

Masoretic Text Summary

The document provides a detailed examination of the Masoretic Text, its origins, transmission, and significance in Jewish and Christian traditions.

Masoretic Text

- The Masoretic Text (MT) is the authoritative Hebrew-Aramaic text of the Hebrew Bible in Rabbinic Judaism.
- It was primarily compiled by the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE.
- The oldest complete copy, the Leningrad Codex, dates to 1009 CE and serves as the basis for many translations.
- Variations in the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate multiple Hebrew scripture versions existed by the end of the Second Temple period.

Origin Transmission

- The oldest manuscript fragments of the MT date from the 9th century, with the Leningrad Codex being the oldest complete copy.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls show no uniform text during the Second Temple period, with many variations from the MT.
- Approximately 60% of Qumran fragments align with proto-Masoretic texts, while 20% show Qumran style variations.

Rabbinic Period

- The emphasis on precise spelling and details in the text peaked during the time of Rabbi Akiva (died 135 CE).
- Very few manuscripts survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, leading to a push for text preservation.
- A fragment from the En-Gedi Scroll, carbon-dated to the 3rd or 4th century CE, matches the MT.

Age of Masoretes

- The Masoretes established the MT's authority through their meticulous copying and error-control techniques.
- Different local traditions existed, leading to variations in pronunciation and cantillation among the Masoretes' texts.
- The Tiberias school became the chief seat of learning, with significant differences from other schools.

Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali

- Aaron ben Moses ben Asher and Ben Naphtali were leading Masoretes, with Ben Asher's codex becoming the standard.
- Differences between their texts mainly involve accent placement and vowel usage, totaling about 875 variations.
- Ben Asher's codex is recognized as the standard text, despite no complete manuscript being based solely on it.

Middle Ages

- The Masorah was largely finalized by the 10th century, with few additions made by later Masoretes.
- The Franco-German Tosafists influenced the development and spread of Masoretic literature during the 11th to 13th centuries.

Masorah

- The Masorah includes annotations for pronunciation, cantillation, and variants, ensuring accurate transmission of the text.
- It consists of vowel points, pronunciation marks, and extensive notes in margins, reflecting the Masoretes' efforts to prevent errors.

Numerical Masorah

- The Numerical Masorah categorizes notes into marginal and final Masorah, focusing on statistics of letters and words.
- It includes observations on spelling variations and references to Kethiv-Qere readings, emphasizing the importance of accurate transmission.

Fixing of Text

- Early Masoretes standardized the text's division into books, sections, and verses while fixing orthography and pronunciation.
- They marked divisions and provided annotations to guide readers, ensuring the text's integrity and adherence to tradition.

Scribal Emendations – Tikkune Soferim

- Tikkune Soferim refers to changes made by scribes to avoid unseemly expressions or safeguard the Tetragrammaton.
- These emendations are attributed to the Men of the Great Assembly and include four general types of corrections.

Inverted Letters

- Inverted nuns appear in nine passages, notably surrounding Numbers 10:35-36, indicating textual significance or placement issues.
- These markings have historical roots and were used to denote important textual elements in ancient manuscripts.

History of Masorah

- The history of the Masorah is divided into three periods: creative, reproductive, and critical, reflecting its evolution over time.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls have provided insights into the MT's history, showing both similarities and differences with earlier texts.

Some Important Editions

- Key editions of the Masoretic Text include the second Rabbinic Bible by Daniel Bomberg (1524-1525) and the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.
- These editions have influenced translations and the understanding of the MT in both Jewish and Christian contexts.