

Jewish and Masoretic Rules for Copying the Scripture

According to Hebrew and Talmudic tradition

- Must be written on the skins of clean animals
- Must be prepared for synagogue use by a Jew only
- Must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals.
- Each skin must contain an exact number of columns, which must be equal throughout the entire manuscript
- The length of each column must be between 48 and 60 lines.
- The breadth of each column must consist of 30 letters
- The whole copy must be first lined, if 3 words were written without a line it was considered worthless.
- The ink must be black only and prepared according to a special recipe that was used only for copying of scripture
- The original used to make the copy must be authentic and must not be deviated from the copyist and the scribe must say each word aloud as he wrote it.
- No word or letter could ever be written from memory, the scribe must always look first at the original before writing his copy.
- A space of a hair or thread must intervene between each consonant
- A space of the breadth of 9 consonants must come between each section
- No word must ever touch another
- A space of 3 lines must come between every book
- The 5th book of Moses (Deuteronomy) must end exactly with a line
- Before copying, the scribe must wash his whole body
- While copying, the scribe must only write the name of God with a pen newly dipped into the ink
- Each time the scribe came across the Hebrew word for God, he had to wipe his pen clean. And when he came across the name of God, Jehovah (YHWH), he had to wash his whole body before he could write it.
- Should a king address the scribe while writing that name he must take no notice of him
- If a sheet of parchment had one mistake on it, the sheet was condemned. If there were three mistakes found on any page, the whole manuscript was condemned. Each scroll had to be checked within thirty days of its writing, or it was considered unholy.
- Every word and every letter was counted. If a letter or word was omitted, the manuscript was condemned.