

A strong political ethnic voice during this time was that of the Karaite Jews. They were ferociously orthodox, competent traditionalists, and to some extent missionary minded. They expanded the size of the Jewish community while maintaining the scope of the tradition. Their insistence on the exactness of the tradition militated for the precision of the Masoretic influence. In time Cabbalism grew from the Karaite sphere as did other legalistic and letteristic cults of Judaism. If one wishes to read more on this line, I recommend Hedegard: SEDAR AMRAM BEN GAON; as a study of cultic growth and influence of Jewish leaders of this time. Exactness in preserving the custom had become the watchword of the Jewish society.

--The Masoretic text, then, is not one manuscript but is the compilation of all the manuscripts that the Masoretes have handed to us. It is not one unified, codified body of material but a mass of traditional reading. Many masoretic texts make up the masoretic text but as a single unit there is no such thing that one could write about in a book and entitle it "The Masoretic Text". Such a description identifies all the traditional text passings of the Masoretes and includes volumes of literary texts.

When one decides to work with a Hebrew text in the Old Testament, one works with a Masoretic text. The exceptions, of course, are Qumran texts although there is only a fragment of the Old Testament available from that source.

The Masoretic text then is the Hebrew text of the Old Testament as passed to us through the skillful fingers of many copiests of the early middle ages whom we call the Masoretes.

### (3) Development

The threat to traditional Judaism as posed by the church's use of the Septuagint meant that the Jewish community lost the text of the Old Testament that had been uniquely theirs. The Septuagint had been prepared for Jews, not Christians, and there is good evidence that it had become almost an "official" text in and by the time of Philo. But the church "took it over" and began to reinterpret it in such a way as to work against the Jews..thus posing a threat to traditional Judaism.