

1. The following is a list of some of the terms you may see as you read the preface to any of the different translations available today or any material concerning the history of the "Bible."
  - A. Masoretic text (codex - manuscript)
  - B. Septuagint (LXX or the 70 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C.)
  - C. Targum (basically means - "interpretation"- Chaldee paraphrases of Scripture)
  - D. Torah (teaching - First 5 books of the O.T)
  - E. Talmud (instruction - made up of the Mishna and Gemara)
  - F. Dead Sea Scrolls (the caves of Qumran)
2. The absence of original or very old copies of manuscripts should not be a surprise. There were repeated persecutions, captivity, destruction, and pilfering of possessions that the Jews were subject.
3. But for those manuscripts that are available - they were meticulously preserved by the Masoretes.
4. They were Jewish scholars who between AD 500 and 950 gave the final form to the text of the O.T. This group of Jewish scribe-scholars worked between the 6th and 10th centuries A.D. (William the Conqueror - first Norman King of England - 1066)
5. They were based primarily in present-day Israel in the cities of Tiberias and Jerusalem, as well as in Iraq (Babylonia).
6. They were called Masoretes because they preserved in writing the oral tradition (masorah) concerning the correct vowels and accents, and the number of occurrences of rare words or unusual spellings.
7. In the manuscripts - no division between the words - each line presenting a continuous row of letters - it might easily happen that one word would be wrongly divided into two or two combined into one.

**Example:** In the old story of the man who wrote over his bed "God is nowhere - which was read by his young son as "God is now here."

**Psalm 48:14** - some Hebrew manuscripts have **HL-MTH** = unto death, others **HLMTH** = forever.

**1 Chronicles 8:28 and 9:34**

8. They accepted the labor-intensive job of editing the text and standardizing it. The text that they preserved is called the "Masoretic" text.
9. They built in many safeguards so they would know if anything was done incorrectly in the scribal process. Still - the earliest Masoretic manuscripts in existence dated from about A.D. 1000 and later.
10. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the same question remained, "How accurate are the copies we have today compared to the first century and earlier?"

11. The earliest complete copy of the O.T. dates from the tenth century.
12. Then the next big question, "Understanding that the text has been copied over many times, can we trust it?"
13. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide an interesting answer.
14. The oldest complete Hebrew manuscripts known to be in existence before the Dead Sea Scrolls were from 900 A.D.
15. There were 11 caves and approximately 40,000 inscribed fragments. The discovery of the first cave was made in 1947 by a Bedouin shepherd boy.
16. One of the scrolls found in the caves was a complete manuscript of the Hebrew text of Isaiah. It dates back to about 125 B.C.
17. The detailed closeness of the Isaiah scroll (125 B.C.) to the Masoretic text (900 A.D.) is significant.
18. Here is an example:
  - Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53 - there are only 17 letters in question.
  - Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling - which does not affect the sense.
  - 4 more letters are minor stylistic changes - such as conjunctions.
  - The 3 remaining letters comprise the word "light" - which is added in verse 11 - and does not affect the meaning.
19. The analysis of Hebrew scholars; the Isaiah copies of the Qumran community have proven to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text.
20. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. It is amazing that through a period of a thousand years - the text underwent so little alteration.
21. The major conclusion was that there was no significant difference between the Isaiah scroll at Qumran and the Masoretic Hebrew text dated 1,000 years later.
22. This confirmed the reliability of our present Hebrew text.
23. So - with the copyists' errors and variations - the most ancient of all the books of the world has virtually no variations at all.
24. Since the O.T. text is related in important ways to the N.T., its reliability supports the Christian faith. This is true not only in establishing the dates when prophecies were made concerning the Messiah - but also in supporting the accuracy and importance of the O.T. that Jesus and the N.T. writers affirmed.