

b. mistake of eye, ear in copying. A matter of seeing or hearing one thing and writing something else which in the mind of the scribe at the time is similar and thus confused.

c. theological alterations. Those places where the scribes altered the text to avoid disgracing the Divine Name are good examples. Probably more of these occur than are listed by the Sebirrim but the number should not be magnified disproportionately.

d. isolation. As the communities concerned with the text were diverse and had little opportunity to compare work, it was rather easy for a small text variance to occur and be perpetuated in a given community without the benefit of the corrective skills of the total group.

When encountering a text where alternate readings are to be had, these things must be remembered and one must see if any of them would affect the text. If no alternate readings are available, some problems from this line may be cautiously postulated when advisable.

3. Evaluating Witnesses and Materials

As a general principle, I offer this advice: if the Hebrew text is uniform in reading, it stands as a powerful argument that no further work is needed although the conclusion to the last section must be borne in mind. If any of these items are thought to have occurred but there is no translation evidence to support such suggestion, the suggested alteration should at least be held in abeyance as a possibility...but not as a strong likelihood. If there are variations in the Hebrew text, the following points are procedural suggestions:

a. Hebrew variants

--Pre-masoretic variations must be held as being potentially more correct and yet not absolutely mandatory. There must have been some reasons why they were not continued and that makes us suspicious of them. This is also true of the Qumran materials.

--Variations in the text based on Qumran literature tend to show the difference in orientation and possibly a difference in families. They must be considered carefully as at least adding light to the text.