

The orthography change is pre-masoretic and probably occurred three hundred years before the current era. (This was the change in writing Hebrew from a cursive to a square script). The science of ancient writing, of course, is known as paleography

A great many traditions abound for the period and we do not go into many of these. The lack of materials is due, in part if not in the majority of cases, to the Hebrew custom of destroying scrolls no longer in use. The geniza, a vault in connexion with the synagogue, was used as a storage point and in time the documents were burned or, as suggested in the Qumran case, buried. The Hebrew attitude towards the sacred Scriptures is also responsible for the lack of many copies and this contributes to the shortage of pre-masoretic documents. Then, too, the fact that many of the fragments are on readily destructible material, papyrus, etc., is a factor in the demolishment of the documents.

2. The Masoretic Text

a. History

(1) The Terms:

Spelling: Technically the terms built around the word Masora are spelled with one medial "s" or two depending on the conviction of the speller! Individual scholars have strong preferences and in this syllabus you will likely see it spelled several ways without care or distinction. The problem grows from an understanding of the Hebrew root from which the term is developed.

Basically the root is either "to bind" "to hand down" "to go straight" and the word "happiness is later derived from the root or a post-biblical root meaning "to hand down". In the case of the first, the form would be a characteristic participle in the Pe Aleph verb and would appear as . . . The strongest argument, I think would be for the second term and thus the noun would imply tradition . . . that which is handed down one generation to the other. (NOTE: if the participle is the root the sin is doubled and this is why the form is sometimes spelled "Massoretic"., If from the second term the sin is singular and the spelling is "Masoretic".) In this line, the Masora would be what was handed down and the Masoretes would be the ones who did the handing and the Masoretic age would be the time when they did it and the Masoretic text would be the product. Wow! In this