tanned goat leather sewn together between the third and the fourth columns (Mathews 1987, 46). Even though the scroll is of continuous text. Mathews estimates that its original height was 25 to 26 centimetres. This estimate is made by averaging letter and line counts in conjunction with the existing column size (Mathews 1987, 47).

The Shapira scroll was also made of leather. The fragments of the scroll were very dark as can be seen from the photo taken by the British Museum (Reiner 1997, 33). Freedman and Mathews (1985, 4) describe the colour of the 11QpaleoLev leather “The color of the scroll ranges from a light to dark brown hue.”. The photo of plate 5 of fragment L of 11QpaleoLev in Freedman and Mathews clearly demonstrates the dark leather of that scroll which is quite reminiscent of the photo taken by the British Museum of the Shapira fragment.

According to Guthe (1883, 2) the manuscript composed of sixteen strips of leather whose height varied between 7.6 and 9.7 centimetres. Five strips were only 15 to 18 centimeters long, while some were 80 to 90 centimetres long.

It is therefore obvious that the dimensions of the fragments of 11QpaleoLev and those of the Shapira scroll, in the state which they were discovered, are quite similar. However, Clermont-Ganneau (1885, 207–9) claimed that the Shapira strips, given their dimensions, were cut from ancient Torah scrolls. Clermont-Ganneau based his claim upon the vertical ruling analysis which we discussed above. Furthermore, Mansoor (1958, 197) referred to an article published by the Daily News on 22 August 1883 on the matter of Clermont-Ganneau’s conclusion in respect of the leather strips of the Shapira scroll. The newspaper sent its own unnamed expert to examine the strips and his conclusion was that “... the portion of the Deuteronomy manuscript examined by the present writer was written on leather of a thicker character, differing very considerably from that usually employed in synagogue-rolls.”.

### 3. *Shape*

When unrolled the Leviticus scroll 11QpaleoLev demonstrates an arc-like shape (Mathews 1987, 46; Freedman, Mathews 1985, 4). The distinct curvature of 11QpaleoLev can be clearly noticed in plate 20 (Freedman and Mathews 1985).

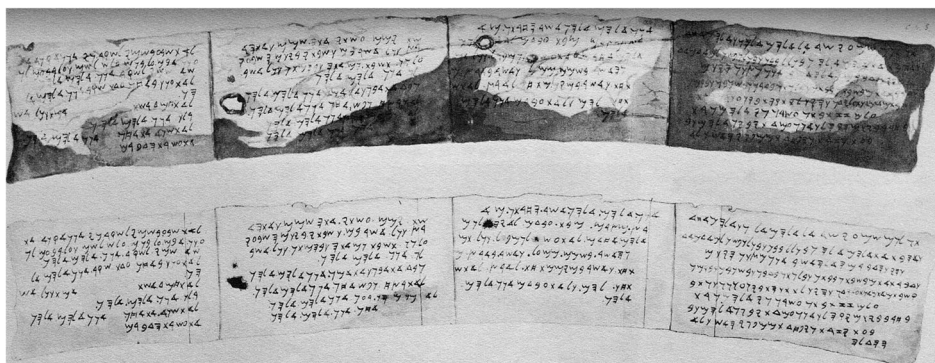


Fig. 6. Drawing by C. Ginsburg of a Shapira fragment demonstrating the arc-like shape.

Similarly, the shape of the Shapira scroll was also in an arc-like form. This curvature is clearly apparent on the following drawing made by Christian David Ginsburg (Fig. 6).

When Clermont-Ganneau introduced his idea that the strips of the Shapira scroll were actually cut from the lower margins of a contemporary Torah scroll (Clermont-Ganneau 1885, plate 18, 184), he correctly drew straight narrow strips which supposedly represented those lower blank leather margins. However, he must have been unaware of the fact that the Shapira fragments were rather in an arc-like form (Fig. 6), a form which obviously cannot be attributed to a contemporary Torah scroll.

#### 7. CONCLUSION

In this article, I have attempted to demonstrate, by means of circumstantial evidence, that the Shapira scroll was an authentic manuscript. The analysis in this article focused upon the physical characteristics of the scroll as well as upon paleographic aspects. The evidence was mostly based upon our present day familiarity with of the Dead Sea scrolls together with current knowledge of the paleo-Hebrew script. Facing these tools were 19th-century transcriptions of the Shapira scroll, which were meticulously prepared by the scholars who tried to determine the authenticity of the scroll. In addition, I have analyzed the validity of their conclusions basing myself upon their observations and descriptions of the physical traits of the scroll. An attempt was then made to demonstrate that due to lack of ancient Hebrew leather manuscripts, dating over two thousand years, these scholars brilliantly analyzed the Shapira scroll but unfortunately came to the wrong conclusions.

Surprisingly, contrary to the belief held for the last forty five years, the Shapira scroll was not destroyed in a fire that erupted in the house of Sir Charles Nicholson, near London. We presently know that it was Dr. Philip Brookes Mason of Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, who acquired the Shapira scroll in 1888 or beginning of 1889 and probably held it until his death in 1903. There are indications that, after his death, his wife sold his life's collection at an auction. Some good detective work might lead to the rediscovery of the Shapira scroll.

#### DEDICATION

This article is dedicated to the late Prof. Menahem Mansoor who in 1958 risked his academic reputation by claiming that there is no evidence to support the idea that the Shapira scroll was a work of forgery.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allegro, J. M., 1965. *The Shapira Affair*, London: W.H. Allen.
- Baillet, M., Milik, J. T., and De Vaux, R., 1962. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan III, Les «Petites Grottes» de Qumran*, Textes / Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barkay, G., 2012. *Ten key points on authenticity of artifacts*. <http://www.gabrielbarkay.com/news-and-publications.html> [10 December 2015].
- Burrows, M., 1950. *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery* (Vol. I), New Haven: The American Schools of Oriental Research.
- Caldararo, N., 1995. 'Storage conditions and physical treatments relating to the dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls', *Radiocarbon* 37 (1), 21–32.
- Cansdale, L., 1997. *Qumran and the Essenes: A Re-Evaluation of the Evidence*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Clermont-Ganneau, C., 1874. 'The Shapira Collection', *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* April, 114–8.
- Clermont-Ganneau, C., 1885. *Les Fraudes Archéologiques en Palestine*, Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- Crown, A., 1970. 'The Fate of the Shapira Scroll', *Revue de Qumran*, Numero 27, Tome 7, Fascicule 3, 421–3.
- Davies, P., Brooke, G., and Callaway, P., 2002. *The Complete World of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: Thames & Hudson.
- Dupont-Sommer, A., 1974. 'Un Dépisteur de Fraudes Archéologiques: Charles Clermont-Ganneau (1846–1923), Membre de L'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres', *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 118e année, N. 4, 591–609.
- Edge, R. L., 1995. *The Use of Palaeo-Hebrew in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Paleography and Historiography*, PhD Dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin.
- Eliav, M., 1973. *The Jews of Palestine in the German Policy. Selected documents from the Archives of the German Consulate in Jerusalem 1842-1914*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad. (Hebrew).
- Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, transl. J. E. I. Oulton. London, William Heinemann.
- Freedman, D. N., and Mathews, K. A., 1985. *The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll (11QPaleoLev)*, American School of Oriental Research.
- Guil, S., 2012. *In the Footsteps of the Concealed Shop Et Mol*, number 223 (Hebrew). In *Search of the Shop of Moses Wilhelm Shapira, the Leading Figure of the 19th Century Archaeological Enigma*. [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu).
- Guil, S., 2013a. *A New Perspective on the Various Components of the Siloam Water System in Jerusalem*. [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu). [7 November 2015].
- Guil, S., 2013b. *Identifying the Form of the Formal Hebrew Aleph Prevalent During the Times of King Hezekiah*. [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu). [12 November 2015].
- Guthe, H., 1883. *Fragmente Einer Lederhandschrift Enthaltend Mose's Letzte Rede an die Kinder Israel*, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Hartel.
- Hanson, R. S., 1985. 'Ancient scribes and scripts and the clues they leave', *The Biblical Archaeologist* 48 (2), 83–88.
- Herr, L., 1978. *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals*, Missoula: Scholars Press.
- Jefferson, H. G., 1968. 'The Shapira Manuscript and the Qumran Scrolls', *Revue de Qumran* Numéro 23, Tome 6, Fascicule 3.
- Kahle, P. E., 1959. *The Cairo Geniza*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger.
- Mansoor, M., 1958. 'The Case of Shapira's Dead Sea (Deuteronomy) Scrolls of 1883. Wisconsin', *Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters* 47, 183–229.
- Mathews, K., 1987. 'The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll from Qumran', *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1), 45–54.
- McLean, M. D., 1982. *The Use and Development of Paleo-Hebrew in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, PhD Dissertation: Harvard University.
- Naveh, J., 1987. *Early History of the Alphabet, an Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press.
- Poole, J. B., and Reed, R., 1962. 'The preparation of leather and parchment by the Dead Sea Scrolls Community', *Technology and Culture* 3 (1), 1–26.
- Rabinowicz, O. K., 1965. 'The Shapira Scroll: A nineteenth-century forgery', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* LVI (1), 1–21.
- Reiner, F., 1995. 'C.D. Ginsburg and the Shapira Affair: A nineteenth-century Dead Sea Scroll controversy', *The British Library Journal* 21 (1), 109–27.
- Reiner, F., 1997. 'Tracking the Shapira Case: A Biblical Scandale revisited', *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23 (3), 32–41.
- Sabo, Y., 2014. *Documentary film "Shapira & I"*, Produced by Yoram Sabo.
- Sanders, J. A., 1965. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan. IV. The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sanderson, J. E., 1986. *An Exodus Scroll from Qumran*, Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Sass, B., 2005. *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium: The West Semitic Alphabet ca. 1150-850 B.C.E*, Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology.
- Schlottmann, K., 1872. 'Neue Moabitische Funde und Rathsel', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig, Bd. XXVI, 786–97.
- Shanks, H., 2002. 'Fakes! How Moses Shapira forged an entire civilization', *Archaeology Odyssey* 5 (5), 32–41.
- Shavit, Y., 1984. 'A note to the biography of M.W. Shapira, an antiques dealer in Jerusalem', *Cathedra* 31, 182–7 (Hebrew).
- Silberman, N. A., 1995. *The Hidden Scrolls: Christianity, Judaism, & the War for the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: Heinemann.
- Skehan, P. W., Ulrich, E., and Sanderson, J. E., 1992. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert IX. Qumran Cave 4 IV. Paleo-Hebrew and Greek Biblical Manuscripts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Socin, A., and Kautzsch, E. F., 1876. *Die Aechtheit der Moabitischen Alterthümer Geprüft*, Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner.
- Sprenger, A., 1876. 'The Shapira Pottery', *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* April, 98–103.
- Tov, E., 2004. *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill.
- Tov, E., 2008. *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran. Collected Essays*, Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck.
- Ulrich, E., et al., 1995. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert XIV. Qumran Cave 4. IX. Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ulrich, E., and Flint, P. W., 2010. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXXII. Qumran Cave 1. II The Isaiah Scrolls*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- White, S. A., 1990. 'The all souls Deuteronomy and the Decalogue', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (2), 193–206.