

The DSS vs Masorete vs Samaritan vs Septuagint vs Aramaic Text - which is right - ???

There are a number of anti-missionaries like Toviah Singer who have accused followers of [Yehoshuah](#) of altering texts that prophecy of The Anointed One. But the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as some other manuscripts, indicate that it was the Masorettes who changed the TaNaKh so as to discredit the Nazarene movement. The following is a comparison of the Masorete texts with some of the other manuscripts that proves the point that it was the Masorettes who changed things.

The following are abbreviations used in this writing...

- DSS = Dead Sea Scrolls
- MT = Masorete Text
- ST = Samaritan Torah (They didn't accept the prophets and writings)
- LXX = Septuagint (Greek TaNaKh)
- Ar = Aramaic TaNaKh

First of all, the DSS published is not a complete text. It's fragmented – largely because it was put together from numerous fragmented scrolls. There were several manuscripts from the DSS that went into the translation, but even with 4-10 scrolls to choose from, there were still a number of gaps they couldn't fill.

Background

The oldest translations of the ENTIRE Masorete TaNaKh tend to come from the Leningrad Codex of 1008 AD. There's another from 925 AD, but nothing before that date has all the books of the TaNaKh. So our oldest Masorete texts are from a rather recent date. There are a few Torahs from further back than that. There are partial scrolls from further back than that. But often the translation we generally get is from a text that is only about 1000years old.

The DSS texts are from 250-100 BC. The Septuagint (LXX) was translated about 280-250 BC. An Aramaic translation soon followed the LXX. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are as old as the LXX & Aramaic targums, some are not. But they are in Hebrew, many in the paleo-Hebrew letters that were used BEFORE the Masorettes switched to using Aramaic letters for writing Hebrew. So the Masorete secularized the scriptures in some respects by using a "foreign" alphabet that is no longer considered a foreign alphabet because it's the standard that is used throughout Israel and the world for that matter. This might partially explain why they may have been willing to "interpret" the scriptures to some degree by replacing the Name in places because they did not consider the alphabet they were using to be true Hebrew, though today those letters are considered Hebrew letters since the Hebrews have adopted what used to be the Aramaic alphabet.

But the DSS is mostly in the original paleo-Hebrew writing. The Aramaic alphabet is in some of the writings and appears to have started creeping into religious writings about the 1st century BC/AD time frame. But it was used in secular writings prior to that time.

The Masoretes changed The Divine Name "YHWH" in 134 places to either "Adonai" or "Elohim" (some of them in places where the Name "YHWH" points to The Anointed One by that Name). Looking over the older text of the DSS, LXX, and the Ar we can easily see where the Masorete scribes tinkered with some Messianic prophecies like Ps 22. So it's important to be able to compare these other texts against the MT to see where the Masoretes erred.

For the most part the texts match word for word and many of the differences between the texts are not significant.

The varied readings between the various scrolls were probably part of what prompted the Masoretes to develop some standards on how to copy the scrolls. Those standards on counting letters, adding them mathematically, have not been in place for 6,000 years. The Masoretes were the ones who invented those procedures and the discrepancies we seen between the DSS, LXX, Ar, and MT and the ST probably prompted the development of those standards. Perhaps the Masoretes developed these standards because they had more errors than the other groups.

Comparing the Various Manuscripts

Here's a sample of some of the lesser significant differences found between them. While some people would like to bury their head in the sand and pretend that this isn't true and that YHWH would never allow various manuscripts to disagree, the truth is we have what we have and if we bury our heads in the sand, we won't be able to minister to people who know this information. If we study it and understand it we should be able to explain to people that what we know about the ancient texts does more to verify the scriptures than discredit them.

The texts never completely agree in all cases. That is, sometimes the DSS agrees with the MT over the LXX, sometimes with the LXX over the MT. Sometimes it agrees with the ST over the MT and sometimes with the MT over the ST.

The 430 year period that Yisra-Ail[*Israel*] spent in Egypt seems to be measure from the time Arawhawm[*Abraham*] went to Egypt until the time of the Exodus by the LXX and ST and by Powlos[*Paul*] in Galatians. The MT and DSS word it somewhat ambiguously but their wording suggest it is saying the 430 year was all spent in slavery (From Yo-Seph[*Joseph*] to Moshay[*Moses*]).

Josephus Flavius agrees with the DSS and disagrees with the MT on this issue in his dating of Yisra-Aili[*Israeli*] history. This would not have happened if 1st century AD thought was in dispute on this, thus the Masoretes must have made this change (probably by mistake) well after the first century AD.

Several other extra-Biblical Yehudish[*Jewish*] sources tend to agree with Powlos[*Paul*] and the LXX including Josephus and a host of other writers. The genealogies tend to agree with the LXX as well since the patriarchs would have had to given birth in a VERY old age for 400 years to pass (all would have had to given birth well past 100 years of age), since only 4 (3-5 depending on how you want to count it) generations separate Moshay[*Moses*] from Yo-Seph's[*Joseph's*] journey to Egypt.

The DSS says 75 people went down to Egypt. The Masorete says 70. Acts 7:14 says 75. Obviously, He was relying on the DSS or a text that agrees with the DSS. The MT must not go back to the first century, since this would have been viewed by their listeners as a mistake if they were using what we have today as the MT. It is obvious that the Masoretes goofed here.

In the Masorete manuscripts, Debareem[*Deuteronomy*] 16 seems to conflict with Wayyiqra[*Leviticus*] 23 on the timing of Passover. This has always bothered many. But the DSS gives a timing of it that is in perfect harmony with how Wayyiqra[*Leviticus*] 23 explains it. The DSS is clearly more accurate on this Scripture because the MT disagrees with itself on how to time this. The fact that the DSS clear this issue up should help build our confidence in the Word stronger by showing us that the conflict in the MT was not a contradiction that came from YHWH, but probably just a scribal error somewhere along the way.

One reason for scribal errors during copying is that the way it was done for many years sometimes included someone orally reading the scriptures while scribes would write down what was said. This could easily cause spelling mistakes. The "DSS Bible" [*Note : This work does not have all the Qumran texts - they may have rushed to publish it*] lists on verse where the DSS reads "Micha" while the MT says "Maki" and the ST says "Miki" and the LXX still says "Makchi". This neither provides a legitimate test that the DSS or ST or MT is better over the other, but simply illustrates the challenges the scribes had to face. Personally I think you have to consider all the readings, which is why I have no problem with the type of footnotes the NIV put into their translation. I think that was a good thing - even though the NIV is not a very good translation itself in a lot of areas.

There's some differences between the DSS and MT on more minor issues, like the use of "son" vs "servant" in one area and whether a woman has to leave her husband's house to be divorced and a few other issues that aren't going to change YHWH's plan of salvation or anything. And folks, it's much better for us to be aware of these things so we can talk about them intelligently than to stick our head in the sand and pretend that the discrepancies don't exist just because it's not what we want to hear. We can't be of much witness to people who know these things if we do that.

The only book of Scripture where there is not a gap between writing and oldest existing publication is the book of Mattith-YaHu[*Matthew*]. The original autograph copy of Mattith-YaHu[*Matthew*] was on display in a museum well into the 4th century while copies of Mattith-YaHu[*Matthew*] date prior to that. If those early century copies we still have today of Mattith-YaHu[*Matthew*] were not right, wouldn't they have destroyed those copies since it didn't match the original that was publicly available at the time? So the book of Mattith-YaHu[*Matthew*] is probably the most reliable book of either set of Scriptures.

There is also lots of writings from the early turn of the centuries that quote the various texts. These tend to agree with the DSS over the MT. In the MT, we have...

{2 Shemoo-Ail[*2 Samuel*] 10:18}

"And Dahweed[*David*] slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen."

{1 Dibre haYameem[*1 Chronicles*] 19:18}

"Dahweed[*David*] slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen."

Now did YHWH inspire the various writers of the TaNaKh to report conflicting information, or is it possible that the Masorete scribes made a mistake since one verse says 700 and the other says 7000? And where the 40,000 on foot or horseback? Some versions of the LXX say "footmen" in 2 Samuel 10:18, agreeing with 1 Chronicles 19:18 and indicating that the Masoretes may have (accidentally) altered this verse from a previous version that the LXX was translated from. These pieces are missing from the DSS, so we can't get a comparison.

1 Samuel 11 - The first 3.5 lines of the DSS in this section is missing from the MT. But Josephus quotes these 3.5 lines in his writings, indicating it was known in the first century and considered part of the Scriptures.

2 Samuel 11 - The DSS lists Ooree-YaHu[*Uriah*] as Yo-Awb[*Joab's*] armor-bearer, but the MT doesn't include this detail. Josephus cites this detail in his writings.

2 Samuel 14:30 in the DSS reads "Abee-Shawlome's[Absalom's] servants set the field on fire. So Yo-Awb[Joab's] servants came to him with their clothes torn and said "Abee-Shawlome's[Absalom's] servants have set the field on fire."

Now the part emphasized here appears in the DSS but not the MT. Note that this may well have been a scribal error in that the scribe's eye wrote "field on fire", looked, then looked back, and maybe his eyes skipped ahead to the second place where it said "set the field on fire", thus failing to copy the quotation, but only the original narrative.

Now there's no reason to suspect that anyone intentionally changed this. It was probably a very innocent error by a innocent scribe. But the point is that a single scribal error propagated to EVERY COPY the Masoretes have of this verse. So this is evidence of a single source of the existing MT in that a single source, with existing errors from previous versions, was copied and became the Masorete standard such that no MT varies or disagrees with such error.

An error very similar to this one is found in Yesha-YaHu[*Isaiah*] 16:8-9, with the MT having the longer version and a similar, easy to make, omission is found in the DSS.

Dawnee-Ail[*Daniel*] 10:16 -

In the MT, it says "someone in the form of a son of man touched my lips"
In the DSS, it says, "something in the form of a man's hand touched my lips"

Tehilleem[*Psalms*] 145 is missing a verse that appears in both the LXX and DSS. This is clearly a Masorete omission. Again, it's an omission that appears in EVERY MASORET TEXT. And unlike the "easy to understand" omission I mentioned in 2 Samuel 14:30, or the somewhat harder to make omission in 2 Samuel 11, this omission breaks the poetry of the Psalm and should have been more obvious that something was skipped. Yet it was skipped in EVERY MASORET TEXT(?).

With the Greek texts, omissions appear in some sources but not others. But in the MT, we've seen examples of omissions from every MT available. This indicates that the Masoretes ensured that they

1. Adopted a standard text
2. Stuck to it.
3. Made certain all Yehudeem[*Jews*] had this standard text, even in the Diaspora
4. All copies can be traced to a single source "standard" that included some omissions (as cited herein), changes (the list of 134) and errors.

Now if the omissions from selective places such as Tehilleem[*Psalms*] 145, 2 Samuel 11, 2 Samuel 14:30, etc., can occur in every MT from an innocent scribal error, then the same circumstances could indeed fuel the ability for the 134 changes, etc, to occur in every MT. Whatever circumstances led to, one led to another.

General

Among the errors common to scribes are...

1. Variant Spellings
2. Misspellings
3. Omissions

These things should not cause alarm, and also they are easy to fix since comparing various texts allows an easy means for reconstructing the correct spelling or inclusion of something omitted. It was because of these errors and omissions that the Masoretes decided to develop the standards they developed. These scribal errors prompted the need for some means to safeguard how the scrolls were copied. The Masorete standards for copying did not prevent these things from happening, rather the standards were a reaction to the fact that it had been going on. The Masorete standards for copying may have locked out future errors but it locked in ancient errors from being corrected due to the fact that they were always copying from the same text. Whereas with the Greek Brit Hadashah (Renewed Covenant), there was no concern for whether the exact same text was used as the master, so more variances occurred. A standard does not mean that fewer errors will occur, it just means that any errors will agree with each other.

Until the time of the Masoretes, the same amount of care or lack thereof, and human error, went into copying the TaNaKh as for copying the Brit Hadashah (Renewed Covenant), but extended for thousands of years before we have a copy of antiquity, compared to only hundreds for the Brit Hadashah (Renewed Covenant).

But the odd part is that the development of a standard text not only protected them from future mistakes, but it sealed past mistakes into all subsequent copies. So in some ways, their "idea" here worked against the intent.

But with BOTH the Renewed Covenant[*a.k.a. - the New Testament*] and the TaNaKh, the translations into various languages have helped us verify accuracy, since the Masoretes didn't control the LXX or Aramaic or the Essene version at Qumran and the New Testament was quickly copied into Aramaic, Greek and Latin. Also, quotations of the scriptures by various early writers help us piece together ancient readings as well.

For the most part, each of these scriptures agree more than they disagree, and they tend to confirm each other more than contradict. While this information isn't all "pretty", it's better to be familiar with these issues than ignore them.