

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

There are a number of anti-missionaries like Toviah Singer who have accused followers of Y'shua of altering texts that prophecy of the Messiah. But the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as some other manuscripts, indicate that it was the Massorettes who changed the Tanakh so as to discredit the Nazarene movement. The following is a comparison of the Massoret texts with some of the other manuscripts that proves the point that it was the Massorettes who changed things.

I'll use the following abbreviations for ease of writing...

- DSS = Dead Sea Scrolls
- MT = Massoret 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 Massoret 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 Massoret 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 1000 years old.

The DSS texts are from 100-250 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 Massorettes switched to using Aramaic letters for writing Hebrew. So the Massorettes 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. I've heard that the Aramaic alphabet is in some of the writings and appears to have started creeping into religion

writings about the 1st century BC/AD time frame. But it was probably used in secular writings prior to that even.

The Massoretes changed "YHWH" to a euphemism (usually either "L-rd"/"Ad-nai" or "G-d"/"El-him") in 134 places, some of them in places where the Name "YHWH" points to the Messiah by that Name. They tinkered with some Messianic prophecies like Ps 22. So it's important to be able to compare the DSS with the Massoret text to see where the Massoretes errors were made.

Most of the differences between the texts are not significant. Despite our earlier discussion of this, most of it matches. The writers did say that some scripts varied from the Massoret by as much as 40%, but I'm not sure how they were counting that - like mere spellings, etc.

The varied readings between the various scrolls were probably part of what prompted the Massoretes 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 Massoretes were the ones who invented those procedures and the discrepancies we seen between the DSS, LXX, Aramaic, and Massoretes and the Samaritan Torah probably prompted the development of those standards. Perhaps the Massoretes 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. Now I know some people would like to bury their head in the sand and pretend that this isn't true and that God would never allow various manuscripts to disagree, but 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 might 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 Massoret over the LXX, sometimes with the LXX over the Massoret. Sometimes it agrees with the ST over the Massoret and sometimes with the Massoret over the ST.

The 430 year period that Israel spent in Egypt seems to be measure from the time Avraham went to Egypt until the time of the Exodus by the LXX and ST and by Paul in Galatians. The Massoret and DSS word it somewhat ambiguously but their wording suggests it is saying the 430 year was all spent in slavery (From Joseph to Moshe). Josephus agrees with the DSS and disagrees with the Massoret text on this issue in his dating of Israeli history. This would not have happened if first century AD thought was in dispute on this, thus the Massoretes must have made this change (probably by mistake) sometime after the first century AD.

Several other extra-Biblical Jewish sources tend to agree with 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 Moshé from Yoseph's journey to Egypt.

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

In the Massoret manuscripts, Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16 seems to conflict with Lev 23 on the timing of Passover. This has always bothered me reading it. But the DSS gives a timing of it that is in perfect harmony with how Lev 23 explains it. I'd say the DSS is clearly more accurate on this scripture because the Massoret disagrees with itself on how to time this. I was so relieved to read this in the DSS because it made my confidence in the word stronger by showing me that the conflict in the Massoret text was not a contradiction that came from G-d, 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 Massoret 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 Massoret is better over the other, but simply illustrates the challenges the scribes had to face. Perhaps the Massorettes came up with the methods they came up with because they had the worst copies of anyway. Who knows??? But 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 are some differences between the DSS and Massoret 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 G-d'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's not a same gap between writing and oldest existing publication is the book of Matthew. The original autograph copy of Matthew was on display in a museum well into the 4th century while copies of Matthew date prior to that. If those early century copies we still have today of 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 Matthew is probably the most reliable book of either set of scriptures.

There are 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 Massoret. In the Massoret text, we have...

2 Sam 10:18 "And David slew the men of **seven hundred** chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen."

1 Chr. 19:18 "David slew of the Syrians **seven thousand** men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen."

Now did G-d inspire the various writers of the Tanakh to report conflicting information, or is it possible that the Massoret scribes made a mistake since one verse says 700 and the other says 7000? And where are the 40,000 on foot or horseback? Some versions of the Septuagint (LXX) say "footmen" in 2 Sam 10:18, agreeing with 1 Chr. 19:18 and indicating that the Massorettes may have (accidentally) altered this verse from a previous version that the LXX was translated from. Something tells me no one ran any Bible Code analysis on this section of scripture. These pieces are missing from the DSS, so we can't get a comparison.

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

2 Sam 11 - The DSS lists Uriah as Joab's armor-bearer, but the Massoret doesn't include this detail. Josephus cites this detail in his writings.

2 Sam 14:30 in the DSS reads "Absalom's servants set the field on fire. *So Joab's servants came to him with their clothes torn and said "Absalom's servants have set the field on fire."*

Now the part I've emphasized here appears in the DSS but not the Massoret. The writers 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 an innocent scribe. But the point is that a single scribal error propagated to **EVERY COPY** the Massorettes have of this verse. So this is evidence of a *single source* of the existing Massoret texts in that a single source, with existing errors from previous versions, was copied and became the Massoret standard such that no Massoret text varies or disagrees with such error.

An error very similar to this one is found in Isa. 16:8-9, with the Massoret having the longer text and a similar, easy to make omission is found in the DSS.

Dan 10:16 -

In the Massoret, 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"

Ps 145 is missing a verse that appears in both the LXX and DSS. So this is clearly a Massoret omission. Again, it's an omission that appears in **EVERY MASSORET TEXT**. And unlike the "easy to understand" omission I mentioned in 2 Sam 14:30, or the somewhat harder to make omission in 2 Sam 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 MASSORET TEXT**.

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

1. Adopted a standard text
2. Stuck to it.
3. Made certain all 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 Ps 145, 2 Sam 11, 2 Sam 14:30, etc., can occur in every Massoret text from an innocent scribal error, then the same circumstances could indeed fuel the ability for the 134 changes, etc, to occur in every Massoret text. 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 Massorettes decided to develop the standards they developed. These scribal errors prompted the need for some means to safeguard how the scrolls were copied. The Massoret standards for copying did not prevent these things from happening, rather the standards was a reaction to the fact that it had been going on. The Massoret 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 Brit Hadassah, 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 Massoretes, the same amount of care or lack thereof, and human error, went into copying the Tanakh as for copying the Brit Hadassah, but extended for thousands of years before we have a copy of antiquity, compared to only hundreds for the Brit Hadassah.

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 New Testament and the Tanakh, the translations into various languages have helped us verify accuracy, since the Massoretes 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 agrees 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.

The 134 Places

The official list of the 134 places where the Massoretes changed "YHWH" to "Adonai" is given in the *Massorah* (§§ 107-15, Ginsburg's edition)

Genesis 18:3, 27, 30, 32; 19:18; 20:4. Exodus 4:10, 13; 5:22; 15:17; 34:9, 9. Numbers 14:17. Joshua 7:8. Judges 6:15; 13:8. 1Kings 3:10, 15; 22:6. 2Kings 7:6; 19:23. Isaiah 3:17,18; 4:4; 6:1,8,11; 7:14,20; 8:7; 9:8,17; 10:12; 11:11; 21:6,8,16; 28:2; 29:13; 30:20; 37:24; 38:14,16; 49:14. Ezekiel 18:25, 29; 21:13; 33:17, 29. Amos 5:16; 7:7, 8; 9:1. Zechariah 9:4. Micah 1:2. Malachi 1:12, 14. Psalm 2:4; 16:2; 22:19,30; 30:8; 35:3,17,22; 37:12; 38:9,15,22; 39:7; 40:17; 44:23; 51:15; 54:4; 55:9; 57:9; 59:11; 62:12; 66:18; 68:11,17,19,22,26,32; 73:20; 77:2,7; 78:65; 79:12; 86:3,4,5,8,9,12,15; 89:49,50; 90:1,17; 110:5; 130:2,3,6. Daniel 1:2; 9:3, 4, 7, 9,15,16,17,19,19,19. Lamentations 1:14,15,15; 2:1,2,5,7,18,19,20; 3:31,36,37,58. Ezra 10:3. Nehemiah 1:11; 4:14. Job 28:28.

To these may be added the following, where "Elohim" was treated the same way:

2Samuel 5:19-25; 6:9-17} Where the KJV says "LORD."
1Chronicles 13:12; 14:10, 11, 14, 16; 16:1. Psalm 14:1, 2, 5; 53:1, 2, 4, 5.} This is where in the Authorized Version and Revised Version the name still appears as "God". It is printed "God" in the *Companion Bible*.

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<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/jovial/learn/mc/TanakVersions.htm>

<http://www.hebrew-roots.com/html/index.php>