Evidences for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Vowel Points

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I. Introduction

In modern times, unlike in past centuries, there is something close to a consensus among both theological liberals and evangelicals that the vowel points of the Hebrew Old Testament were added by a group of scribes called the Tiberian Masorites somewhere between A. D. 500-1000. However, among certain groups of fundamentalists, notably those that defend the Authorized Version and its underlying Hebrew and Greek Received Texts, affirmations of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowel points are still made today. Advocates for the inspired vocalization of the Hebrew text make a variety of arguments

1 Compare the essay “The Battle Over the Hebrew Vowel Points, Examined Particularly As Waged in England,” by Thomas Ross, for an examination of the historical debate over the inspiration of the vowels. The essay is available at http://sites.google.com/site/thross7.

2 The position explained in the sentence above will be referred to elsewhere in this paper as the TM position. TM will thus be shorthand for “Tiberian Masorite(s).” Similarly, TMT will be employed to refer to the words “Tiberian Masorite Theory;” the view that a school of Masorites at Tiberias invented the Hebrew vowels found in the Old Testament. The view that the vowel points were given to the writers of Scripture by inspiration will be referred to as the IV position, that is, the “Inspired Vowels [Position].” Also, the Hebrew Textus Receptus, the 1524-1525 2nd Rabbinic Bible edited by Jacob ben Chayyim, and more specifically the Hebrew Old Testament underneath the English King James Version, will be referred to as the MTR, the “Masoretic Textus Receptus.” Advocates of the IV typically believe the MTR is a perfectly preserved representative of the autographs, along with the edition of the Greek Textus Receptus edited by Scrivener that exactly replicates the Greek New Testament underlying the King James Bible. The Hebrew text printed by the Trinitarian Bible Society (Holy Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the Original Languages: תהלים נביאיםｳﾒﾖן, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. ה קאין ﺪﻴﺎΘ ﻢﺤ، Beza/Scrivener, 1894. London, England: Tyndale House/Trinitarian Bible Society, 1894/1998) is the MTR. This printed text represents “Jacob ben Chayim’s Massoretic Recension, printed by Bomberg, at Venice, in the year 1524-5. . . . No variations, however strongly supported by Hebrew Manuscripts and Ancient Versions, are introduced into the Text itself, which has been compiled strictly in accordance with the Massorah collected from the Manuscripts. . . . All variations are relegated entirely to the margin” (pg III, Preface, Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible, Christian D. Ginsburg. London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897). This edition of the Hebrew Old Testament “[by] Jacob ben Chayim, a Jewish Christian . . . became the standard edition of the Hebrew Old Testament. It was the first to present a complete Masorah—the Masoretic notes on the text—and was the second Rabbinic Bible, the only authorized Masoretic recension, becoming in time the ‘textus receptus’ of the Old Testament. It has been reprinted in numerous editions over the past four hundred years and was used as the basis for the Old Testament for many Reformation-era translations such as the English Authorized Version and the Dutch Statenvertaling, as well as many versions up to the present day” (preface to the The Holy Scriptures in the Original Languages: תהלים נביאיםｳﾒﾖן, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. ה קאין ﺪﻴﺎΘ ﻢﺤ, Beza/Scrivener, 1894). Other abbreviations, such as MS for manuscript or MSS for manuscripts, and K/Q for Kethiv/Qere, are also employed. A facsimile of the actual 1524-1525 MTR is available for download at http://sites.google.com/site/thross7. It should be noted, however, that the MTR that underlies the KJV is not in every jot and tittle exactly the same as the text of the 1524-1525 Ben Chayyim text—e. g., Joshua 21:36-37 is not present in the 1524-1525 edition (cf. pg. 48, vol. 2 of the 1524-1525 facsimile): “R. Jacob ben Chayim has omitted vv. 36 and 37 from his Rabbinical Bible of the year 1525 as spurious, upon the authority of Kimchi and the larger Masora; but upon insufficient grounds, as these verses are to be found in many good MSS and old editions of an earlier date than 1525, as well as in all the ancient versions, and could not possibly have been wanting from the very first” (footnote #53 to Joshua 21:36-37, in Keil & Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament. elec. acc. Christian Library Series, vol. 15: Classic Commentary Collection).
from Scripture itself for their position. The analysis below sets forth certain evidences outside of the realm of the presuppositions of the verbal, plenary inspiration and preservation of Scripture in favor of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels. It also critically examines the main arguments employed in favor of the hypothesis that the vowels were added centuries after the completion of the canon by the Tiberian Masorites. It should thus be viewed as an evidentialist supplement to the presuppositional arguments for the inspiration of the vowels made by modern defenders of the Received Text and the Authorized Version.

II. Evidence for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Vowels from the New Testament

In Matthew 5:18, the Lord Jesus declared, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Similarly, in Luke 16:17, He stated, “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.” In Matthew 5:18, the “jot” speaks of the smallest Hebrew consonant, the yod (י), and the tittle or keraia (κεραία) refers to the smallest

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4 The author of this paper is committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of every word dictated by the Holy Spirit in the canon, as well as to the verbal, plenary preservation of those inspired words in the Old and New Testament Received Texts. He recognizes that the testimony of Scripture itself on any topic is absolutely certain and authoritative, and uninspired evidence is by no means comparable to the testimony of the Word revealed from heaven. Nevertheless, in the analysis below the question of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels is addressed from the viewpoint of uninspired historical evidences, not because they are in any way equivalent to the testimony of Scripture itself, but to supply a gap in the current debate over the vowels’ inspiration.

The evidentialist perspective adopted in this essay does not mean that verses from the Bible will not be analyzed—if, for example, Matthew 5:18 refers to a Hebrew vowel in its reference to the “tittle” or keraia, the text provides evidence that the vowel points were extant in the first century A. D., even apart from the fact of the inspired declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ in the passage. It should also be stated that the evidences adumbrated below are merely preliminary and are intended to provoke further discussion and examination. Even apart from the epistemological fact that Scripture alone, not history, is infallible truth, no claim is advanced that the historical and uninspired arguments and evidences below are all irrefutable.

5 ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἔως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ιῶτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραίᾳ οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἔως ἂν πάντα γένηται. εὐκοπώτερον δὲ ἔστι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν παρέλθειν, ἢ τοῦ νόμου μίαν κεραίαν πεσεῖν.

6 It should be noted that the teaching by the Lord Jesus that the yod is the smallest Hebrew consonant also validates the traditional square Hebrew letters found in the Masoretic text. The Samaritan letters, which much of modern scholarship erroneously affirms are older than the square script, contain a large yod, not a diminutive one. Matthew 5:18 only makes sense if the Son of God refers to the square
Hebrew vowel, a single dot, the *chireq* (ך). The Christ’s promise is that not a single stroke or dot, not the smallest vowel or consonant, would fail in the entire Hebrew Old Testament. The fact that the Lord Jesus states that a single dot, the smallest Hebrew vowel, would not pass from the Law, and His evident recognition of the equality of the Hebrew vowels and consonants, evidences the equal inspiration of both the consonants and the vowels of the Hebrew text, while also clearly evidencing that the Hebrew vowels were already extant, not added close to a millennium later, as asserted by the *TMT*. If not a single dot or stroke would pass from the Law, then not only would not a single *chireq*, but other vowels of several dots (ג, ה, ו, ע), the other vowels which are formed of lines, that is, of dots together forming lines (ג), those that are combinations of dots and lines (ג, י), and likewise the accents, many of which are composed of several dots (ג and so also כ, ר, מ etc.) would not pass from the Law. Thus, the Author of Scripture testified to the existence, inspiration, and preservation of the Hebrew vowels and accents in the first century.

The use of *keraia* for single dots and minuitia is evidenced in a variety of extrabiblical documents. For example, Dio Chrystostom wrote, “if anyone should go to the building where your public records are kept and erase one titlè of your law, or one single syllable of a decree [κεραίαν νόμου τινός ἢ ψηφίσματος μίαν μόνην

character. One notes that in Isaiah 9:6 the word “increase,” לִֽשָּׁהֶרְחָה, has a final *mem* in the middle of the word. The Masorites noted מְכֹר הָרָה כָּרְה הָרָה, that is, “Shut Mem in the middle of the word” (see Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah, vol. 1, John Calvin, on Isaiah 9:6, trans. William Pringle, footnote #135, elec. acc. Albany, OR: AGES Digital Software Library, 1998.) Since Samaritan characters do not have final letter forms, this text provides evidence that the square Hebrew characters are original. One notes as well that Nehemiah 2:13 has an open מ at the end of a word. George Bishop (pgs. 57-59, The Doctrines of Grace) provides further strong evidences for the originality of the square character. One notes also that only a “few Qumran manuscripts are in . . . Paleo-Hebrew [the Samaritan character], but the majority of biblical texts from Qumran and later are in the Jewish [traditional square] script” (An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, Bruce Waltke & M. O’Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990; 1.5.3d). Specifically, there are 190-1 texts in the traditional square character and only 12 in the Samaritan script (pgs. 104-105, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Tov). Furthermore, “the texts written in the paleo-Hebrew [Samaritan] script do not belong to the earliest group of the Qumran scrolls” (pg. 106, *ibid*). Both the most ancient extant Hebrew MSS, and the overwhelming majority of the oldest MSS, are in the traditional Hebrew square script. Thus, the actual evidence of Biblical MSS is consistent with the Scriptural data affirming the originality of the traditional square Hebrew script, and the affirmation of the originality of the Samaritan letters is based upon the unproven assumptions of theological liberalism.

One notes also that the alternative non-Tiberian punctuation called *Syro-Palestinian or Samaritan* “is not certainly marked in Hebrew texts other than Samaritan” (pg. 196, “Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period,” E. J. Revell, Journal for the Study of Judaism, Vol. 7:2) and should not in any way be preferred or accepted alongside of the punctuation in the *MTR* as a representation of the inspired originals.
Similarly, Plutarch wrote of “quibbling over syllables and titles [‘ζυγομοχεῖν περὶ συλλαβῶν καὶ κεραίαν].” Philo, writing of one who corrupted various Greek documents, stated, “He was exchanging, altering and turning up and down the letters, according to the syllables, but rather even each title [ὑπηλλάττετο μεταποίων καὶ μεταστηθεὶς καὶ στρέφων ἄνω κάτω τὰ γράμματα, κατὰ συλλαβῆν, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ κεραίαν ἐκάστην].” Here the word is used for something less than a letter, such as an accent mark or similar minuita. Hence the standard New Testament Greek lexicon lists the texts above from Philo, Dio Chrysostom, and Plutarch under the category of keraia in the sense of “accents and breathings.” The Liddell-Scott lexicon states that the keraia can refer to a “mark placed over [a] letter to indicate length,” and categorizes not only, among other extra-Biblical texts, the reference to Plutarch above in this category, but also Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17 themselves. Pasor’s Greek lexicon states that the keraia refers to “an apex, a point. Matthew 5:18. μία κεραία οὐ μή παρέληθη . . . a single apex shall not pass out of the law. By which is meant here a point. Therefore vowel points existed in the time of Christ, and [they are] not, as certain ones are pretending, a recent invention.” The view that the title referred to a specific particle is also found in the first centuries of Christian history. There is consequently a reasonable case for seeing the word keraia in Matthew 5:18 and 16:17 as referring to something less than a letter, such as an accent mark or similar minuita.

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10 Flaccus, 131.
14 For example, Augustine declared, “[A]s to what He says, “One iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law,” nothing else can be understood but a strong expression of perfection, since it is pointed out by means of single letters, among which letters ‘iota’ is smaller than the others, for it is made by a single stroke; while a ‘tittle’ is but a particle of some sort at the top of even that. And by these words He shows that in the law all the smallest particulars even are to be carried into effect. After that He subjoins: “Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” Hence it is the least commandments that are meant by ‘one iota’ and ‘one tittle’” (Augustine, Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Book I, Chapter 8, trans. from A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff. Edinburgh: T & T Clark. Elec. acc. Oak Tree Software, Inc.). While Augustine, who appears to have been ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, does not specifically say that the tittle is a Hebrew vowel, he does state that it is a
5:18; Luke 16:17 as a reference to and a promise of the preservation of already extant Hebrew vowels and accent marks.

Indeed, the Greek word keraia (κεραία) has, by some, been specifically derived from the Hebrew vowel chireq (חָ֫יֵ֫ךְ), as a Greek transliteration of this Hebrew word. They then conclude that, as the chireq is a single dot, the smallest of the Hebrew vowels and one from which all the rest can be derived, the Lord Jesus affirmed the inspiration and preservation of all the Hebrew consonants and vowels through His statement that not the smallest of the consonants (the yod) or vowels (the chireq) would be corrupted. For this specific connection of chireq to keraia to be valid, ɣ must be the equivalent of κ, ı̂ equivalent to ε, ّ equivalent to ρ, Debej̄ equivalent to α, and ʕ equivalent to α.

There are several ways in which one could argue for an equation of ʀ with κ. First, one notes that the letters sound similar. Second, one notes that at times Hebrew words beginning with ʀ are transliterated in Greek with κ; the city ʀən, for example, is called καρρά by various Greek writers, such as Ptolomy and Hadrian. Furthermore, Josephus transliterates the word as καρραν in Antiquities 1:16:1:244. One can compare also ʀ̃ / Κελζζ (Joshua 17:2), Ṣ̄ Ṣ̄ / Κανν (1 Samuel 23:15-16, 18-19) in the LXX for further examples of a ʀ/κ interchange. Third, the equivalence of both ʀ and 旸 with χ, and of 旸 with κ, can be used to establish the equivalence of ʀ and κ.

There are also places where ɣ is transliterated as ε. For example, in 1 Samuel 14:50 Ṣ̄ Ṣ̄ is transliterated as Αβενη. Note also 1 Samuel 26:6, Ṣ̄ Ṣ̄/Αβεσσα, 1

particular and distinct sort of particle, not to a serif or to part of a letter, as the TMT interpretation of Matthew 5:18 affirms.


16 Of course, κ is not the only letter which ʀ is transliterated into, as will be verified by even a cursory comparison of, e. g., the Hebrew Bible and the LXX. One also notes that there is a variety of textual-critical and translation questions, the answers to which are uncertain, that influence the rendition of Hebrew words and names in particular in MSS of the LXX.

17 Pg. 51, Brief Memoir, John Rippon.

18 This method is employed and documented on pgs. 333-334 of One Tittle Shall In No Wise Pass, Kulus. Kulus’ conclusion is as follows: “[S]tep one, ʀ (ch) = χ (ch); from step two, 旸 (k) = χ (ch); and from step three, 旸 (k) = κ (k); therefore, by two substitutions, ʀ (ch) = κ (k).” While this sort of multiple-step equation of letters, as employed by Kulus, is here mentioned, it is not a very strong or effective method of argument. If one can find instances of direct transfer of Hebrew letters into Greek, this multiple-step method is unnecessary. If one cannot find instances of direct transliteration of Hebrew into Greek, then the multiple-step conclusion is very dubious.
Samuel 28:7, נֶדֶר נַע/velopment, 1 Chronicles 1:31, בָּשָׁבָם/ נגופף. Further arguments can be given to demonstrate the possibility of such a transliteration.¹⁹

The Hebrew נ is usually transliterated as ρ. A few of the many examples of this equivalence are Joshua 13:25, נב/Ῥαββα, Jeremiah 39:3 (46:3, LXX) נב/Ῥαββαμαγ, and Nehemiah 7:50 נב/Ῥαα. The transliteration of נ to ρ is self-evident.

At times, ρ can be equivalent to α. In 2 Samuel 3:5, נב becomes Αιγλα, in Joshua 12:12 נב becomes Αιλαμ, and in Joshua 13:31 נב becomes Εδραιón.

Finally, ρ would have to be equivalent to α. Gill argues for this equivalence as follows:

[Having already equated] the first and principle syllable in the word κερ, [then] there is only ρ at the end of the word to be accounted for: and that and נ, in some languages, are used promiscuously: as in Behek and Behah. Besides, in the Chaldee or Syro-Chaldean language, used in Christ’s time, and before, the same word, which ends in נ, κα, has the termination of κύ, αα, or αια. Thus araka is read araa in the same verse, Jeremiah 10:11, and then, put all together, and you have the word κεραια or κεραία.²⁰

Gill’s point is verified in the Aramaic of Jeremiah 10:11, where the words rendered the earth, נב/א in the first instance of this English phrase in the verse but נב/א in the second, in both cases in exact parallel to נב, form an exact parallel and demonstrate the equation of the sounds in question. Gill’s contention is also consistent with modern studies in the development of the Aramaic language. The standard lexicon for Biblical Hebrew²¹ discusses the interplay in the Hebrew form נב and the Aramaic forms נב and נב in Old, Egyptian, Imperial, Jewish, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic and other cognate tongues.

Based on the connection of κεραία to נב, Gill argued:

Now as our Lord refers to the least Letter (Yod) in the Hebrew language, and from which all the other letters are derived, as some learned men have observed, this being a part and branch of each of them; so it need not be wondered at, that he should refer to the least Point in that language, from which all the rest come.

¹⁹ Compare Kulus, One Tittle Shall No Wise Pass, pg. 335.
²⁰ Pg. 52, A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D. D., by John Rippon (elec. acc. John Gill Collection). Gill’s argument is more convincing than the reasoning of Kulus on pgs. 336-337 of his book. Indeed, Kulus’ method of equating transliterated letters with each other through substitution is not especially convincing. Direct transliteration is far superior methodologically.
And, indeed, though the Points are represented as very numerous, yet there is but one point in the whole language, and that is Chirek which is diversified, or placed in a different position. Thus Patach is only Chirek diteted [written out in a line]; Kametz is that in a cluster; Segol is three of them set in a triangle; Tzere is two of them in a direct line; and Sheva is two more in a perpendicular one; and Kibbutz is three of them placed obliquely; and, when placed in the middle of Vau, or above that, or another letter, it is either an u or an o. And the like observations may be made on all the compound vowels.

Gill’s argument concerning the vowels could be extended to the accents as well. Thus, an etymological derivation of κεραία from ρηρη gives evidence for the existence of the Hebrew vowels at the time of Christ.

While one could raise a variety of objections, some of which are quite significant, to the direct equation of the words κεραία and ρηρη, the argument is substantive enough to deserve consideration, although it is by no means certain. Even without such a direct derivation, extrabiblical Greek demonstrates the clear propriety of employing κεραία for a single point or dot. It is thus an appropriate word to designate the Hebrew vowels and accents, for Gill’s observation that the chireq is the smallest of the Hebrew vowels, and the one from which all the others are derived, retains its validity even apart from the specific question of the correctness of his argument based on transliteration.

The view of the TMT that the keraia of Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17 refers to the strokes that differentiate Hebrew consonants such as ג and ד possesses certain objections. While BDAG states that the word can refer to a “part of a letter, a serif,” it does not provide any unambiguous examples of this category of usage. The lexicon gives references from the Sibylline Oracles where keraia refers to a complete letter and

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22 Pg. 51-52, A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D. D., by John Rippon (elec. acc. John Gill Collection). Gill goes on to mention further evidence for the equation of keraia and chireq, including this specific rendering in Hutter’s Hebrew version of the New Testament. He also poses problems for Capellus’ equation of the keraia with “the cornicated apices, pricks, or spikes upon the tops of some letters” as “not in use in [Christ’s] time,” and which, besides, are not actually constituent parts of the word.

23 Representative problems in the derivation include: 1.) The fact that the connections between the letters of κεραία and ρηρη in Greek and Hebrew that must be equivalent are frequently not the most common or obvious. 2.) The absence of documentary evidence for the Hebrew word ρηρη in other writings of the time period. 3.) The more apparently natural derivation of κεραία from κέρας, giving it the significance of “little horn.”

24 There are other interpretive options given by TMT advocates. For example, Günther Schwartz (“ιώτα έν ἦ μια σχετόις.” Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 66 (1975) 268–69) concludes that the keraia is the ί, although he also says, “Was dagegen κεραία bedeutet, ist nich so sicher.”

25 Keraia is found in Sibyl 5:21, 24-25, 28, 37-38, 40, 42; 12:39, 50, 101, 125; 13:84. In none of these verses does it refer to a serif or to part of a letter—in each instance a complete letter is signified, e. g.,
places all other listed examples in the category “accents and breathings.” If the *keraia* in Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17 really refers to parts of the Hebrew consonants in the Old Testament, rather than to the vocalization of the text, the vowels and accents, why does BDAG, the standard lexicon for Koiné Greek, not reference a single instance of *keraia* as part of a letter in the Koiné? This fact would support the *IV* view that the references by the Son of God to the *keraia* would be to the vowels and accents of the Hebrew Bible. The *IV* advocate would affirm that to equate the *keraia* of the Gospels with part of a

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5:21, “who will have his first letter of the number of three hundred,” ὃς τε τριηκοσίων ἄριθμων κεραίην ἐπὶ πρώτην.

26 Nonetheless, Lampe’s *Patristic Greek Lexicon* lists a significant number of examples to support the definition that the word *keraia* can refer to “the small projection occurring in strokes of certain Hebrew letters such as differentiates ꝏ from Ꝑ.” A good number of the examples listed appear ambiguous, but the example from Eusebius *Commentarius in Ps.* 33:1 (Migne, 23.292C) appears to provide definite support for this definition. This quotation refers to “confusion between Abimelech and Ahimelech (LXX 1 Reg. 21:1; Ps 33:1),” that is, to the fact that the Hebrew text in 1 Samuel 21:2 reads ꝙτῶν θυσίας, while in Psalm 33:1 (Eng. Psalm 34 title) it reads ꝣτῶν θυσίας, while the LXX reads Ἀβιμέληξ in both instances (as it does in 1 Samuel 21:3; 9: 22:9, 11, 14, 16, 20; 23:6; Psalm 52:2). Note, however, that the LXX follows the Hebrew ꝝτῶν θυσίας in 1 Samuel 26:6; 30:7; 2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 24:3; 6; 24:31 writing Ἀχιμέληξ. Note also that the Hebrew actually distinguishes between a Ꝑ and a ꝑ, not a ꝕ and a Ꝑ, but the question at hand is not the accuracy of Eusebius’ exegesis, but the sense he gives to the word *keraia*. With reference to this confusion, Lampe’s *Lexicon* records that Eusebius wrote: παρὰ ... τὴν ὀμοιότητα τοῦ στοιχείου τοῦ βῆθ ... καὶ τοῦ χῶρ διαφόρους εξεσθένῃ τοῦ νόμου: σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐν καὶ ταυτὸν ἐστὶ τὰ δύο στοιχεῖα, βραχυτάτης κεραίας νόνης εναλλαττούσης. The quotation, with more context, is Καὶ ταῦτα πάντα πέρασαν, διοίκησε Δαυὶδ τὸν τρόπον αὐτοῦ ἤ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον Ἀβιμέληξ. Ἡ τῶν Βασιλείων Γραφῆ Ἀχιμέληξ περιέχει εναλλαττήσεις στοιχείου γενομένης, οὕτως δεῖ κινεῖσθαι παρὰ γὰρ τὴν ὀμοιότητα τοῦ στοιχείου τοῦ βῆθ παρ’ Ἐβραίων καλουμένου καὶ τοῦ χῶρ διαφόρος εξεσθένῃ τοῦ νόμου: σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐν καὶ ταυτὸν ἐστὶ τὰ δύο στοιχεῖα, βραχυτάτης κεραίας νόνης εναλλαττούσης. The sense of the text in English is: “And when all these things were done, David changed his manner or his face before Abimelech. Or the Book of Kings contains Ἀχιμέληξ, nothing being necessary to set in motion a disorder of the letters. For by the Hebrews the likeness of the letter *bet* and *kaphe* being called [is great], the name being given out differing. For the two letters are almost one, the smallest title only being changed.”

While this appears to give support for Lampe’s categorization, one could argue that his specification of the nearness of the two στοιχείων indicates that Eusebius refers to the differentiation in sound between the two letters in question, rather than to the differentiation in shape between the letters Ꝑ and ꝑ, since στοιχείου refers fundamentally to the sound of the letter, rather than to the letter itself, especially since the Hebrew text does not contain a Ꝑ, but a ꝑ. One could then allege that the translation above should replace the word letter with something such as: “For the two letter sounds are almost one.” The στοιχείου would then designate the similarity in sound between the Ꝑ and the ꝑ. Against this attempted rebuttal, one notes that the word στοιχείον definitely comes to designate actual letters as well as sounds, whatever the case might be about its original use. Thus, this response may be a stretch. One who wished to attempt to deny the etymological possibility that the word *keraia* in Scripture as a reference to a Ꝑ Ꝑ sort of distinction would do better pointing out that Eusebius wrote around three hundred years after the composition of the gospels, and that the sense of *keraia* in this Eusebian sense should be established by evidence from earlier centuries.

To acquire a more definitive view of the *keraia*, a thorough examination should be made using the Thesaurus Linguæ Graecæ.
Hebrew consonant appears to be a way to avoid the natural evidence of the text for both the existence and inspiration of the Hebrew vowels.27

III. Extra-Biblical Evidences for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Vowel Points From Uninspired Ancient Documents Composed Before the Time Required by the Tiberian Masorite Theory

In addition to the argument for the points from the New Testament, advocates for the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels employ a variety of arguments from other documents in favor of their inspiration. A selection of representative evidences will be presented.28 Various documents that predate the time allowed by the TMT evidence the existence of the vowel points. For example, the Talmud contains statements that are very incongruous if only an unpointed text existed.29 The Babylonian Talmud states:

“For Joab and all Israel remained there until he had cut off every male in Edom”
(1 Kings 11:16).
When Joab came before David, he said to him, “How come you did it this way [killing only the males]?”
He said to him, “Because it is written, ‘You shall blot out the males [דנ] of Amalek (Deuteronomy 25:19).’”

While the evidences above provide, in the mind of this author, substantial evidence for the superiority of the IV view to the TMT position on Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17, one who wishes to deal with the question more conclusively should, as noted above, do a study of κεφαλα in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. This writer has not conducted such an analysis (nor did he verify the single listed reference that appears to favor the TMT in Liddell-Scott’s Greek Lexicon), but he commends such a study to his readers as a worthy of further investigation, or, perhaps, a useful dissertation topic for an enterprising preservationist scholar.

This writer does not claim originality for most of his arguments. They may be found in the variety of the works of the numerous advocates of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels, a significant sampling of which are mentioned in “The Battle Over the Hebrew Vowel Points, Examined Particularly As Waged in England,” by Thomas Ross (http://thross7.googlepages.com).

The texts below are by no means the only relevant citations. Whitfield, for example, writes:
The Talmudic Treatise of Vows [mentions that] R. Johannes expounds the Mishna thus: That it was lawful for a Man to take a Reward for teaching the Use of the Accents לִפְסַר קַשֶּׁי קַשֶּׁי, notwithstanding he was, by Vow, obliged not to teach the Law for Reward...[T]he [Talmudic tractate] Massecheth Berachoth [states that a certain bodily function was to be performed with the left hand, not his right hand, according to R. Nachman and R. Akiba], because ['']with the Right-hand the Points belonging to the Law are shewn['']...[The Talmudic tractate] Massecheth Chagiga, upon those words Exodus 24:5...[comments that the word] כַּשָּׁי Oxen [does not]...have relation to both the preceding Words Burnt Offerings and Peace Offerings [because]... כַּשָּׁי of the Division of the Sentence, by the Accent (meaning the Athnach) after the Word לִפְסַר קַשֶּׁי. (pgs. 245-245, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points)
Whitfield concludes, “from these Remarks, I think I might affirm the Certainty of the Existence of the points, before the writing of those Books[.]”
He said to him, “What is written is not ‘males,’ [רַכְלָּא] but ‘remembrance.’ [רֵכֶל הַתְּלֹה הֶזְזֶה] the reading of the MT”
He said to him, “But I was taught to read, ‘male [רַכְלָּא].’”
Joab then went to his teacher. He said to him, “How did you teach me to recite the verse?”
He said to him, “Male [רַכְלָּא].”
Joab pulled out his sword and proposed to kill him.
The teacher said to him, “What are you doing?”
He said to him, “Because it is written, ‘Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord negligently’ (Jer 48:10).”
He said to him, “Let it be enough for you that I am cursed.”
He said to him, “It also says, ‘Cursed be he who keeps his sword back from blood’ (Jeremiah 48:10).”
There are those who say that he killed him, there are those who say he did not kill him.30

The differences between רַכְלָּא and רַכְלָּא have been supplied; the actual Hebrew Talmudic text, at least as currently extant,31 is unpointed. Thus, the sentences actually read, “What is written is not רַכְלָּא but רַרְכֶל הַתְּלֹה הֶזְזֶה . . . He said to him, ‘But I was taught to read, רַרְכֶל. Joab then went to his teacher. He said to him, ‘How did you teach me to recite the verse?’ He said to him, ‘רַרְכֶל’. He pulled his sword and proposed to kill him.” It is difficult to see how a statement such as “What is written is not רַרְכֶל but רַרְכֶל” makes any sense without vowels. For Joab to threaten to kill his teacher for teaching him to read רַרְכֶל instead of רַרְכֶל is sensible, but why he would want to put him to death for teaching him to read רַרְכֶל instead of רַרְכֶל is more difficult to explain. The fact that a death penalty was connected in the Talmud to improper vocalization also demonstrates the seriousness with which the

31 “[S]ome of the Jewish Writers assert, that both the Targums and other early Writings of the Jews, particularly the Mishna, were writ with the Points; and they say the same of the Talmuds themselves; particularly because of the monstrous Absurdity of their Directions for the different reading of pariliteral Words . . . [(As ‘Y]ou are not to read רַרְכֶל, but you must be sure to read רַרְכֶל, Deuteronomy 25:19. You must not read קַנְנַךְ, but you must read קַנְנַךְ, Isaiah 54:13. You must not read קַנְנַךְ, but you must read קַנְנַךְ, Psalm 50:23[‘]). . . which no Man of common Sense could be guilty of; and they thence . . . conclude the Authors had the Points” (pgs. 259, 266, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points).
32 The ambiguity here is evident from the fact that the Neusner translation translates רַרְכֶל here as “remembrance” (רַרְכֶל), while on pg. 26 of An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (by Bruce K. Waltke & M. O’Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), a reference to the same Talmudic passage points the word as male, רַרְכֶל. One who, to defend the TMT, affirms that the ambiguity between רַרְכֶל and רַרְכֶל in the Talmud could be resolved by a comparison with the actual Hebrew Old Testament text would seem to run into the affirmation that the Hebrew text was vocalized at the time of the Talmudic record, which was presumably exactly what was to be avoided to maintain the TMT.
Judaism of the Talmudic period took the necessity of employing the correct vowels of Scripture. Similarly, the Talmud records elsewhere, “Said Mar Zutra, “Read the verse [Deuteronomy 31:12] as though the vowels yielded not, that they may learn [לֹא in the Qal], but that they may teach [לָאו in the Piel].” R. Ashi said, “Certainly it is ‘that they may teach [לָאו in the Piel],’ for if it should enter your mind that the meaning is ‘that they may learn’ [לֹא in the Qal] with the result that if one cannot speak he cannot learn and if one cannot hear he cannot learn, all that follows from that they may hear.’ So it most certainly is to be read, that they may teach [לָאו in the Piel].”

Declarations such as: “Read the verse as though the vowels yielded not but certainly it is [instead of [לֹא]. . . . for if it should enter your mind that the meaning is [bad consequences would follow] . . . it most certainly is to be read [לָאו]” are difficult to understand if vowels were not already extant. One notes also the specific mention of “vowels” in the verse. Statements such as the two above—the number of which could be multiplied—support the contention that vowels were already extant in the Hebrew text of Scripture at the time of the composition of the Babylonian Talmud.

Similar declarations are contained in the Jerusalem Talmud. For example, the Tractate Shabbat reads, “Rab said, [At Mishna Tractate Shabbat 11:2B] one should read not ‘exempt’ [מסורא] but ‘permitted.’ [מסורא] . . . said R. Yohanan, ‘One should read here [At Mishna Tractate Shabbat 11:2K] not “exempt,” [מסורא] but “permitted.”’” This would be a strange declaration if only unpointed texts were involved.

Furthermore, the Babylonian Talmud affirms that Scripture was written with vowels and accent marks, thus also evidencing their existence in the time of its own composition: “Qohelet [Solomon] was wise, he also taught the people knowledge

Of course, the point of the quotation is the evidence concerning the points from the Talmudic period, not the historical accuracy of the Talmudic record. Joab did not quote the yet unwritten book of Jeremiah.


[Ecclesiastes 12:9]. . . He taught them the accent signs [דמנוה טמעות].” Similarily, the Jerusalem Talmud records, “‘They read from the book, from the law of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading’ (Nehemiah 8:8) . . . ‘and giving the sense’—this refers to the accents.” The Babylonian Talmud states, “R. Iqa bar Abin said R. Hananel said Rab said, ‘What is the meaning of the verse, “And they read in the book in the law of God, distinctly, and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8)? “And they read in the book in the law of God . . .”—this refers to Scripture; “distinctly”—this refers to the translation into Aramaic; “. . . and they gave the sense”—this refers to the division of sentences; “so that they understood the reading”—this refers to dividing accents [ָֽו).” Others say, “To the correct vowels [maldeha].”

Along these lines, Elias Levita, the first modern opponent of the IV view, noted concerning these texts:

[According to the opinion of most men, Ezra the Scribe, and his associates, who were the men of the Great Synagogue, made the Massorah, the vowel-points, and the accents through all the Scriptures. In support of this, they insist that the explanation (in Nedarim [37b]) which our Rabbins of blessed memory give of Nehemiah 8:8, viz., “And they read in the book, in the Law of God,” means the original text; “explaining it,” means the Chaldee paraphrase; “and gave the same,” means the division into verses; “and caused them to understand the Scripture,” means the dividing accents; or, according to others, it signifies the Massorah.

40 Jerusalem Targum Meg. 4.74d, translation from pg. 68 Tov, Textual Criticism, cf. Neusner, The Jerusalem Talmud, “proper articulation.”
42 Pg. 103, Masoreth Ha Massoreth, Elias Levita, trans. C. D. Ginsburg. The footnote on this page reads: “The passage quoted by Levita is from the Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 37b, Megilla 3a. It also occurs with the following variations in the Jerusalem Talmud . . . [Hebrew from the Talmud omitted] . . . R. Seurah propounded, in the name of Hananeel, ‘they read in the book, in the Law of God,’ means the original text; ‘explaining it,’ means the Chaldee paraphrase; ‘and gave the sense,’ means the division according to the sense; ‘and caused them to understand the Scripture,’ signifies the Massoreth. Some, however, say it denotes the pauses, and others heads of verses (Jerusalem Megilla iv. 1, 7b, ed. Krotoschin). It is necessary to remark, that in all these passages, the expression ָֽו denotes the traditional pronunciation of the text, and that it is not to be confounded with the technical meaning “critical apparatus,” which it was made to signify in after times.” Levita, after stating that the view above is commonly accepted, argues for an alternative that seeks to remove these Talmudic references from the IV camp and makes them consistent with the TMT. However, Levita admits that his explanation and the TMT view left him with great difficulties. He wrote: “Accordingly, I find it very difficult to make out what it was that Ezra wrote in the Law. . . . Forsooth this difficulty puzzled me so much for many years, that I mentioned it to the learned, but they could not give me any explanation of it” (pg. 106, ibid). Accepting the thesis of the IV position would have solved Levita’s difficulties.
In addition to the mention of “vowels” and “accents,” the Babylonian Talmud also records, “Mar Zutra said, ‘It has to do with the punctuation of the verse [in this case, Exodus 24:5].’” Punctuation is mentioned in addition to the specific references to vowels and accents. What is more, “Berakot 62a mentions the use of the right hand to indicate the אמאוני העורים, presumably referring to the practice known as ‘cheironomy,’ still in use in some Jewish communities, in which a leader uses his hands to indicate to the congregation the accentuation of the text being chanted.” Old Testament verses are mentioned, counted, and their number ascribed to remote pre-Talmudic Tanaanite authority:

Therefore the early masters were called scribes [those who numbered], because they would count up all the letters in the Torah. For they would say, “the W in the word belly (gahon) [Lev 11:42: “whatever goes on the belly”] is the midpoint among all the letters of a scroll of the Torah. The words “diligently enquire” [at Leviticus 10:16] mark the midpoint among the words; the word “he shall be shaven” (Leviticus 13:33) marks half the verses; in the verse, “the boar out of the wood does ravage it” (Psalm 80:14), the ayin of the word for forest marks the midpoint of all of the verses [of Psalms].” . . . Said to him Abbaye, “As to the count of the verses, in any event, we certainly can bring a scroll and count them up.” . . . Our rabbis have taught on Tannanite authority: There are 5,888 verses in the Torah; the Psalms are longer by eight, Chronicles are less by eight.

Non-IV scholarship dates the Tannanite period to 100 B. C. to A. D. 200—thus, the Talmud attests that the verses of the MTR, were not only known but counted in this period centuries before the arrival of the TM. Since the verse divisions are intimately linked with the vocalization and accentuation of the text as, for example, the necessities of the soph pasuq, the athnach, their associated accents, and the vowel changes connected with pausal forms evidence, versification in the Tannaite period would involve vowels and accents then extant as well. Furthermore, if the Tannanites practiced in accordance with their name (the word is derived from the Aramaic נזר, “Those who hand down”), they did not invent the versification, vocalization, or accentuation of the MTR either—they simply handed down the vocalization and versification which they themselves had received.

Modern scholarship acknowledges that “The accent signs in the MT also preserve a tradition. The Talmud mentions תערハード תושעים ‘the stops of the תּוּאָמִים’ which were

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43 Bavli Hagigah, 1:2:D:VIII.5:C
learned as a normal part of learning the text.”

Even theological modernists such as “Hupfeld and Riehm . . . advance [the view that] the Old Testament books were divided into verses, פסוק, even before the time [on the TMT theory] of the Masoretes . . . the verse bounded by הסוף פסוק, the placing of which harmonizes with the accentuation . . . [is mentioned] in the post-Talmudic tractate סופים[.]” Both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds provide evidence for the existence of both the Hebrew vowels and accent marks at the time of their composition.

As John Owen points out, even apart from the fact that the “Talmud itself, in [Tractate] Nedarim . . . doth plainly mention” the Hebrew vowels, in the overwhelming quantity of commentary by the Talmudists “there is not one text of Scripture to be found cited in the Talmud in any other sense, as to the literal reading and meaning of the words, than only that which it is restrained unto by the present punctuation[,] . . . [H]ow it can be fancied there should be no variety between our present reading and the Talmudists’ [reading], upon supposition they knew not the use of points[?] . . . Is it possible, on this supposition, [that] there should be such a coincidence between their and our present punctuation[?]” Such questions have no satisfactory answer by those who affirm, with the TMT, that the Hebrew vowels were invented after the time of the composition of the Talmud.

The Jerusalem Talmud also evidences that the existence of final forms of letters (e. g., מ/מ), and thus word division, was already extant, and affirms that the use of final forms was given to Moses at Sinai. Indeed, word division is found in both the texts in

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48 An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, Bruce K. Waltke & M. O’Connor, sec. 1.6.4.
52 Similarly, “Quotations in the Mishnah and Gemara exhibit no material variants . . . the Targums also presuppose a text which deviates from (the M.T.) but slightly” (pg. 439, An Introduction to the Old Testament In Greek, Henry Barclay Swete, rev. Richard Rusden Ottley (New York, NY: Ktav, 1968), citing S. R. Driver, Samuel, pg. xxxix).
53 “In the case of double letters of the alphabet, one writes the first ones at the beginning and middle of a word, and the second <final forms> at the end. If one did otherwise, the scroll is invalid. In the name of R. Mattiah b. Heresh they have said, "<The letters> מ, נ, ס, פ, כ, those that appear in two forms> were revealed to Moses at Sinai” (Jerusalem Talmud, Meg. 1.71d, cited pg. 210, Tov, Textual Criticism); Neusner, Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Megillah 1:9:II:10:A; 5:IX:10:II:10. “The double form of Mem, Nun, Saddi, and Kaf . . . was declared by the prophets . . . the open mem and the closed mem—the open
the square script and in cursive at Qumran, and also finds support in the Moabite Mesha Stone (840-820 B.C.), the Siloam Inscription (c. 700 B.C.), and the Ophel Inscription, supporting the conclusion that word division and final letters were in use from the time when the books of the Old Testament were inspired, in accordance with the promise of the Lord Jesus that no consonant or vowel of the Hebrew text has been changed (Matthew 5:18). Advocates of the TMT must admit that “Qumranic texts . . . witness to the antiquity of certain aspects of the Masorah,” and that “the assumption that the first biblical texts were written in the *scriptio (scriptura) continua* [without word division] is not supported by the evidence pertaining to the biblical texts written in the paleo-Hebrew [cursive] or the Aramaic (Assyrian) [square, traditional] script.” Furthermore, the *parashot* divisions found in the *MTR* are also supported by the textual division in the Qumran scrolls, while the verse divisions of the *MTR* are contained in distinctive marks in MSS of the Samaritan Pentateuch, a MS of Leviticus at Qumran, another Qumran MS of Daniel, and a number of ancient Greek texts. “Paragraphs (based on contentat called *pisqot* or *parashiyyot*, are marked by spaces in the text. The *pisqot* seem to have been marked in early (Jewish) manuscripts of the Greek translation, showing that they were a feature of the text before the turn of the era . . . the Bible was divided into verses in talmudic times, since there are *halakot* (legal findings) which depend on this feature. . . . Column and line divisions [such as for] “songs” in the Torah are written in a distinctive format, described in the Talmud.” Similarly, the “*pâsêq . . . is pre-masoretic and . . . existed long before the Masoretes [lived according to the TMT].” The “pisqot seem to have been marked in early (Jewish) manuscripts of the

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55 Pg. 209, Tov, *Textual Criticism.*


57 Pg. 209, Tov, *Textual Criticism.*

58 Pgs. 50, 210-11, ibid.

59 Pg. 633 (38:1c) *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Waltke & O’Connor.

60 Pg. 59, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, Wilhelm Gesenius.
Greek translation, showing that they were a feature of the text before the turn of the era [that is, they were extant in B. C. times].  

The Talmud clearly speaks of the Kethiv/Qere distinction and other textual distinctions considered Masoretic, and traces them to Moses at Sinai.

Said R. Isaac, “The correct text of Scripture deriving from the scribes, the embellishments of the letters derived from the scribes, the words that are read in the text not as they are spelled out, the words that are spelled out but not read—all represent law revealed by God to Moses at Sinai.”

“The correct text of Scripture deriving from the scribes”: These are the words in Hebrew for land, heaven, Egypt [where the tone vowels are lengthened, but nothing in the lettering indicates this change (Freedman)]; . . .

“The words that are read in the text not as they are spelled out”: “Euphrates” in “as he went to recover his border at the river [Euphrates]” (2 Samuel 8:3); [כיתקיתק, קיתקיתק, קיתקיתק] “man” in “And the counsel of Ahithophel . . . was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God” (2 Samuel 16:23); [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק] “come” in the verse, “Behold the days [come] says the Lord that the city shall be built” (Jeremiah 31:38) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]; “for it” in the verse, “let there be no escape for it unto me” (Jeremiah 50:29) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]; “unto me” in the verse, “all that you say unto me I will do” (Ruth 3:5) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]; “unto the floor” in the verse, “and she went down unto the floor” (Ruth 3:6) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]; “to me” in the verse, “and she said, these six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me” (Ruth 3:17) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]—all these represent the words that are read in the text not as they are spelled out.

“The words that are spelled out but not read”: The word “pray” in “Strike this people, I pray thee, with blindness” (2 Kings 6:18) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]; “these” in “Now these are the commandments” (Deuteronomy 6:1) [כיתקיתק, כיתקיתק]; “let him bend” in “against him that bends, let

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62 Along those lines, up until quite recently the Kethiv/Qere were “by all writers, allowed to be, at the least, nearly as old as the Times of Ezra; and by many of the ancient Jewish Writers they are taken to be as old, as the Text, to which they belong” (pg. 286, Whitfield, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*).

Note as well that a variety of explanations can be made by IV advocates (following the standard harmonizing practice of old Jewish interpreters such as Kimchi) to explain the existence of both the Kethiv and Qere readings. For example, Whitfield explains the three instances in Psalm 71:20 where the Kethiv ה is to be read as י by writing: “I cannot think it probable, three Mistakes of the same kind could, any how happen in the Compass of one Verse. Supposing the points as ancient as we are endeavouring to prove them, I believe this Diversity in this, and some other places, betwixt the reading by the Letters and by the points, was originally designed by the Holy Penman, perhaps to shew that the Import of the place might be applied to himself as a single Person, or to the Community whereof he was the Head” (pg. 198, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*).

63 That is, that יชอบ has a pausal form of יชอบ, and that יชอบ and י<?, י<?, have dual, rather than plural forms, but are not duals. The Talmud affirms that these vocalizations are from Moses on Sinai.
him bend the bow” (Jeremiah 51:3) [קר ר persone, חתים] ; “five” in “and on the south side for thousand and five hundred” (Ezekiel 48:16) [קר ר persone, חתים]; “if” in “it is time that if I am your near kinsman” (Ruth 3:12) [קר persone, חתים]. These are the words that are spelled out but not read.

The Mishna speaks of the verse divisions [פסכרא קרו] of Scripture, which, as already indicated, are intimately associated with the vowel and accent marks. “He who reads in the Torah should read no fewer than three verses. He may not read to the translator more than a single verse, and, in the case of the prophetic lection, three. If the three constitute three distinct pericopae [פרוש], they read them one by one” (Megilla 4:4). The Mishna even mentions the puncta extraordinaria or Nequdoth, as do even earlier sources. Commenting on Numbers 9:10, where an unusual dot is found over the letter he in the word far (יהפור), Pesahim 9:2 records, “Said R. Yose, ‘Therefore there is a point over the he, to tell you that it is not because it is really a distant journey, but even one who is anywhere outside the threshold of the Temple courtyard and beyond.’” Likewise, “In the most ancient Jewish writings, such as Mechilta (a commentary on Exodus, first probably compiled 90 A. D.), Sifri (a commentary on Numbers and Deuteronomy, compiled by Rab 219-247 A. D.), [and others such as Tanchuma] . . . mention is made of the tikkune Soferim.” The Itture Sopherim are mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (Nedarim 37b-38a).

The fact that the verse divisions and other markers involving vowels and accents, and the details of the MTR from the verses to the parashot divisions to the Kethiv/Qere to

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65 Kelley lists a variety of theologically liberal explanations for the Nequdoth, then notes that “none of [these explanations] can explain every occurrence . . . [for example] the ה in Genesis 37:12 defies explanation by any theory” (pg. 33, The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia). The Nequdoth are listed in the halachic commentary Sifre 69 to Numbers 9:10, which seems to date to the third century A. D.
66 “Dotan has collected many references to these points from ancient sources. Evidence for some of them goes back to the second century C. E.” (pg. 33, The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Kelley, etc. citing A. Dotan, “Masorah,” Encyclopedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: Macmillan Col, 1971), XVI:1407.)
even the puncta extraordinaria are evident before the time the TMT avers for the Tiberian Masorites provides good support for the IV position.

The existence of the Kethiv/Qere (K/Q) centuries before the TMT theory alleges the vowels were invented provides further evidence for the vowels themselves, as some of them are very difficult to explain on the assumption of a solely consonantal text. For example, in Judges 20:13, one finds in the text, while the Qere states, that is, that the word is to be read, though it is not written. Similarly, in 2 Samuel 18:20 the text contains , indicating a Qere of , while the Kethiv simply specifies the . There are a few other passages where the text contains vowels but no consonants. These K/Q marginal annotations are specifically referenced in the Talmud, but the notes make little sense unless the text was pointed at the time the K/Q was written. “Had there been no points in this place [Judges 20:13], the marginal Note would hardly have been added; as the Sense would have been sufficiently clear without it; for the Word in the singular Number, might as well be used here with a Verb plural, as other Nouns collective in various Parts of the Scripture are: So that it will be hard to assign a Reason of the Note . . . if [one] suppose the Points not to have been in the Text.” Similar evidence for the ancient character of the vowels are the very rare instances where the K/Q specifies a word that is written but not read (because it is not pointed with vowels. A clause such as Ezekiel 48:16’s or 2 Kings 5:18’s and their associated textual notes explaining the unvocalized words are easily explicable on the supposition that the

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71 There are a variety of textual issues in this verse. See the notes in the Ginsburg edition of the MTR.
72 “The word should be placed with the vowels in the text[.] . . . This is one of ten instances where a word is to be read although it is not written” (Massorah magna 2745). The ten references are Judges 20:13; 2 Samuel 8:3; 16:23; 18:20; 2 Kings 19:31, 37; Jeremiah 31:38; 50:29; Ruth 3:5, 17. See pg. 178, The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary, Kelley, Page H., Mynatt, Daniel S., & Crawford, Timothy G. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.
73 Note the discussion of these texts quoted above in the Talmudic tractate Bavli Nedarim, 4:III:3:AE (37B-38A).
74 “[T]he Kethiv/Qere notes are integral to the character of other Masoretic activity,” such as the vowels, yet even modernistic scholarship acknowledges that some of the K/Q “are mentioned in the Talmud” (pg. 42, The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Kelley).
75 Pg. 153, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points. Whitfield provides and argues from a large number of K/Q instances that “the Points were in use, and of great Antiquity and Authority, when the Notes Keri were added to the Margins of our Bibles” (Pg. 195).

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Hebrew vowels were extant during the time, far before the TMT theory allows, when these K/Q were added. While this handful of verses where the Kethiv/Qere note consonants without vowels, or vowels without consonants, are unquestionably unusual, the fact that these K/Q are mentioned in the Talmud strongly undermines the conclusions of the TMT.

The writings of Jerome provide a variety of evidences in favor of the IV position. For example, in an epistle of his to Evagrius, Jerome, speaking of the history of Melchisedek, transliterates Genesis 14:18-20 into Latin letters. The Hebrew text reads as follows:

Jerome’s Latin transliteration was:

Umalkisedeck melec Salem hosle lehem vaiain vehu Cohen leel elion:
Vaiebarchehu vaiomar baruch Abram leel elion kone Samaim Vaarez:
Ubaruch el elion esher migen zarecho bejadecho vaititenlo maeser michol.

The very great similarity between the transliteration and the vocalized MTR supports an IV position, rather than the concept that the points were not yet extant. Similarly, support for the IV is derived from comments in Jerome’s writings such as “Fire and light are written with the same letters רות, which, if they be read רות[רות] signify fire, if רות[רות] signify light.”

Jerome also specifically speaks of the Hebrew vowels and accents in a variety of his writings. Commenting on the word בְּשֵׁם in Isaiah 65:15, he spoke of the “difference of accent” the word can have. In his commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:5, he refers to the difference in Jeremiah 1:11-12 between הדוק and ודוק, writing that “the word הדוק in the beginning of Jeremiah, with a change of accent, signifies a nut or

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77 Some IV advocates, following the traditional Jewish interpretation, would aver that both the vowels and the K/Q were given by inspiration to the original authors and possess didactic significance, although at times an obscure one.

78 Whitfield, on pgs. 211ff. of his Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points demonstrates the difficulty of accounting for the K/Q as alternative textual readings. He gives a good number of examples of K/Q that are very difficult to account for upon this supposition, and mentions, further, that “had the Keris been different readings, it may seem highly probable, there would, at least in some places, have been more than two various readings, but there is not one such Instance in the whole” (pg. 216).

79 See pg. 241, Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points, Whitfield.

80 Cited pg. 241, Whitfield, ibid, from Jerome’s commentary on Isaiah 32. The vocalizations in brackets have been supplied. Jerome’s statement to read רות not רות makes little sense unless there was a way, in his autograph, of distinguishing between the two words.

81 The quotations from Jerome’s commentaries on Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, and Ezekiel that follow are from pgs. 242-243, Whitfield, ibid. The original Latin is there reproduced.
Commenting on Ezekiel 27:18, Jerome wrote, “Hebrew nouns have very different interpretations, from the difference of accent, and the change of letters and vowels, especially such as have their peculiar uses.” Likewise, in his commentary on Jonah, he writes, “I am quite surprised at some translations, since in Hebrew there is no such close relation between letters, syllables, accents, and words.” He comments on Genesis 10:33, “They point the word ‘she arose’ [as] ‘Bheqomah.’” Furthermore, commenting on Genesis 47:31, he defends the Hebrew reading of מַטָּה (hDÚfI;m), “bed,” rather than “staff,” (hRÚfAm), although both alternatives have the same consonants (חָמַח), and a cursory examination of Hebrews 11:21 appears to reference and give support for the reading “staff” (ῥόβδος) in the Genesis passage. Jerome writes: “In this place [Hebrews 11:21] some have pretended in vain that Jacob gave worship to the top of his staff [rather than worshipping God while leaning on his staff]. But in Hebrew it is read quite differently[;] in honoring his son [Jacob] gave thanks for the power granted to him, worshiping at the head of his bed.” Jerome says that the Hebrew of Genesis 47:31 does not read מַטָּה, “staff,” but “quite differently,” as מַכָּה, “bed.” If there were no Hebrew vowels in the text of Genesis, Jerome’s assertion would become that the Hebrew is not read מַטָּה, but “quite differently” מַכָּה, although both “alternatives” would be exactly the same. Jerome would not have gone against what appeared to be the support of the New Testament in Hebrews 11:21 for the reading staff if he did not have access to a Hebrew text with vowels that read “bed,” מַכָּה, instead. The writings of Jerome evidence that a Hebrew text with vowels was extant in his day, far before the time the Tiberian Masorites allegedly invented them.

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83 There actually is no contradiction between the account in Hebrews and the Genesis record as vocalized in the MTR. John Gill, commenting on Hebrews 11:21 in his Exposition of the Old and New Testament (orig. pub. 1809, elec. acc. Online Bible for Mac), explains: “[N]or is there any necessity of supposing a different punctuation of Genesis 47:31 and that the true reading is not ‘mittah,’ a bed, but ‘matteh,’ a staff, contrary to all the Targums, and the Talmud, which read ‘mittah,’ a bed, seeing it is not that place the apostle cites or refers to; for that was before the blessing of the sons of Joseph, but this was at the same time; and the apostle relates what is nowhere recorded in Genesis, but what he had either from tradition, or immediate revelation; or else he concludes it from the general account in Genesis 48:1-12 and the sense is, that Jacob, having blessed the two sons of Joseph, being sat upon his bed, and weak, he leaned upon the top of his staff, and worshipped God, and gave praise and glory to him, that he had lived to see not only his son Joseph, but his seed also, see Genesis 48:2,11,20.” Compare pgs. 96-107, Moncrieff, Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points.

84 Moncrieff (pgs. 41ff., Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points) provides evidence from the translations of Origin and Jerome that the points were extant in their day.
The Masoretic notes themselves evidence the ancient character of the Hebrew vowels and accents and demonstrate that they were not added to the text centuries after the time of Christ any more than the consonants were. Textual notes discuss variations in vowels and accents in the same manner that they discuss consonants—on the TMT assumption that the Masorites added the vowels and accents, it would be odd that they did not standardize them, but instead viewed them as authoritative and unchangeable, in the same manner that they did the allegedly far more ancient consonants.\(^{85}\) The Masoretic notes demonstrate that the vowels and accents, so far from being a recent addition, descended from remote antiquity, which is consistent with the IV position. Furthermore, there are no Masoretic notes whatever that state or hint that the Masorites themselves were the authors or creators of the vowel and accent system. Representative notes on the points from the Masoretic notes on the Torah provide clear evidence that the vowels and accents existed long before the time the TMT allows.

The note on Exodus 20:3 discusses the difference between the Ben Asher tradition, which has chireq, and the Ben Naphtali text, which had a segol. The note on Leviticus 7:16 indicates that the Western reading (לְמַדְתָּה) of a word contained a pathach, while the Eastern reading (לְמַדְתָה) was chireq. Numbers 31:49 likewise distinguishes the Western and Eastern use of a dagesh, the Eastern reading being יד, that is, without dagesh. Similarly, in Deuteronomy 33:5, the Western reading (which was followed in the text) was יִהוּד, while the Eastern was יִיהוּד, clearly indicating that both texts were pointed, as the consonants for both readings are the identical יִיהוּד. However, “there existed . . . as early as the third century of the Christian era . . . differences

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As indicated above, Jacob ben Chayyim’s “version of the Masorah, which was the first printed Masorah, came to be viewed as a codification of the Masorah, as if exclusively it were the standard Masorah (which explains why references in the older literature to “the Masorah” or “the printed Masorah” refer to the Masorah of the Second Rabbinic Bible” (pg. 25, The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary, Kelley, Page H., Mynatt, Daniel S., & Crawford, Timothy G., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). “Jacob ben Hayyim’s edition, the first printing of the Masorah, was accepted as a sort of codification of it. Most of the Migra’ot Gedolot (“Rabbinic Bibles”) printed from his time to our own have copied his Masorah, and the treatises on the Masorah are based on it.” (pg. 126, Revell, E. J., trans. & ed., Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah, Israel Yeivin, Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1980.)
between the Easterns and Westerns.” Differences involving the vowels thus provide evidence for their existence at the time of the Eastern/Western division. One also wonders why the Masorites would invent the points, but then act as they do in Deuteronomy 2:16, where they did not put a dagesh lene in the post-vocalic ב in the אגש, choosing to leave the text different from the clearly standard אגש, but adding a textual note concerning the situation. Leviticus 22:17 has a Masoretic note stating that the word אגש has a dagesh in the א, as, indeed, it does. With TMT presuppositions, one wonders why the Masorites decided to add the extremely unusual dagesh to the Aleph and then, fearing to change what they had just added, put a note in the margin to warn all future scribes to not alter their new and novel notation.

Furthermore, the Masora discuss ancient codices of the Scripture, now lost, which were pointed. On the TMT theory, it would be impossible for the TM who added the vowels to discuss ancient codexes which were themselves pointed. Nevertheless, the Masoretic note on Genesis 2:3 explicitly states that the Hebrew text follows the vocalization of the ancient and now lost Jericho manuscript (כריורדה ינותן). The note on Exodus 18:10 mentions that the same MS had the accent revi (דורייתו רכיב . . . דורייתו). Leviticus 8:13 demonstrates that the Jericho MS had the vowel shewa, and Leviticus 10:13; 21:10 that it had the accent gaya (ברירה בנותא . . . ברירה בנותא). Leviticus 25:11 comments on its use of zaquef qaton ('). Leviticus 26:21 comments on the sound, musical phrase, or accent in the MS (ברירה בנותא . . . ברירה בנותא). Numbers 4:4 and 10:21 demonstrate that Jericho contained the hateph qametz, Genesis 28:3 and Numbers 16:21 the tsere (ברירה ברירה . . . ברירה ברירה), and Numbers 34:28 the pathach (ברירה ברירה . . . ברירה ברירה). The note on Deuteronomy 25:7 even indicates that the Jericho MS had the accent geresh (') on the final syllable of the word rather than on the antepenult (ברירה ברירה), as in the reading within the text of Scripture itself (דריתו דריתו . . . דריתו). Deuteronomy 30:17 explicitly states that the Jericho MS contained the points (לנהנה . . . לנהנה).

The note on Exodus 21:37 indicates that בולב was the vocalization contained in the ancient and now lost Hillel and Zanbuqi MSS (בילובו בולבוב). If the Hillel MS dates to the time of R. Hillel (c. 60 B. C. – A. D. 20), “the great Jewish Rabbi who lived immediately before the beginning of the Christian era,” the Masorah here affirm that the vowels were extant in pre-Christian times. Exodus 30:14 proves that the Hillel MS had the tsere (ברירה ברירה . . . ברירה ברירה), as do Deuteronomy 3:4, 13, 14, while Exodus

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30:21 mentions the *qametz*. Leviticus 5:21 shows the Hillel MS contained the *pathach* (חתם), as does Leviticus 7:7. Leviticus 13:57 shows the manuscript had the *dagesh* (חתם), and Numbers 5:30 that it had the accent *revi* (חתם). Numbers 18:21 indicates that the document contained the *shewa*, and the ancient and now lost Mugah MS the *hateph patach*. Numbers 3:27 mentions that both the Hillel and Zanbuqi MSS had a *patach* (חתם). Exodus 25:6 evidences that Zanbuqi had the vowel *tsere* (חתם), as do Exodus 29:7; 25:8; Numbers 22:25. Exodus 29:15 proves Zanbuqi had the *patach* (חתם), as do Numbers 14:9; 20:21; 22:26. Exodus 35:22 indicates it had *qametz* (חתם), as do Leviticus 26:20 and Numbers 5:13; 8:13; 10:36. Exodus 40:22 indicates both *tsere* and *segol* for Zanbuqi, while Numbers 14:18 indicates *segol* on its own (חתם). Leviticus 5:5 mentions a *hateph segol* in the MS, Numbers 11:29 the *hateph pathach*, and Leviticus 13:10 the *dagesh* (חתם).

Exodus 25:19 indicates that the Hillel MS pointed the word הַיְמֵנָה with a *dagesh* in the ב, while Codex Mugah did not have the *dagesh*, and the reading of Mugah was also that of the MTR (חתם). Exodus 25:39 indicates that the Mugah MS had the *qametz* (חתם), as does Leviticus 11:19. Numbers 36:9 proves Mugah had the *tsere*, and Deuteronomy 27:8 the *segol*. Leviticus 6:19 indicates that Mugah contained a *shewa* where the Hillel MS had a *hateph pathach*. Leviticus 21:8 demonstrates that Mugah had accents, for the note mentions an instance where the manuscript had no`, no *azla* (חתם). Numbers 11:16 mentions a place where the MS lacks a *gaya* (חתם), while in Deuteronomy 1:41 the Masorites indicate that the manuscript contained *gaya* (חתם). Numbers 34:28 evidences that Mugah contained the *mappiq* (חתם), in contrast to the Hillel MS, which did not contain a *mappiq* where the Mugah MS did. The note on Numbers 5:28 indicates that Mugah read נִרְשָׁה, while Hillel read נִרְשָׁה and the Jericho manuscript נִרְשָׁה. Genesis 30:38 mentions that the ancient and now lost Jerusalem manuscript contained *shewa* and *patach* (חתם). The fact that Masoretic notes mention ancient MSS that themselves had vowels and accents is strong evidence in favor of the *IV* position and against the *TMT*.

The evidence from the Masorah for the antiquity of the points is even acknowledged by some that reject the *IV* position. For example, Geden and Kilgour,

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88 For further instances of similar Masoretic notes in the *Torah*, see also Exodus 29:8; Leviticus 4:18; 13:3; Numbers 3:17, 19, 29, 30; 4:15, 18, 37; 6:21; 7:9; 19:18; 22:6; 26:36; 32:41; 36:2; Deuteronomy 24:20; 29:12; 30:7; 32:6. Of course, such notes also occur in the other books of the Old Testament.
representing the British and Foreign Bible Society (which does not even take a stand on the Trinity,\textsuperscript{89} not to mention any of the other fundamentals of Biblical orthodoxy or of orthodox bibliology) and commenting on the Masorah in their published Hebrew Old Testament, wrote:

The peculiarities and anomalies of the vowel-points and accents were also recorded [by the Masorites], and in particular the influence of the latter on the quantity of the syllable. The presence or absence of daghesh or mappiq was noted, where for any reason a deviation appeared from the form that was usual or that might have been expected. The inference is clear therefore that the Massoretic scholars were not the inventors of the signs for the vowels and accents; but that on the contrary these had already been so long in existence as to have acquired a certain prescriptive right, although inferior to the consonants and not inspired.\textsuperscript{90}

These writers admit that the vowels and accents were viewed as authoritative by the Masorites, whom they aver certainly did not invent them, contrary to the \textit{TMT}, for they had already been in existence for so long that they had a “certain prescriptive right.” They then add, naturally and in accordance with the unorthodox presuppositions natural to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and without giving any evidence for their assertion, that the vowels and accents are “inferior to the consonants and not inspired.”

Geden and Kilgour provide evidence for the antiquity of the points, and opposition to the \textit{TMT} registered on that basis. While the \textit{IV} position is also opposed, no evidence for this rejection is given in their book. It should be noted that Geden and Kilgour also affirm that the Masorites worked from “about the fourth to the sixth centuries of our era or even later,”\textsuperscript{91} so their statement that the vowels and accents had been so long in existence so as to acquire authority places the points a very long time before A. D. 300. The fact that “Jewish tradition ascribes the beginning of the work to Moses, from and after whom it was carried on through an unbroken succession of wise men, until it was finally taken up and completed by Ezra and the members of the Great Synagogue”\textsuperscript{92} is mentioned and

\textsuperscript{89} The Trinitarian Bible Society was formed in 1831 because as far back as that time the British and Foreign Bible Society would not even require a confession of faith in the Trinity, not to mention any other doctrines essential to salvation.

\textsuperscript{90} Pgs. 51-52, \textit{Introduction to the Ginsburg Edition of the Hebrew Old Testament}, Alfred S. Geden & R. Kilgour (London: British & Foreign Bible Society, 1928). On page 49, the writers affirm that “the most probable view” is that the \textit{TMT} took already extant textual annotations and put them in order, with their own additions, around the “sixth century A. D.”

\textsuperscript{91} Pg. 55, \textit{ibid}. Many writers today place the work of the \textit{TMT} later, even as late as the tenth century. Since nobody knows who they were, it is possible to add or subtract centuries from the estimated times of their alleged invention of the points without tremendous amounts of difficulty. Thus, Geden and Kilgour say that “The authors of the Massorah are termed Massoretes . . . but who they were or at what time they lived is uncertain” (pg. 49, \textit{ibid}).

\textsuperscript{92} pg. 49, \textit{ibid}. 

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documented, but it is rejected for a post-Christian (but pre-Masoretic) origin of the vowels and accents without any specific evidence being mentioned or definitive reason being given.

Comments in the Targums appear to support the IV position. Various advocates of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels have referenced Deuteronomy 27:8, where the Lord commanded Moses, “Thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly,” arguing that for the words to be “very plain” they must have had vowels. They note that the only other reference to writing plainly in Scripture is Habakkuk 2:2: “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” Why would not the way of making the Law “very plain” so that “he may run that readeth it” be by writing a pointed copy? Would the people be able to

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93 Pirque Aboth I, 1. is cited: “Moses received the Law from Sinai, and delivered it (הַקְּסֶפֶת, u+mesara) to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets delivered it to the men of the Great Synagogue.” The traditional Jewish view was that the “Men of the Great Synagogue did dispose the Sacred Books into three Parts, called the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, as they are reckoned up, Luke 24:44, where under the last Head are comprehended what are otherwise called the Hagiographa, or Holy Writings[.] . . . They divided the several Books of the Scripture into greater and lesser sections, by Marks and Points for that Purpose. . . . They fixed the Keri Vekethib . . . [the Malle Vehhafar, or the Account of Words which are writ fully or defectively. They registered the large and small Letters, and such as are inverted, suspended, etc. They numbered the תִּלֶּשָׁה, the Parashas, or greater Divisions, the פֶּסַק, Pesukim, or lesser Divisions, the Words, and the Letters of the whole Scripture, and of every Book, which also proves, they had then some Points[,] . . . They noted what was the middle Parasha, the middle Pesuk, the middle Word and Letter of every Book, with a good many other critical Performances of less Importance; as the Numbers of each particular Letter in every Book: How many Alephs; how many Beths, etc. . . . Now is it probable, that so many Men, acted by such a Principle of pious Zeal, for perpetuating the certain Use and Interpretation of their divine Laws, under the Presidency of an inspired Person [Ezra], should take so much pains, about a great Number of, comparatively, trifling Circumstances, while the greatest and most essential Article of all was left undetermined, without which the other would be almost ineffectual? Or is there not rather the highest Probability, that they would, in that Case, have, first of all, set about fixing the Vowel-points, as being, by much, of the greatest Importance for obtaining their End; and as this is not usually reckoned amongst their Performances, there is the strongest Ground to believe that they had been perpetual [that is, given by inspiration to the original writers of Scripture from the days of Moses]” (pg. 263-265, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points).

94 See the historical analysis in “The Battle Over the Hebrew Vowel Points, Examined Particularly As Waged in England,” Thomas Ross (http://sites.google.com/site/thross7). Also note pgs. 89, 250, One Tittle Shall In No Wise Pass, Chester W. Kulus. A representative Jewish argument is made by R. Levi b. Joseph: “If any one should ask, Whence do we know that the points and accents were dictated by the mouth of the Omnipotent? The reply is, It is to be found in theScriptures, for it is written, ‘And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly’ (Deuteronomy 27:8). Now, if the points and accents, which make the words plain[,] did not exist, how could one possibly understand plainly whether הרַעַל means wherefore, retribution, Solomon, garment, or perfect?” (Sepher Ha-Semadar, cited pg. 122-123, Massoreth Ha Massoreth, Levita, trans. Ginsburg).

95 Compare the LXX: καὶ γράψεις ἐπὶ τῶν λίθων πάντα τὸν νόμον τοῦτον σαφῶς σφόδρα.
“write upon [the stones] all the words of [the] law” (Deuteronomy 27:3) so that they could “keep all the commandments” (27:1) in them with an unpointed copy? How would they know whether or not they were forbidden to boil goats in their mother’s milk (כִּבְשָׂה) or fat (חַלּת), for example (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21), since, without vowels, the two words are exactly the same (כִּבְשָׂה), and there is nothing in the context of the texts that would prove the one or the other reading is correct?

The IV view of Deuteronomy 27:8 finds support in the Targumim. Targum Neofiti reads, “And you shall write on the stones all the words of this Torah, written, inscribed וְחַקֵּקְךָ, Pael passive participle, “being engraved” and explained well מֵפָרֵשֶׂם, Pael passive participle, “being specified” + רוֹאָה, “rightly, properly”), so as to be read נַפְתַּמָּה אֲוֹרִיתֶהוּ וּרְאֵהוּ מֵפָרֵשׂ מַתְקַרְתָּם וּמַתְקַרְתָּם בַּשְׁבֵּטֵי לֵשׁוֹנָם (וְתַחֲכִיתָם וַעֲבֹנֵי יְהוָה). If the Torah was to be “engraved” and “specified” on the stones so that “all the words” would be able to be “called by name” and accurately translated into seventy languages, specific, vocalizable words, including vowels, would have been required. The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Targum Yerushalmi I) on Deuteronomy 27:8 reads, “And you shall write on the stones all the words of this Torah, an engraved and distinct writing, read in one language and translated into seventy languages” (לְשׁוֹנָי נִפְתַּמָּה אֲוֹרִיתֶהוּ וּרְאֵהוּ מַתְקַרְתָּם בַּשְׁבֵּטֵי לֵשׁוֹנָם וְתַחֲכִיתָם וַעֲבֹנֵי יְהוָה). Here again the Targumic wording supports a vocalized text being engraved on the tablets. Compare also Targum Yerusalmi II, where Fragment Targum Paris reads: מַתְקַרְתָּם בַּשְׁבֵּטֵי לֵשׁוֹנָם וְתַחֲכִיתָם וַעֲבֹנֵי יְהוָה and Fragment Targum Vatican reads: מַתְקַרְתָּם בַּשְׁבֵּטֵי לֵשׁוֹנָם וְתַחֲכִיתָם וַעֲבֹנֵי יְהוָה. The very early MS AA discovered in the Cairo Geniza reads: מַתְקַרְתָּם בַּשְׁבֵּטֵי לֵשׁוֹנָם וְתַחֲכִיתָם וַעֲבֹנֵי יְהוָה (cf. also MS D). The Targumim on Deuteronomy 27:8 support the interpretation that the verse refers to the inscription of the Hebrew vowels as well as the consonants by Moses. They thus provide support for the existence of the vowel points at least at the time when, far before the TMT avers the vowels were invented, the Targums were created, and further evidence that Jewish tradition in the time of the Targumists traced the points to Moses.

Jews who lived not long after the time the TMT affirms the vowels were invented affirm that the points were given by inspiration. Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) wrote, “Ezra the Scribe . . . [was] the divider . . . [of] the verses . . . In short, after the divider, there were none so wise as he was, since we see that, throughout the whole of the
Scriptures, he never made a pause which is not in its proper place.’\textsuperscript{96} Consequently, Ibn Ezra declared, “You should not listen to, or agree with, any interpretation which is not consistent with the accentuation.”\textsuperscript{97} Furthermore, Ibn Ezra “quotes Writers before the Talmud in Vindication of particular Constructions of sundry Texts, which entirely depend upon the Necessity and Perpetuity of the Punctuation.”\textsuperscript{98} Summarizing the historical situation within Judaism, Moncrieff writes:

The Jews who were contemporary with this supposed . . . Tiberian academy . . . and those who lived before and after the time fixed for them, tell us of the Targums and the Talmuds, which are still in such high repute with the nation. They inform us of the design for which these writings were executed, and speak particularly of the persons by whom they were understood to have been collected and drawn up. But not one of these historians, whether contemporary with, or living soon after, these learned men, tell us any thing of this extensive system of punctuation as their invention. The Jews of these more early times, and in subsequent periods, speak of Ezra [or Moses] as the author of the Vowel-Points, but never of the School of Tiberias.\textsuperscript{99}

If the TM invented the vowels and accents, it is unusual in the extreme that nothing about this invention has found its way into the historical record.

The likelihood that a mere naturalistic oral tradition could pass down unrecorded but correct vowel and accent marks for millennia is most improbable, but modernist scholarship that dismisses the IV view out of hand generally affirms, along with its TMT position, that exactly this has happened:

The Masoretic tradition, including the vowel points, represents the overall grammatical systems current during the period when biblical literature was being created. . . . [A] considerable body of evidence indicat[es] that the traditioning function was taken seriously and that the linguistic data of the MT could not be faked. . . . In addition to ancient evidence for the general validity of the MT, there is modern evidence, both systematic and incidental. On the whole the grammar of the MT admirably fits the framework of Semitic philology, and this fact certifies the work of the Masoretes. When in the 1930s Paul Kahle announced his theory that the Masoretes made massive innovations, Gotthelf Bergsträsser sarcastically observed that they must have read Carl Brockelmann’s comparative Semitic grammar to have come up with forms so thoroughly in line with historical

\textsuperscript{96} Ibn Ezra, \textit{Purity}, cited pg. 125, \textit{Massoreth Ha Massoreth}, Levita, trans. Ginsburg. The quotation requires the existence in Ezra’s day of (at the very least) the atnach and associated accents, with which are associated the vowel changes involved in pausal forms.


\textsuperscript{98} Pg. 267, \textit{A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points}, Whitfield.

reconstructions. Further, there are numerous individual patterns of deviation within the MT which reflect ancient phonological and morphological features of Hebrew known from other sources; yet again, numerous isolated oddities in the MT have been confirmed by materials unearthed only in this century. . . . The evidence shows that the language of the MT represents the grammar of the Hebrew used during the biblical period. Our stance toward the MT is based on

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100 Here Waltke & O’Connor have a footnote which reads, “Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 217; cf. Rabin, “Hebrew,” 306. The apparent preservation of much apparently unrecoverable information must be handled with caution. Note, for example, the case of Chemosh. The MT nearly always has the form $k\overline{\mu}o\check{s}$, in agreement with the bulk of extrabiblical (mostly onomastic) evidence from the Iron Age, but the Kethiv of Jer 48:7 has $k\mu\check{s}$ for $k\overline{\mu}i\check{s}$, apparently agreeing with the Ebla texts, which know this god as Kamish ($d\overline{k}a3\cdot mi\cdot is\Sigma$); see Pettinato, *Archives of Ebla*, 245, 291–92.”

101 Here Waltke & O’Connor footnote the following: “Compare the views of Bo Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangehendem w§* (Lund: Gleeup, 1979) 23.”
Thus, “modern grammatical studies . . . show that the complexities of Masoretic study could not be the result of later reconstruction.”

It must be shown rather than assumed to be in error; the burden of proof rests on the critic.

When textual data actually becomes significant “at about the beginning of the Common Era” (Waltke & O’Connor, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, 1.5.4), evidence for a standard Hebrew text is exceedingly strong. “The seven rules of biblical hermeneutics, compiled by Hillel the Elder (fl. 1st century C.E.) at the time of Herod, demanded an inviolable, sacrosanct, and authoritative text. The exegetical comments and hermeneutical principles of tannaim (teachers of the first two centuries C.E.), notably Zechariah ben ha-Kazzav, Nahum Gimzo, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Ishmael, presuppose that in this period a single stabilized text had attained unimpeachable authority over all others. . . . [In a] recension of the Greek Old Testament (R) found at Nahal Hever in the Dead Sea region and dated by its editor, D. Barthélemy, to 70–100 C.E. . . . all the modifications of the traditional Greek text [LXX] can be explained by a concern to model it more exactly after the Hebrew text that ultimately crystallized as Masoretic. . . . Rabbinic testimony combined with the evidence of manuscripts bears witness to the existence of an official Hebrew text with binding authority at a time shortly after the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.), in the days of Rabbi Akiva. The dominance of a text like that used by the Masoretes is amply attested by the Hebrew biblical scrolls discovered at Masada (occupied 66–73 C.E.) and at Wadi Murabba‘at, as well as by the text from Nahal Hever (occupied 132–35 C.E.). These scrolls largely lack even the minor variants found in the great recensions of the Greek Old Testament attributed to tradition by Aquila (based on R; ca. 120 C.E.), Symmachus (ca. 180 C.E.), and Theodotion (ca. 180 C.E.) . . . In effect, the combined evidence essentially supports Paul de Lagarde’s nineteenth-century view that all Hebrew medieval manuscripts of the Bible were descended from a single master scroll[,]” (Waltke & O’Connor, ibid.) While theological modernism assumes that this single scroll that the extant evidence indicates was the source of all the evidence for the MTR dates “no earlier than the first century of the Common Era” (Waltke & O’Connor, ibid.), just as it assumes that the MTR contains errors although it cannot prove the existence of any, and it assumes that there were no original autographs given by inspiration at all, believers who recognize the truth of the perfect preservation of Scripture (Psalm 12:6; Isaiah 59:21) correctly recognize that the single scroll that was the prototype of the MTR was the infallible and inerrant autographical text itself.

Waltke & O’Connor, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, 1.6.3. Waltke and O’Connor also mention other lines of ancient evidence for the allegedly TM vocalization of the MTR, such as that “Aquila’s barbaric Greek reflects the Hebrew as closely as possible; in his farrago he often supplies Hebrew words and forms in a vocalization close to that of the MT . . . even rare words are given in forms close to those of the MT.” Aquila’s vocalization of segohates, is however, alleged to be an exception, a sort of anaptyxis supposedly not having yet occurred.

Similarly recognizing the accuracy of the vocals of the MTR, Gesenius wrote: “[I]nternal reasons, as well as the analogy of kindred languages, testify in a high degree to the faithfulness of the tradition” (pg. 39 (Ti), Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar).

Pg. 632 (38:1:b), Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, Waltke & O’Connor.
that men in Tiberias invented a vocalization and accent system somewhere between A. D. 500-1000 that accurately reflected the grammar and pronunciation of millennia earlier?

The claim that the Masorites invented the vowels sometime between A. D 500-1000 is further problematized since even knowledgeable advocates of the TMT admit that “the name [of Masorite] itself went back to Mishnaic times,” at the very least. Since the Mishna records a saying by R. Aqiba (d. A. D. 132) that “Tradition (massoreth) is a fence for the Torah,” extra-Biblical evidence places the concept of the Masorite to at least the second century A. D. Furthermore, not long before the Mishna records R. Aqiba’s Masoretic reference, the book states: “Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets, and prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly. They said three things: (1) Be prudent in judgment. (2) Raise up many disciples. (3) Make a fence for the Torah.” Thus, the Mishna traces the Masoretic concept back to Moses at Sinai. Furthermore, inspired promises of the preservation of Scripture (Psalm 12:6-7) cohere with the infallible record of those with the position of “scribe” (כְּלָלִך) in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 8:17; 20:25; 1 Kings 4:3; 2 Kings 12:10; 18:18, 37; 19:2; 22:3, 8, etc.). Prominent among these was “Ezra . . . a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given . . . [who] prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. . . . [as a] scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. . . . a scribe of the law of the God of heaven” (Ezra 7:6, 10-12). “[T]radition ascribes the first Targum to Ezra.”

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106 Avot 3:13:
107 Avot 1:1:
108 pg. 149, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Tov. “Elias Levita . . . says the Masoreths were hundreds and thousands . . . ‘and that no Man knows when they began, nor when they shall end[.]’ Yet the other Jews who wrote several Centuries before him, seem unanimously to fix their beginning in the time of Ezra, and that the Men of the Great Synagogue, to whom was committed the Revival of the Sacred Books, were the first to whom that Appellation was given. . . . in the Book Megilla, it is thus written: . . . . Now, I think it will appear highly probable, to every impartial Reader, that these Men, who are said to have been to the Number of one hundred and twenty, whose peculiar Business and Profession it was to restore the Sacred Scriptures, to their original Purity, and to guard them against all future Corruptions, to which they might any how appear liable, (especially from the Loss of the free Use of the Hebrew language) under the Direction of Ezra, a Person divinely inspired, would leave nothing material undone, which could be subservient to this great End; and consequently, that they completed, at least, the greatest and most important Part of the Masorah. This Work is, by the Jews, called . . . . The Hedge of the Law[.] . . . But if we consider what they did for this great Purpose, we shall easily see, that
the Levites (2 Chronicles 34:13) “families of the scribes” (1 Chronicles 2:55). Since Scripture records no post-Mosaic date when the office of scribe originated, but rather indicates that from the time of Moses the priests and Levites were guarding, teaching, and passing on the Law (Deuteronomy 24:8), and since God has declared that His Words would be in the mouths of His people from the time Scripture was given by inspiration to all eternity future (Isaiah 59:21), it is eminently reasonable to accept the Mishnaic testimony as accurate and conclude that there were Masorites, people who were guarding and passing on the Law of God, from the time that it was revealed by Jehovah at Mount Sinai. This view appears far superior historically to the idea that the office of Masorite originated close to 1,400 years after the completion of the OT canon. Just as there are no canonical references to a post-Mosaic origination of the office of scribe or Masorite, so there are no ancient post-Biblical testimonies to the origin of a new position or class of people called Masorites. If one includes the authors of Scripture, writing inspired and vocalized words, not consonants alone, as the first “Masorites” for their respective books, and considers that their writings were preserved by the scribes in Israel from that day onward, it is appropriate to connect the use of the Hebrew vowels in the Old Testament with the Masorites. The contrary view, that the Masorites were certain schools of men who invented the Hebrew vowel points when they arose centuries after the conclusion of the canon of Scripture, has the plain testimony of both the Bible and uninspired records against it.

Considering the Biblical and Mishnaic testimony to the ancient existence of the Masoretic idea, one notes as well that “[T]he oldest evidence for the Hebrew accent system [is found] in the spacing of an early Septuagint text (2nd century B. C. E.) which corresponds almost exactly with the accents of the Hebrew Bible.”109 In the words of E. J. Revell:

[P]apyrus 957 . . . a Septuagint text of the second century BC . . . is punctuated by spaces corresponding almost exactly to the Tiberian accents in the Hebrew text. . . . [T]he scribe of Pap. 957 divided the text . . . into phrases in almost exactly the same way as does the accentuation of BHK [the modern printed Hebrew Masoretic text, specifically the 3rd edition of Kittel’s Biblia Hebraica]. One can only conclude, then, that Pap. 957 and BHK represent the same tradition of text division. . . . Pap. 957 shows that, for the Torah at least, such analysis [as is found in the Hebrew accents] had already reached this stage in the second century B. C.

supposing the Points to be absent from the Sacred Text, it would have been but a very poor Hedge, a Defense very easily broken throughout” (pgs. 262-263, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points).

These facts have important implications for the history both of the reading traditions and of the interpretation of the Bible.\textsuperscript{110} Furthermore, “we have definite proof, in . . . the Greek translation of the Twelve Prophets published by Barthélemy\textsuperscript{111} . . . of the use of punctuation . . . in the first century, to mark a Jewish analysis of the text of the Prophets. Since it was worth marking in a text, this analysis must have been established (save perhaps in minor details) for some time.”\textsuperscript{112} Modernists allege that the Old Testament was only coming into its final textual form in the second or even the first century B. C., yet works written from a similarly liberal theological perspective allow that evidence for the Hebrew accents and vocalization dates to the same time period. Bible-believers regularly reject late modernistic dates for the composition of Biblical books, as well as associated declarations such as that “an ‘original text’ never existed”\textsuperscript{113}—why should they not take modernistic evidence that the vowels and accents were extant at the same period as the modernists allege the Old Testament was redacted, and conclude that the vowels and accents were extant when the Old Testament Scriptures were truly given perfectly by inspiration?

There is also no clear evidence of any kind about who, on the TMT view, invented the vowel points, although one would think that an event of such tremendous importance would have had substantial record of its occurrence. Standard works of modernistic textual criticism provide no names,\textsuperscript{114} rather stating that “there is no historical account of the date of th[e] vocalization of the O. T. text.”\textsuperscript{115} Furthermore, “Jewish history . . .


\textsuperscript{111} Revell (pg. 182, “Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period”) documents that “The MS of the Twelve Prophets was described by P. Barthélemy, O. P., in \textit{RB} 60 (1953), p. 18-29, and published by him in \textit{Les dévancieres d’ Aquila (=VTS X, Leiden 1963)}. A few more fragments of the MS were published by B. Lifshitz in \textit{Yediot} 26 (1962) p. 183-190.”

\textsuperscript{112} Pg. 198, Revell, “Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period.” Revell also mentions that the “4Q Ecclesiastes text published by Muilenberg in \textit{BASOR} 135 (1954), p. 20ff., may show the use of punctuation by spaces in a Hebrew text” (pg. 193, \textit{ibid.})


\textsuperscript{114} Advocates of the view that vowel points gradually evolved and were, for some reason, understood and accepted, likewise give no names whatever in their description of the alleged evolution (cf. pgs. 17-44, \textit{The Vocalization Systems of Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic}, Shelomo Morag, where no names are mentioned in his detailed study of the alleged evolution of the Hebrew vowels), and even admit that various stages of the alleged evolutionary development have “scanty” evidence, so that “no Hebrew mss. . . . bear evidence” of them (pg. 17, Morag).

\textsuperscript{115} Pg. 38 (7h), \textit{Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar}, Wilhelm Gesenius. Despite the total lack of evidence, Gesenius goes on to “infer” how the vowels were allegedly added. Unfortunately, too many theological conservatives have uncritically adopted such speculation without recognizing that it is mere inference based on absolutely nothing of substance.
knows nothing of the work of [inventing the points by] the Masorites."\textsuperscript{116} In fact, once the TMT advocate abandons the IV view that the Masorah date back to Ezra, at the latest, he must admit that “we know absolutely nothing about the scholars who performed the immense labour of which the masoretic notes are the fruit. . . . [N]either the beginning nor the end of [their work] is known.”\textsuperscript{117} The only name of any kind that seems to have been given by anyone in the relatively recent past\textsuperscript{118} is “Mocha of Tiberias, or Palestine,” who the nineteenth-century \textit{Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature}\textsuperscript{119} states was “a noted rabbi, who flourished shortly after the middle of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century.” It is affirmed that “little is known of his personal history.” However, although nobody seems to know anything about him, the article states he is the “author” of “the interlinear system of vocalization, called the Tiberian, or Palestinian.” Perhaps it is “known” that he lived shortly after the middle of the eighth century because his use of the vowel and accent marks makes it unacceptable to place his life any earlier. In any case, the \textit{Cyclopedia} proceeds to affirm that he either “established, or at least amplified” the Tiberian vocalization. No evidence that he invented the points is provided in the article, and the qualification that he either invented “or at least amplified” them makes their conclusion the more dubious. The only indication that would remotely seem to evidence that Mocha invented the vowels is that he “compiled a large and small Masorah, in which are discussed the writing of words with or without the vowel letters (etri), the affixing of certain accents (b’al), accented syllables, \textit{Dagesh} and \textit{Raphe}, rare forms; archaic words; homonyms, etc.” All that such work truly evidences is that the vowels

\textsuperscript{116} Pg. 169, “The Vowel-Point Controversy in the XVI and XVII Centuries,” Pick.

\textsuperscript{117} Pg. 137, \textit{Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah}, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell. The first statement is by the author of the book himself; the second half is a quotation from Elias Levita that the author agrees is accurate.

\textsuperscript{118} Whitfield mentions speculation in his time (the eighteenth century) that “[the points] were not even begun, till the tenth Century . . . [in the time when] Rabbi Judas Chig . . . wrote of the Hebrew Grammar. [But Whitfield asks], Has this Rabbi, in his System of Grammar, said a Word of the Institution of the Points, and, particularly, as being a late Performance? And had it been so, is it not next to impossible he should not? Some say they were invented by Rabbi Aaron Ben Asher and Rabbi Jacob Ben Naphtali, about the Middle of the fifth Century. But of this they give no more Assurance than the other” (pgs. 70-71, \textit{A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points}). These speculations were abandoned such a long time ago that the \textit{Cyclopedia} that suggests Mocha as the inventor of the points does not even mention them.

\textsuperscript{119} “Mocha of Tiberias, or Palestine,” in the \textit{Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature}, John McClintock & James Strong. Elec. acc. \textit{Christian Library} Series vol. 2. Albany, OR: AGES Software, 2006 (orig. pub. 1867-1887). The quotes in the rest of the paragraph come from this article. Note also pgs. 154-155, “The Vowel-Points Controversy in the XVI. and XVII. Centuries,” B. Pick. It is noteworthy that both Pick’s article and McClintock & Strong’s encyclopedia, which give specific names for the alleged originators of the Hebrew vowels, date to the nineteenth century. It is possible that modern writers pass over such specific speculations because they recognize that no substantial evidence for them exists.
were already extant in Moc'hha’s day, rather than that he authored them. However, if one assumes the validity of the TM hypothesis, the self-evident fact that the vowels were extant for this rabbi to discuss around A. D. 750 makes him seem like a good candidate for their invention. The conclusion, however, is nothing but circular reasoning and speculation based on the presupposed late date of the points. The entire lack of evidence for Mocha inventing the vowels may perhaps account for the general silence by modern liberal works of textual criticism about such a role by the man the Cyclopaedia designates as their inventor.

Indeed, just as very little evidence is offered that a school of Masorites in Tiberias invented the Hebrew points, there is little evidence for even the existence of a Masoretic school in the region.

With such general silence on the part of the Jews, who lived near to the supposed era of this Tiberian school, we cannot but think, that the existence of a school of any reputation, at the supposed time, is greatly questionable—that whatever were their numbers and their character, they were men of no such abilities as to be able to invent the present excellent and varied system of punctuation, and, that, even though they could have been thought capable of inventing it, their name and authority were not of such influence as to recommend the system to that universal esteem in which it has been held among the Jews, in every country, not only in later times, but even about the very time in which they are said to have flourished at Tiberias. Upon the whole, there appears no reasonable ground for supposing that this is the School to which the invention of the present System of Punctuation is to be ascribed. . . . [There is a] great deficiency of evidence, as to the nature of the labours, and as to the boasted reputation, of this school of Tiberias.

There could well have been scribes in the region of Tiberias in the centuries the TMT avers the Hebrew vowels and accents were created. However, historical documentation that they invented the points is entirely absent, although such a radical addition to the Hebrew text would surely have been noted, not to mention arousing opposition from at least some quarters, especially since Tiberias appears to have been, at best, a backwater of Jewish learning. As with the fact that historical evidence that any particular person

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120 Indeed, “[n]early all those [Masoretic] scholars who are mentioned by name [in ancient Jewish writings] are mentioned because they held particular opinions on details of vocalization or accentuation” (pg. 137, Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell), evidencing that the vowels and accents were already extant in their day.

121 Pg. 84-85, Moncrieff, Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points.

122 Whitfield summarizes Buxtorf’s argument along this line as follows: “That as for so long, before the Time assigned for the Invention of the Hebrew Points, the Schools of Babylon were in so superior a Situation, to those of Tiberias, if there were any at all at the latter Place; and as they continued to flourish for many Centuries afterwards; whereas there is no Account of the others being at all restored, nor any thing published there: it being highly probable, they were totally reduced before the six hundredth Year of the Christian Account: As the Superiority of the Babylonish Schools is particularly evident, from the Greatness of their Talmud, above that of Jerusalem, and the universal high Esteem it immediately obtained
invented the points is entirely lacking, the documentary silence about the creation of the Hebrew vowels by Tiberian schools supports the IV position and undermines the TMT.

There are a great variety of other arguments in favor of the IV position and against the TMT which will not be exhaustively examined, but only stated with some brevity. These include:

1.) The similarity of names in the MTR and the LXX, the Vulgate, and the Hexapla (cf. pgs. 67-70, Moncrieff, 1833 Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points).

2.) “[T]he great variety of Accents, in the Hebrew . . . not only for the various, necessary Pauses . . . but principally, as Elias Levita asserts, and as the Jews believe, for embellishing the Reading and Pronunciation, with various Elegancies of Modulation of the Voice, in tone and Cadence . . . now almost wholly lost, to the Jews themselves, and [which have] been so for many Generations[.] . . . This is a strong Evidence of their having been, anciently, of known and familiar Use, and that their Use was lost long before the Time assigned for the Invention of the Points” (pg. 41, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points).

3.) The fact that the LXX and Vulgate correctly render the Hebrew dual for nouns that are identical in form with the plural if vowels are not present (e. g., Exodus 21:21, מֶמוֹנָה, not מְמֹנָה, with the LXX ἡμέραν . . . δύο and Vulgate duobus).

4.) The question of why anti-Christian TMs would add vowels that teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah, instead of adding anti-Christian points, in texts such as Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

5.) The question of whether the Jews would dare to make such radical additions to the Scriptures as to add vast numbers of uninspired marks to them, when they had warnings such as Deuteronomy 12:32 and Proverbs 30:5-6. Josephus records, “[H]ow firmly we have given credit to those Scriptures of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for amongst all the Jews, both in East and West; whereby the other was, in a great measure, disused and neglected . . . [therefore Buxtorf concluded that] a Work of such Importance, as the Institution of a System of Vowel and Accent-points, for the certain, uniform and perpetual reading of the Holy Scriptures, should have been undertaken, prosecuted and completed, at Tiberias, and published without the Consent, Concurrence or Approbation of the learned Men in the Schools at Babylon; or without their being in any way interested in it . . . is highly improbable; and I add, especially as none of the learned Men at Babylon, nor in Palestine, nor elsewhere, for some Hundreds of Years, have said the least Syllable of such an Institution. . . . [I]t is very hard to be supposed, considering the Disposition of the Jews . . . that they should calmly and without all Controversy and Opposition, submit to such a very material Alteration, in their Scriptures, upon the Recommendation and Authority of any one, or a few private Men; though of ever so great Esteem; if we can suppose, that they would at all have paid that Regard to the united Authority of all the Rabbis and great Men in Babylon; which . . . I very much question” (pg. 83, 85 A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points).
during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.”

Similarly, Philo said that the Jews “have so great a veneration for the Author of their laws, that they strictly observe all his precepts, as of Divine authority . . . so that, after so great a number of years, . . . they have not altered a single word of what he wrote, and they would rather suffer ten thousand deaths, than do anything against his laws and institutions.”

6.) The violent antagonism between Christendom and Judaism at the time the TMT assigns to the invention of the points would have been expected to have drawn cries from either Catholics or Jews, as the one or the other saw advantage being taken or given, that the Scriptures were being corrupted by the radical change in character that was made in the Old Testament by the addition of the vowels and accents. However, not only are all Jewish writers silent about the creation of the points by the TM, but all patristic and scholastic Catholic writers say absolutely nothing about the invention of the vowel points.

7.) The second column of Origen’s Hexapla, which contained a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew Old Testament, included Greek vowels. This would support the position that the Hebrew vowels were already extant in Origin’s Hebrew Vorlage.

8.) Unexpected and unusual vocalizations, some of which are mentioned and followed in the Targums, LXX, and other pre-TM documents, would not have been placed in the text by the TM.

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123 ἔδηλον δὲ ἐστὶν ἔργον πῶς ἡμεῖς πρόσθιμον τοις ἰδίοις γράμμασι τοσοῦτον γάρ αἰῶνος ἡδὲ παραφηκότος ο الدنيا πρὸς αὐτὸν οὕτω μεταθεῖται τετάρμηκεν πάσι δὲ σύμφωνον ἐστὶν εὐθὺς έκ πρώτης γενέσεως Ἰουδαίος τὸ νομίζειν αὐτὰ θεοῦ δύναμαι καὶ τούτοις ἐμένειν καὶ ύπέρ αὐτῶν εἰ δέω θνήσκειν ἡδέος

124 See pgs. 62-63, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points, where Philo’s quote, with its original Greek, is found, as replicated by Eusebius.

125 cf. pgs. 48-51, 317, Invitation to the Septuagint, Karen H. Jobes & Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000. “[T]he striking agreement of the present mode of reading with Points, with the reading in the Hexapla, must be apparent to the most inattentive observer. . . . [D]istinct signs, if not the same, yet of correspondent power, with the present Points, were well known in the age in which Origen flourished ” (pgs. 52-63, Moncrieff, Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points).

126 See a large number of examples explicating this argument on pgs. 120-134, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel Points. Another example of this sort of evidence (mentioned on pg. 184, Whitfield) is Jeremiah 4:5’s reading (with some textual variation; see Ginsburg’s note in the MTR) of בְּהֵן וַיַּשְׁמַע נַעֲשָׁה as the Qere. The Kethiv would be translated, “And tell and blow with the trumpet,” a reading supported by the Vulgate, while the Qere, “and say, Blow ye the trumpet” (KJV) is followed by the Targum of Jonathan (בְּהֵן יַשִּׁמַּע נַעֲשָׁה) and the Septuagint (ἐἴσακε σημάνατε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς σάλπιγγι). The Qere would not be deduced from a solely consonantal text, so
9.) Jewish tradition and the most celebrated Jewish Rabbis make claims that fit with the IV position, not the TMT. Whitfield provides and comments on some examples:

R. D. Kimchi [wrote] . . . in his Book Michlol . . . our Rabbins, of blessed Memory, do not say, to change the Vowels from what they were, as given to Moses in Sinai.” . . . R. [Ibn] Ezra [in] his book Zechuth [writes] . . . “I very much wonder, how the Author of the Pauses could mistake, especially (חָמַשׁ בַּעֲשָׁרָה) if he were Ezra the Scribe.”

10.) “[N]o Tiberian MS is known which marks an accent not in use today, or which fails to show one which is in use today.”

11.) “[I]n Bereshit Rabba [the accent , the] atnachta[,] is mentioned (36:8 in the MS Vatican 30 . . . referring to Neh 8:8)[. . . The names of vowel signs are used in a Geniza frament containing a ‘Qaraite list of terms’ written . . . in the eighth century[,] . . . Mar Semah ben Hayyin Ga’on (883-896) mentions ‘vowel points and conjunctive and disjunctive accents,’ and the differences between the scholars of Babylon and Eretz Israel in the use of them. . . . The earliest Biblical MSS, such as C, already show a fully developed system of vowel and accent signs. . . . Even the oldest Geniza framents provide no evidence of a stage at which only disjunctives were marked in Tiberian texts, nor of a stage where the accents were not marked on the stress syllable of the word.”

12.) Both “the medieval rabbinical interpreters and the ancient versions generally understood the [Old Testament] text in a way consistent with the accents.” This fact is difficult to explain if they were not already extant and deemed authoritative.

13.) One argument of dubious value that has been made by various IV advocates, especially those of earlier centuries, comes from the acceptance of the claims of the Zohar. If the traditional view of the authorship of the Zohar is correct, and it was

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the text evidences that either the K/Q note or the vowels, or both, were already present at the time the Targum and the Septuagint were created. Similar evidence for ancient K/Q or vowels is seen in Jeremiah 40:8, where a name has a K/Q stating that the name the Kethiv would read ‘לֹא נִצְחֶה is to be read as ‘לֹא נִצְחָה. The Kethiv is followed by the LXX and the Vulgate, while the Peshitta and the Targums follow the Qere, supporting the view that the K/Q was already present when the latter translations were made. Nothing in the connection would indicate that this name, a hapax legomenon, should be pronounced in any way other than would be natural according to its letters, were the text solely consonantal in the time assumed by the TMT.

See pgs. 249-257, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points, for these and other texts discussed and explained.


Pg. 633 (38:1c), Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, Waltke & O’Connor.
composed in the second century A. D. by Shimon bar Yochai, then the work provides definitive evidence for the antiquity of the Hebrew vowels, as they are regularly mentioned within it. The traditional view was “maintained not only by Jews for centuries, but even by such distinguished Christian scholars as Lightfoot, Gill, Bartolocci, Pfeffer, Knorr von Rosenroth, Molitor, Franck, and Etheridge.” Furthermore, Elias Levita, the first known opponent of the inspiration of the points, accepted the legitimacy of the Zohar’s claims, so the fact that the document regularly and repeatedly mentions the vowels should have moved him to abandon his TM position. However, the common modern view is that the work was composed by Moses de Leon in the thirteenth century. If this latter position is correct, the Zohar is of no value in the question of the legitimacy of the TMT. Advocates of the antiquity of the Zohar argue that references in the Zohar to events after the second century are interpolations within what is substantially an ancient rather than a late medieval document. Furthermore, even certain scholars that accept its composition by Moses de Leon argue that he compiled a variety of earlier sources, rather than creating an entirely original work. It is noteworthy that one of the arguments for a late dating of the Zohar is that it “quotes and mystically explains the Hebrew vowel-points,” which, it is alleged, are a late product of the Tiberian Masorites. However,

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131 “The opinion of the kabbalists themselves concerning the composition and editing of the Zohar was formed after the circulation of the book. At first the view was widely held that this was the book written by Simeon b. Yohai while he was in hiding in the cave, or at least during his lifetime, or at the latest in the generation that followed” (Article “Zohar,” in the Jewish Encyclopedia. This particular article is available online at http://www.radicaltorahthought.com/Info%20Zohar.htm.)

132 For example, the Zohar states, “the letters are the body and the vowel-points the soul, they move with the motion and stand still with the resting of the vowel-points, just as an army moves after its sovereign” and “the vowel-points proceeded from the same Holy Spirit which indited the sacred Scriptures, and that far be the thought to say that the scribes made the points, since even if all the prophets had been as great as Moses, who received the law direct from Sinai, they could not have had the authority to alter the smallest point in a single letter, though it be the most insignificant in the whole Bible” (Zohar i., 15, b; (cf. pg. 65, The Zohar, vol. 1., trans. Harry Sperling & Maurice Simon, London, England: Soncino Press, 1933); Zohar on the Song of Solomon, 57 b, ed. Amsterdam, 1701, in “Life of Elias Levita,” Ginsburg, pg. 48). Note also the entire Tikkunei Zohar.

133 “Zohar,” in the supplement to the Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, John McClintock & James Strong. The works where the scholars above defended the authenticity of the Zohar are listed in the original source, but have been removed from the quotation.

134 Indeed, Levita even stated “I shall first do battle against those who say that [the points] were given on Sinai, and then state who invented them, and when they were originated and affixed to the letters. But if anyone should prove to me, by clear evidence, that my opinion is opposed to that of our Rabbins of blessed memory, or is contrary to the genuine Kabbalah of the Sohar, I will readily give in to him, and declare my opinion as void.” (pg. 121, Levita, Massoreth Ha Massoreth, trans. Ginsburg).

135 “Ever since the historical critique of the Zohar first began, there have been views that regard the Zohar as a combination of ancient and later texts, which were put together only at the time of the Zohar’s appearance” (Article “Zohar,” in the Jewish Encyclopedia). The Encyclopedia concludes, however, that this assertion is not valid, and presents a large number of strong reasons to favor a late date for the work.

136 “Zohar,” ibid.
other substantial arguments in favor of a late date for the Zohar and its authorship by Moses de Leon can be made, and, without a careful and thorough answer, they render strongly dubious any argument against the TM position from the book.

In conclusion, a substantial body of historical evidence favors the IV position and opposes the TMT. The idea that a school of Masorites in the area of Tiberias invented the Hebrew vowel and accent system should not simply be assumed to be an unshakeable and undisputable fact.

IV. Answers to Extra-Biblical Arguments Allegedly Evidencing the Early Non-Existence of the Hebrew Vowels

Two seemingly substantial arguments\textsuperscript{137} against the IV position and in favor of the TMT remain to be analyzed. If these arguments fail to prove the position, the TMT does not have much left to support itself.

\textsuperscript{137} Other arguments may, at times, be advanced by certain TMT adherents. The question of differences in names in the MTR and the LXX and Vulgate is examined and very thoroughly answered on pgs. 222-244 of Whitfield, \textit{A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points}. Whitfield points out the fact that one who takes the position of Levita, that the points represent an oral tradition passed down perfectly from Moses, have no logically coherent explanation for the differences that is in any way superior to the arguments of IV advocates. Against the more radical of TMT advocates who also reject the position of Levita, Whitefield sets forth a variety of considerations. The facts that huge numbers of glaring variations between these translations and the MTR cannot be accounted for on the basis of the assumed presence or absence of the points, the requirements of Greek pronunciation, and the evidence for the points from the renditions in the Targumim are discussed. The fact that Jerome, in his preface to his translation of Chronicles from the LXX, specifically states that deviances in the LXX from the Hebrew are due to sloppy scribes is mentioned. Many individual words and passages from these works are also elucidated which favor the existence of the vowel points. Note also the earlier section of this paper, which presented some evidences for the existence of the points in the times when those translations were made.

The alleged silence of the Talmud on the points, which was the strongest argument alleged by Levita and others for the TMT, has been shown earlier to be invalid, by direct quotations from the Talmudic writings themselves that evidence the existence of the vowels. The argument by Whitfield (pg. 261-262, \textit{A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points}) for the lack of the mention of the specific names of the Hebrew points in the Talmud is interesting:

[First, it is manifest that] every Person, who writes upon any Subject, [does not] always mention every thing, which he knows[.]. . . [Furthermore], the Authors of the Talmud designed to conceal the Jewish Language and Affairs, from the Christians . . . Elias Levi himself [wrote] . . . ["Woe to my Soul because I am teaching the Law to Gentiles"] . . . [citing then] a Malediction from the Rabbins, thus: . . . 'Whosoever shall our Laws reveal/To Men incompetent,/ His Soul and Spirit shall to Hell/ And to endless Fire be sent./ But none are meet save Israelites/To learn our Laws Divine,/ Not Edomites nor Ishmaelites,/ Nor any other Line.["] . . . By Edomites and Ishmaelites, the latter Jews meant all who are not of their Nation, and especially those of the Christian Religion, whom, in their Prayers, they devote to the Divine Malediction[.]."

On the supposition that, "as some of the Jewish Writers assert . . . both the Targums and other early Writings of the Jews, particularly the Mishna, were writ with Points. . . [then] for that Reason [the authors and editors of those early writings] had no Occasion to mention their Names: as one may read a great many Books in any language, without meeting with the Name of any one Letter" (pg. 266, Whitfield, \textit{A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points}). See also footnote 31.
First, the fact that Jewish synagogue copies are solely consonantal is advanced by some as evidence that the points were a late invention by the TM. As indicated by Emmanuel Tov, Jewish tradition held to a distinction between synagogue copies and copies employed outside of the synagogue. Synagogue copies for liturgical use were “written without vowels and accents in the form of scrolls, in accordance with the rules of writing laid down in antiquity by the rabbis. Most of those rules are also reflected in texts not used in the liturgy, certainly in the carefully written codices [note that the codex, rather than the scroll, was in use at the time period under discussion for non-liturgical copies], but the latter texts were vocalized and accented and contained the complete Masoretic apparatus.” A traditional Jewish distinction between synagogue copies and those used outside of the synagogue does not by any means establish that a school of Tiberian Masorites invented the vowel points nearly a thousand years after the time of Christ. To argue thus is simply unwarranted. Besides, there is no way to determine that in ancient times the modern practice of employing unpointed copies in the synagogue was followed. Furthermore, even if the ancient character of the tradition of employing unpointed synagogue copies could be established, it would not prove that all copies were unvocalized. The modern existence of unpointed synagogue scrolls certainly does not prove that no vocalized copies of the Old Testament exist today. Indeed, the existence of “rules laid down in antiquity by the rabbis” mandating that synagogue copies be composed without points evidences that, at the time, pointed copies were extant. What is more, in the modern period when historical evidence of unpointed synagogue copies actually exists, those who read in the synagogue practice in private beforehand with pointed copies.

John Owen explains the use of unpointed synagogue copies very well: The constant practice of the Jews in preserving in their synagogues one book, which they almost adore, written without points, is alleged to [prove that the points are uninspired]; “for what do they else hereby but tacitly acknowledge the points to have a human original?” . . . But it is certain they do not so acknowledge them, neither by practice nor by any other way, it being the constant opinion and

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139 “[I]t must appear very strange, that in all the voluminous Performances of the Jewish Writers, before and since the finishing of the Talmud, nothing should be found before [an assertion by Elias Levita to this end in the sixteenth century], to prove so important a Proposition [as that synagogue copies were always and at all times unpointed], had it been true” (pg. 269, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points).
140 Pg. 274, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points, Whitfield.
persuasion of them all (Elias only excepted) that they are of a divine extract; and if their authority be to be urged, it is to be submitted unto in one thing as well as in another. The Jews give a threefold account of this practice: —

1.) The difficulty of transcribing copies without any failing, the least rendering the whole book, as to its use in their synagogues, profane.

2.) The liberty they have thereby to draw out various senses, more eminent, as they say (indeed more vain and curious), than they have any advantage to do when the reading is restrained to one certain sense by the vowels and accents.

3.) To keep all learners in dependence on their teachers, seeing they cannot learn the mind of God but by their exposition[]. If these reasons satisfy not any as to the ground of that practice, they may be pleased to inquire of them for others who intend to be bound by their authority; — that the points were invented by some late Masoretes they [the Jews in Owen’s day] will not inform them. . . . I do not understand this argument: “The Jews keep a book in their synagogues without points, therefore the points and accents were invented by the Tiberian Masoretes;” when they never read it, or rather sing it, but according to every point and accent in ordinary use. Indeed, the whole profound mystery of this business seems to be this, that none be admitted to read or sing the law in their synagogues until he be so perfect in it as to be able to observe exactly all points and accents in a book wherein there are none of them.142

The explanations given for the use of unpointed synagogue copies by advocates of the antiquity and inspiration of the Hebrew points are entirely reasonable. The objection to the IV view from the use of unpointed synagogue copies fails.

Second, the discovery of a significant variety of unpointed ancient documents through archeological investigation is also affirmed to prove the TMT.143 Emmanuel Tov wrote, “The late origin of the vocalization [of the MTR] is evident from its absence in the texts from the Judean Desert.”144 Indeed, Tov’s work, the “authoritative reference work for all those engaged in the study of the text of the Hebrew Bible,”145 gives no other

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141 Owen’s statement that the Jews, with the exception of Elias Levita and whoever had adopted his new opinion, received the Hebrew vowels as given by inspiration, was true when the great Puritan wrote in the seventeenth century. In the 21st century, however, much of Judaism has abandoned its traditional position in favor of the view of Levita that the points were not written along with the consonants. Most of modern Judaism has also gone far beyond Levita and rejected the inspiration of the Bible wholesale.


143 The answer to this objection deals with unpointed Hebrew documents. For considerations on comparative languages, such as Arabic, see pgs. 34-41 of Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points.

144 Pg. 40, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible.

145 Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, back cover.
arguments for a late origin of the Hebrew vowels, while it admits, in the very sentence after its affirmation of the late origin of the vocalization, that “[n]evertheless, Jewish and Christian tradition both believed in the divine origin of the vocalization, and only in the sixteenth century was a serious attempt made to refute this supposition.”146 Thus, it appears that the Jews and Christians until the sixteenth century were not aware that anyone had added the vowels, but somehow convinced themselves that they were inspired by God even in the time period when they were allegedly being invented.147 In any case, the existence of unpointed ancient writings do not prove that the ancient Hebrews had no way to write down the vowel sounds found in the MTR. Were a city in the nation of Israel buried today, and then, some centuries later, uncovered as an archeological dig, the overwhelming majority of documents unearthed would have no vowels or accent marks. Newspapers, personal letters, official government documents, street signs, and practically all other writings in Israel today—most copies of the Hebrew Bible, and grammar books for young children constituting practically the only exceptions—contain no vowel points. Since 99%+ of modern Israeli documents are unpointed148 (although Hebrew grammar books teach people to read and write the

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146 Pg. 40, Ibid. Note that since Tov does not employ the argument from unpointed synagogue copies, from the lack of Talmudic references to the names of the points, or any other TMT argument besides the one set forth above, he implicitly recognizes the weakness of the rest.

147 Thus, Gesenius assumes that the vowels and accents were a late invention, without providing any proof, and then affirms that, once they were invented by certain unspecified Jews, the existence of these new markings “soon caused the Jews to forget [their] real origin” (pg. 58 (15c), Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar). Indeed, the Jews not only refrained from engaging in any debate over such a momentous alteration of the Hebrew text, but they so “soon forgot” that they themselves had invented the vowels that they did not leave a scrap of evidence that any of them ever believed that they had done so, leaving this “fact” to be discovered by rationalism many centuries later without any actual historical evidence whatever.

148 It should be noted, however, that a more generous use of vowel-letters than are found in the Hebrew Bible greatly reduces the possibility of ambiguity in modern Hebrew. Tov admits that, in contrast to other documents, “vocalization . . . was a necessary component of [the Masoretic Text], since this text was sparing in its use of matres lectionis, which facilitate the reading of the consonants. On the other hand, in such texts as some of the Qumran scrolls, which make abundant use of matres lectionis . . . vocalization was required less” (pgs. 40-41, Textual Criticism, Tov). If, in contrast to other Hebrew texts, “vocalization [is] . . . necessary” to the MTR, how can one accept as fact that it was read without the points for thousands of years? The allegedly original “scriptio defectiva, the orthography in which the vowels were completely or almost completely lacking . . . was sometimes necessarily subjective. Even the scriptio plena [with matres], however, constituted only a partial solution to the problem in question” (pg. 10, The Vocalization Systems of Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic, Shelomo Morag), for in the Biblical text “much remained uncertain even in texts which were plentifully provided with vowel letters. For, although in most cases the context was a guide to the correct reading, yet there were also cases where, of the many possible ways of pronouncing a word, more than one appeared admissible. . . . Thus e. g. בֵּית can be read qäṯal, qäṯal, qäṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, qiąṯal, and several of these forms have also different senses” (pg. 38 (7g) Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar). For this reason, it is not surprising to note that “[p]unctuation is more common, and much more thorough going and consistent, in Biblical texts than in other literary texts” (pg. 193, “Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period,” E. J. Revell. Journal for the Study of Judaism, Vol. 7:2).
A supposition that vast quantities of matres were in the ancient Hebrew text, but were then removed when the vowels were added by the TMT, is opposed both by the Scriptural fact of the perfect preservation of the Bible (Psalm 12:6-7; Isaiah 59:21) and the evidence of history. Dealing with this idea, Moncrieff (pg. 39, 37 Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points), wrote: “In order to account for the deficiency of Vowel letters [in the MTR, for reading simply with the matres], it has been contended that a great proportion of these have been dropped from many Manuscripts, and that some ancient Manuscripts have more of these matres letters than others. This may hold true as to some MSS., but cannot be the case with those which deserve to be in the highest reputation for fidelity and accuracy. Would not the Masoretes, who were so scrupulously careful as to the preservation of every letter of the original, that they counted every one of them whether consonants or matres, and affixed the where there was any real or supposed deviation from what the genius of the language required [this part of the sentence involves an opposition to the traditional Jewish view that the Qere/Kethiv were given by inspiration, a common IV position, but one which Moncrieff does not here advocate], have faithfully recorded any extensive obliterations or rejections of the lectionis in the MSS. they consulted and read? We have Jerome’s authority that in his time and long before it, the Hebrew noun תַּכָּן which signifies a word, though invariably pronounced Dabar, was not written תַּכָּנָה, but in three letters תַּכָּן. [One notes also that, for example,] תַּכָּן stands for . . . 11 [different] words . . . if stripped of the Vowel-Points . . . but every one of them is clearly distinguished, if the points are regarded in reading.”

Elias Levita even references the words of R. Levi Bar Joseph, author of the Sepher Hassamadar, who said, “Without the Vowel-Points and Accents to explain the Words [of the Hebrew Bible], no Man can possibly understand them” (cited pg. 59, Whitfield, A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points). Gesenius admits that the “ambiguity of such a [system of] writing [as allegedly existed before the alleged invention of the vowel points] must have been found continually more troublesome . . . [especially] when the language had died out. . . . there was thus a danger that the correct pronunciation might be finally lost. By means of the [vowel] points everything . . . left uncertain was most accurately settled” (pg. 38 (7h), Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, Wilhelm Gesenius).

It should also be no ted that an IV advocate affirms that the letters employed as matres are not themselves vowels, but consonants used to lengthen the sound of vowels; i.e., a shorter o vowel than , and . is a shorter sound than . . . Certainly acrostic poems like Psalm 119 treat the letters used as matres as consonants.

“Some of the Opposers of the Antiquity of the Points, represent them as invented for the Use of Children and others of low Capacities and small Attention . . . yet those very Men, in describing Rules for reading without Points, have a necessary Recourse to those very Points, which they are deprecating and endeavouring totally to reject. They teach how to read the Verbs according to the Conjugations, which Conjugations . . . in a great measure, depend upon the Variety of the Punctuations. In short, they allow the absolute Necessity of the Knowledge of Grammar; yet one of the principal Parts of Hebrew Grammar is to teach the proper use and Variation of the Punctuations; so that they themselves unavoidably confess the Impossibility of learning to read the Language, without the Use of the Points, which yet they say had no being, till about five hundred Years after Christ. . . . [H]ow great an Improbability . . . That such a Number of different Vowel and Accent Sounds, with other Diversities of Punctuation, as are denoted by more than forty different Characters, were, for above two thousand Years, known and understood, by all the Israelites, who could read the Scriptures; and were taught to Children, to Strangers, to People in all Conditions of Life, without any Signs or Marks, by which their Ideas might be distinguished. . . . [I]f it must be so very difficult to read the Hebrew, without the Vowels, while it was a living Language and familiarly Spoken[,] how Impossible must it be, to do the same, after it had ceased to be Vernacular, for more than a Thousand Years; as it is pretty generally agreed on all hands, it had, at the time, when the Points are said to have been invented, by the Masorets of Tiberias? Could [reading without the points] have been done to the six hundredth year of the Christian Account[,] no Reason can be given for their Invention at all . . . since, whatever Reason can be assigned, for their Institution, at that or any other Period; the same was equally Cogent, at the Time of Ezra, and the Great Synagogue” (pgs. 12-13, 22-24 A Dissertation on the Hebrew
pointed documents, even in this post-printing press world. This fact would hardly prove that Hebrew vowel and accent marks had not been invented by A.D. 2000. No more do unpointed hand-copied documents at Qumran and other archeological digs prove that the vowel and accent marks were unknown in ancient Israel.\textsuperscript{150}

V. Conclusion

The evidence for the \textit{IV} position, and against the \textit{TMT}, is strong. Numerous strands of historical data make problematic the idea that the Hebrew vowels and accents were invented by a school of scribes in the area around Tiberias somewhere between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1000. History corroborates the Scriptural evidences in favor of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowel points.

VI. Appendix I: The Vocalization of the Tetragrammaton

\textit{Vowel-Points, showing that they are an original and essential part of the Language}, Peter Whitfield. Liverpool, 1748).

Whitfield also mentions (pgs. 76-79) that Jerome, in commending Origin’s learning of the Hebrew tongue, mentions difficulties he had from being a foreigner, being advanced in age, being engaged in other projects, etc., but does not say a word about the far greater difficulty of the necessity of learning the language without any written vowels (which leaves, e.g., the Qal, Piel, and Pual verb paradigms largely identical). Jerome also mentions various far smaller difficulties he had himself in learning Hebrew without a word of the language’s lack of vowels. He even writes a letter to a woman in Rome who had, with her daughter, learned Hebrew so perfectly that they could read and sing the Psalms of David in that language with elegance and propriety, without any word about the tremendous difficulty that a lack of vowels would have made in such a task. Furthermore, when Augustine wrote to Jerome urging him to not edit the Latin Bible based on the Hebrew, but to continue to follow the Greek of the LXX, he gives a great variety of trifling reasons for his advocacy of the LXX, but never mentions the ambiguity that would, on the assumption of an unpointed text, fill the \textit{MTR}. Indeed, no patristic writer says a syllable in any of their writings about the allegedly unpointed nature of the Hebrew Bible.

\textsuperscript{150} It should also be noted that the methods employed to date manuscripts tend to have significant elements of subjectivity. More objective criteria, such as radiometric dating, are not regularly employed. Thus, if an ancient geniza was discovered containing MSS with the vowel and accent marks of the \textit{MTR}, the documents would automatically be assigned dates that fit within the parameters of the \textit{TM} hypothesis. If, as advocates of the \textit{TMT} affirm, the men of Tiberias invented the vowel marks, any MS that contains vowels must necessarily be dated after the era when they were allegedly first employed. The possibility that a pointed MS is actually centuries older than is consistent with the \textit{TM}, and so the \textit{TM} is incorrect, would almost surely be dismissed out of hand. The scholarly bias is comparable to that which would make it extremely difficult to convince many that an ancient copy of the books of the Pentateuch predated the era postulated for the illusory J, E, D, and P documents, or that a MS of Daniel predated the era of Antiochus Epiphanes. The “facts” of the JEDP theory and the impossibility of predictive prophecy would “prove” the late dates of newly unearthed MSS that problematized such theories, just as the century assigned pointed MSS would be made to fit within the parameters of prevailing scholarly liberalism. If it became necessary, a pointed MS that truly appeared too old to fit the \textit{TMT} could always be affirmed to have had its vowels added by a later hand.
The vowels of the Tetragrammaton יְהֹוָה, that is, Yehowah or Jehovah (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4)\(^{151}\) are not a late addition, but represent the original and true pronunciation of the profoundly significant\(^{152}\) Divine Name.\(^{153}\) The commonly

\(^{151}\) The MTR fully points the Tetragrammaton as Yehowah (יהוה), while the Hebrew critical text based on the Leningrad MS (codex L) omits the cholem (חולם), leaving Yeh-wah, which, as it obviously is missing a vowel, is more open to critical emendation to an alternative pronunciation. For one who maintains Biblical presuppositions, it is inconceivable that God would allow the correct pronunciation of His Name to be lost (cf. Exodus 3:15, Psalm 9:10, Proverbs 18:10, Joel 2:32), so the pointing actually in the Hebrew text must represent the correct pronunciation, Yehowah or Jehovah. The difference between the Old Testament Textus Receptus, the 1524-5 Rabbinic Bible edited by Ben Chayyim, which “has been printed thousands of times in many countries” (pg. 32, Revell, E. J., trans. & ed., Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah, Israel Yeivin, Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1980), and the current critical Hebrew OT, adopted in 1937 and the standard for modern Bible versions, is explained on pgs. 27-28, Defending the King James Bible, D. A. Waite, Collingswood, NJ: Bible For Today Press, 1999. It should be noted that, strictly speaking, both the Hebrew Textus Receptus and modern critical text are editions of the Ben Asher (as opposed to the Ben Naftali) Masoretic Text, a point not clearly brought out in the source here listed. The MTR is printed today by the Trinitarian Bible Society (Holy Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the Original Languages: Hebrew and English, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. H KAINH DIACHKH, Beza/Scrivener, 1894. London, England: Tyndale House/Trinitarian Bible Society, 1894/1998) while the modern critical text is available in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (ed. K. Elliger & W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977). The Hebrew critical text contains “many erasures . . . mostly of ga’ya, but also of letters and accents[,] . . . The Masora of L occasionally contradicts the text” (pg. 19, Revell, E. J., trans. & ed., Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah, Israel Yeivin, Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1980). Furthermore, there are places where ancient evidence supports the MTR against the critical Hebrew text. For instance, in Deuteronomy 32:18, the MTR contains the word יָדָה with a small י, while in codex L the י is of normal size. However, “in Wayyiqra Rabba, a midrash compiled before the close of the Talmudic period, it is said יָדָה לְדוֹרֵךְ וּלְאַנָּתר וּלְעַנָּתר – הַתֵּשָׁתֵהּ פָּזָה, יָדָה לְדוֹרֵךְ וּלְאַנָּתר וּלְעַנָּתר (Wayyiqra Rabba 23:13, ed. Margoliouth, p. 548, cf. Bemidbar Rabba 9:1). This midrash states that יָדָה in Dt 32:18 has a small יד, and bases the homily on this fact. Not only this, but the text states in characteristic masoretic terminology that this small יד is unique (i. e. it includes enumeration) . . . [H]owever . . . [in codices] such as A and L, this יד is written normally, not small, in clear contradiction of the midrashic statement” (pgs. 135-136, Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell). Thus, not only does the full pointing of the Divine Name and the providence of God in the preservation of Scripture demonstrate the superiority of the MTR to codex L and the modern critical Hebrew text, ancient evidence is also extant that supports the MTR against the critical text.

It is possible that the form יְהֹוָה is a result of considering of the Tetragram as a qere perpetuum that possesses the vowels of the Aramaic נְבֵעָה, “the Name.” It is noteworthy that the actual vowels of the word Lord, יְהֹוָה, are never found underneath the Tetragrammaton in any Hebrew text. See pgs. 192-193, The Name of God YeHoWaH, which is Pronounced as it is Written, I_Eh oU Ah: Its Story, Gérard Gertoux. One note as well that “the Samaritans . . . in reading the Pentateuch substituted for Jehovah (שמיה, shema) ‘the name,’ at the same time perpetuating the practice in their alphabetical poems and later writings” (“Jehovah,” Dictionary of the Bible, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. Newton Center: 1863. Elec. acc. Online Bible for Mac, Ken Hamel).

\(^{152}\) Wilhemus á Brakel expressed the common classical view of the significance of יְהֹוָה: [It] has pleased the Lord to give Himself a name by which He wishes to be called—a name which would indicate His essence, the manner of His existence, and the plurality of divine Persons. The name which is indicative of His essence is יְהֹוָה or Jehovah, it being abbreviated as י, or Jah. The name which is indicative of the trinity of Persons is Elohim or Elohim. Often there is a coalescence of these two words resulting in יְהוָה or Jehovis. The consonants of this word constitute the name Jehovah, whereas the vowel marks produce the name Elohim. Very frequently these two names are placed side by side in the following manner: Jehovah
repeated modern idea that the pronunciation Jehovah is a late and incorrect invention, while Yahweh is the true pronunciation of the Name, is false. No known Hebrew MSS on earth actually is vocalized as Yahweh. On the other hand, the form Jehovah is found in a variety of locations in the oldest Hebrew MSS, such as the Aleppo codex and a variety of “biblical fragments dated between 700 and 900,” as well as being the universal pointing in the MTR. Jewish scholars such as Maimonides (1138-1204) affirmed that the Tetragrammaton was pronounced according to its letters as YeHoWaH. Were, as the common modern notion affirms, the vowels of the Divine Name simply lifted from יְהוָה, Adonai, the of the Tetragram would have a hateph

\[Elohim,\] to reveal that God is one in essence and three in His Persons. The Jews do not pronounce the name Jehovah. This practice of not using the name Jehovah initially was perhaps an expression of reverence, but later became superstitious in nature. In its place they use the name יְהוָה or Adonai, a name by which the Lord is frequently called in His Word. Its meaning is “Lord.” When this word is used in reference to men, it is written with the letter patach, which is the short “a” vowel. When it is used in reference to the Lord, however, the letter kaf is used, which is the long “a” vowel. As a result all the vowels of the name Jehovah are present. To accomplish this the vowel “e” is changed into a chatef-patach which is the shortest “a” vowel, referred to as the guttural letter aleph. Our translators, to give expression to the name Jehovah, use the name Lord, which is similar to the Greek word κύριος (kurios), the latter being a translation of Adonai rather than Jehovah. In Rev 1:4 and 16:5 the apostle John translates the name Jehovah as follows: “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” This one word has reference primarily to being or essence, while having the chronological connotation of past, present, and future. In this way this name refers to an eternal being, and therefore the translation of the name Jehovah in the French Bible is l’Eternel, that is, the Eternal One.

The name Jehovah is not to be found at all in the New Testament, which certainly would have been the case if it had been a prerequisite to preserve the name Jehovah in all languages. . . . Even though the transliteration of Hebrew words would conflict with the common elegance of the Greek language, it is nevertheless not impossible. Since they can pronounce the names Jesus, Hosanna, Levi, Abraham, and Hallelujah, they are obviously capable of pronouncing the name Jehovah. . . . Jehovah is not a common name, such as “angel” or “man”—names which can be assigned to many by virtue of being of equal status. On the contrary, it is a proper Name which uniquely belongs to God and thus to no one else, as is true of the name of every creature, each of which has his own name. (pgs. 84-85, The Christian’s Reasonable Service, vol. 1)

Note the connection made between the Tetragrammaton and the incarnation on pg. 8, The Doctrines of Grace, George S. Bishop (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1977).

Theologically modernistic Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (ed. Karen Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking & Pieter W. Van Der Horst. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. 2nd rev. ed. pg. 910) states, “Yahweh is the name of the official [G]od of Israel, both in the northern kingdom and in Judah. . . . [T]he correct pronunciation of the tetragrammaton was gradually lost: the Masoretic form ‘Jehovah’ is in reality a combination of the consonants of the tetragrammaton with the vowels of ‘adonay’.”

Pg. 144, The Name of God YeHoWaH, Gertoux. It should be noted that יְהוָה is not by any means uniformly found in the Aleppo Codex; the form in the Leningrad Codex, יֵהוָה, is found with significantly greater frequency. However, even the Leningrad Codex does have a small number of יֵהוָה forms, in, e. g., Psalm 15:1.

Pgs. 147ff., 214ff., The Name of God YeHoWaH, Gertoux.

In the Reformation era, the pronunciation Jehovah obtained general agreement. See pgs. 165-177, The Name of God YeHoWaH, Gertoux. It also “found its place in an overwhelming majority of Bibles from 1500 to 1900” (pg. 183, ibid; see pgs. 175-183). However, “Louis Cappel (1585-1658),” the first Protestant exponent of the TMT position, “maintained that the first syllable [of the Tetragrammaton] was certainly Iah-,” supporting the vocalization Yahweh (see pg. 210, The Name of God YeHoWaH, Gertoux).
YeHoWaH names in the Masoretic text follow the phonetic pattern 'Yehô and is the authentic pronunciation, contrary to the form Yahvé of Samaritan (1897)). "[T]he pronunciation Yehova . . . [is] in agreement with the beginning of all theophoric names, and [is] the authentic pronunciation, contrary to the form Yahvé of Samaritan origin. . . . [A]ll theophoric names in the Masoretic text follow the phonetic pattern ‘Yehô-a.’" (pgs. 174, 189 The Name of God, YeHoWaH, Gertoux; cf. pg. 210). Note also Thomas Strouse, “Who is this Deity Named Yahweh?" http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/CriticalTexts/yahweh.htm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jehoahana (1 Chron 26:3)</td>
<td>יְהוֹאָן</td>
<td>Jehovah has been gracious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6)</td>
<td>יְהוֹיאָכִין</td>
<td>Jehovah appoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiada (2 Samuel 8:18)</td>
<td>יְהוֹיאָדָּה</td>
<td>Jehovah knows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34)</td>
<td>יְהוֹיָכִים</td>
<td>Jehovah raises up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiarib (1 Chron 9:10)</td>
<td>יְהוֹי־אִרְיָב</td>
<td>Jehovah contends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehonadab (2 Kings 10:15)</td>
<td>יְהוֹנָדָּב</td>
<td>Jehovah is noble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehonathan (1 Chron 27:25)</td>
<td>יְהוֹנָתָן</td>
<td>Jehovah has given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoram (1 Kings 22:50)</td>
<td>יְהוֹרָם</td>
<td>Jehovah is exalted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoseph (Psalm 81:5/6)</td>
<td>יְהוֹשֵׁפ</td>
<td>Jehovah has increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoshabeath (2 Chr 22:11)</td>
<td>יְהוֹשַׁבֵּת</td>
<td>Jehovah is an oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoshaphat (2 Sam 8:16)</td>
<td>יְהוֹשָפָט</td>
<td>Jehovah has judged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehosheba (2 Kings 11:2)</td>
<td>יְהוֹשֵׁה</td>
<td>Jehovah has sworn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoshua (Num 13:16)</td>
<td>יְהוֹשֻׁע</td>
<td>Jehovah is salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehozabad (2 Kings 12:21)</td>
<td>יְהוֹזָבָד</td>
<td>Jehovah hath bestowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehozadak (1 Chron 6:14)</td>
<td>יְהוֹזָדָק</td>
<td>Jehovah is righteous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it is very evident that the first section of the Divine Name is pronounced as it is written, Jehovah, not Yahweh.

Names of people and places that end with the Divine Name likewise evidence that Jehovah is correct, rather that Yahweh. Consider the following examples:

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161  The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, trans. & ed. M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden, The Netherlands: 2000) states that “Joshua [is] the first name in OT containing [Jehovah]” (though it then mentions as prior the shortened name יָהָה, found in Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59; the names Aliah (יהוֹאָל) in 1 Chronicles 1:51 and Beriah (יהוֹרוֹא) in Genesis 46:17 are not theophoric). It is noteworthy that this theophoric name was specifically chosen by Moses for the man formerly named simply Oshea (יהוֹאָשֶׁה, Numbers 13:16), and the name taken by the Messiah and Son of God, the Lord Jesus (Heb. Joshua; cf. Hebrews 4:8). However, Koehler & Baumgartner neglect the earlier theophoric name Joseph, יְהוֹשֵׁפ (Genesis 30:24; cf. Genesis 22:2, יְהוֹשֵׁע). However, it is true that Joshua/Jehoshua is the first theophoric name which contains the unabbreviated Jeho-, which is not found in יָהָה or יֶהוֹשֵׁע. Note that Jehoshua/Joshua can be written as יְהוֹשֻׁע (Exodus 17:9) as well as יְהוֹשֵׁע.  

162  A consistent advocate of the pronunciation Yahweh should insist upon changing all these Biblical names from, e.g., Jehoahaz to Yahuwahaz, Jehoshaphat to Yahwshapaht, Jehoshua to Yahwshua, and so on.

163  Unlike the Jeho- names, the list above is only representative, not comprehensive. Like the list of Jeho- names, only one reference where a name is found is listed. There are many names that end in יָה (yah) that are not included, for there are a great many more of such names in Scripture than there are Jeho-names. The English letter i appears on these names, not because a Hebrew chireq uniformly precedes the י, but because the * is transliterated as i instead of as y. An examination of the names above in Hebrew will validate that no single vowel uniformly precedes the י. Furthermore, it should be noted that very many of the yah names also have forms ending in יי. For example, equivalents to the first three names (יהוֹאָשֶׁה, יְהוֹשֵׁע, יְהוֹשֶׁפ) are found in 2 Chronicles 13:20 (יְהוֹאָשֶׁה), 1 Kings 14:4 (יְהוֹשֶׁפ), and 2 Kings 14:1 (יְהוֹשֵׁע).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abiah</td>
<td>(1 Samuel 8:2)</td>
<td>Jehovah is (my) father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahiah</td>
<td>(1 Samuel 14:3)</td>
<td>brother of Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaziah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 12:21)</td>
<td>Jehovah is mighty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athaliah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 11:3)</td>
<td>afflicted of Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezekiah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 18:1)</td>
<td>Jehovah is my strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilkiah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 18:37)</td>
<td>My portion is Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jedidiah</td>
<td>(2 Samuel 12:25)</td>
<td>beloved of Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesiah</td>
<td>(1 Chron 3:21)</td>
<td>Jehovah has saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>(Jeremiah 27:1)</td>
<td>Jehovah has founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah</td>
<td>(1 Kings 13:2)</td>
<td>whom Jehovah heals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micaiah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 22:12)</td>
<td>Who is like Jehovah?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moriah</td>
<td>(Genesis 22:2)</td>
<td>chosen by Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obadiah</td>
<td>(1 Chron 3:21)</td>
<td>servant of Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekahiah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 15:22)</td>
<td>Jehovah sees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seraiah</td>
<td>(2 Samuel 8:17)</td>
<td>Jehovah is ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shemaiah</td>
<td>(1 Kings 12:22)</td>
<td>heard by Jehovah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uriah</td>
<td>(2 Samuel 11:3)</td>
<td>Jehovah is my light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzziah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 12:21)</td>
<td>Jehovah is mighty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachariah</td>
<td>(2 Kings 14:29)</td>
<td>Jehovah remembers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zedekiah</td>
<td>(1 Kings 22:11)</td>
<td>Jehovah is righteous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These names evidence that Jehovah is the correct ending for the Tetragrammaton, not Yahweh. They employ the shortened form of Jehovah, Jah (Psalm 68:4, יְהֹוָה), which combines the first letter of the Name (י) with the ה, at the end, validating that ah, not eh or some other vocalization, properly ends the Tetragram. Both the Jehovah names ending in ah and the shortened form Jah itself validate that the final syllable of the Name is ah, not eh. No theophoric names anywhere in Scripture end with an eh, the expected ending were the Name pronounced Yahweh. Similarly, the word Hallelujah (Psalm

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164 Note the use of Jah and Jehovah together in Isaiah 12:2; 26:4.
165 The advocate of the pronunciation Yahweh could argue that יְהֹוָה does not combine the beginning and ending of the longer יָהָה, but rather constitutes the first portion of the Name, thus supporting an initial syllable of Yah instead of Yeh/Jeh. However, the fact that all the theophoric names that clearly do contain the initial portion of the Tetragrammaton read as Yeho not as Yah makes this idea unlikely. Furthermore, the mappiq in יְהֹוָה is expected only if the ה is a final consonant, which also suggests that the ב, represents the concluding portion of the Tetragrammaton. Note that certain theophoric names, such as 2 Samuel 12:25’s יְהֹוָה, also contain the mappiq. Thus, when theophoric names end with the Name, it is reasonable to think that the final portion of the name, the ב, of Jehovah, is combined with the initial consonant ב.
Furthermore, the Mishna states that the Name was pronounced as it was written, that is, as יהוה, Jehovah.\textsuperscript{166} This pronunciation is also consistent with Talmudic evidence.\textsuperscript{167} The plain evidence of what the vowels on the Name actually are, other theophoric names, the Mishna, and a variety of other evidences demonstrate that the Tetragrammaton is correctly pronounced Jehovah.

In contrast to the strong evidence in favor of the pronunciation Jehovah, very little favors the pronunciation Yahweh. Since this latter pronunciation is not favored by any evidence in the Hebrew of the Bible, nor in other ancient Jewish documents, its advocates must look outside of Scripture and Jewish texts for evidence in its favor. This they find in the late patristic writers “Theodoret . . . and Epiphanius . . . [who] give Ἰσαμή” as the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, although “the former distinguish[es] it as the

Thus, the Mishna records, “In the sanctuary they would pronounce the [divine] name as it is written, and in the provinces, by an epithet” (Tamid 7:2; see also the translation of the Stone in the article “Yahweh,” Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible). It should be noted that the idea that the Jews always forbade the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton is false. In addition to the quotation above, the Mishna speaks of the “voice of the high priest when he made mention of the Divine name on the Day of Atonement” (Tamid 3:8; see also the translation of the Stone). Likewise, the Talmud affirms that the Tetragram was pronounced. It declares that, on the Day of Atonement, “Ten times that day [the High Priest] pronounced the Divine Name, three in the first confession, three in the second confession, three in connection with the he-goat that is sent away, and one in connection with the lots” (Yoma 39A, Babylonian Talmud, trans. Neusner). Likewise, Yoma 69B reads, “And Ezra blessed, the Lord, the great God’ (Nehemiah 8:6). What is the meaning here of ‘great’? Said R. Joseph said Rab, ‘It means that he magnified him by using the Ineffable Name of God. . . .’ [A]nd Ezra praised the great God’ (Nehemiah 8:4-6) . . . [S]aid R. Giddal, ‘It means that he magnified him by using the Ineffable Name of God.’

While the “pronunciation of the Name became forbidden . . . at the time of Abba Shaül in the second century . . . before the priesthood of Simon the Just (3\textsuperscript{rd} century [B. C.]) . . . the name was used even outside of the Temple” (pg. 214, The Name of God YeHoWah, Gertoux). The Name was known and pronounced by Adam and Eve (Genesis 4:1) and their descendants, such as Abraham (Genesis 13:4). It was known and pronounced in Israel (Exodus 7:16), and known and pronounced by Gentiles (2 Chronicles 2:11). A simple study of the Tetragram in Scripture testifies to its common use. Archeology evidences that the Tetragrammaton was pronounced commonly enough in Israel that it was known to the surrounding nations, as is evidenced, for example, by the presence of the Name on the Moabite Mesha Stone (850 B. C.; note the translation of the Stone in the article “Yahweh,” Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible). The practice of pronouncing the Tetragrammaton continued until after the completion of the canon. A prohibition of saying Jehovah is not only dangerous because it is entirely absent from Scripture, but the connection between God one names and the Deity one worships (Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7; Jeremiah 10:25; Joel 2:32; Romans 10:13) makes a prohibition the more unbiblical.

The declaration of Sotah 10b, 36b, that the name Judah, יהוה, contains the name of God (“To . . . Judah, who sanctified the name of Heaven in public, they gave the entire name of the Holy One, blessed be he.” Sotah 36b; cf. “Judah . . . had . . . the entire set of letters of the name of the Holy One, blessed be he . . . [in] his name”, Sotah 10b, trans. Neusner) supports the translation Jehovah. The entire vocalization (except for the ו) of יהוה are in the name יהוה. Yahweh does not have any of the vowels of יהוה.
pronunciation of the Samaritans.”

These statements constitute the most substantive and strongest argument in favor of the pronunciation Yahweh. Also, papyri involving pagan magic, and “which . . . are not to be conceived of as transcriptions of the Tetragrammaton . . . [and in which] every possible and impossible designation of deities, Greek, Egyptian and Semitic, is found in profuse variety, just as, in general, this whole class of literature is characterized by a peculiar syncretism of Greek, Egyptian and Semitic ideas” contain invocations that sound like the word Yahweh. To use the

168 “Jehovah,” Dictionary of the Bible, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. The article also mentions that others writers speculated that the pronunciation was Iaou, Ieou, Iou, or Ioeu. (The pronunciation Ieoue, which is in some manuscripts of 2 and 3 Clement, and is also somewhat close to Yahweh, has as a textual variant Ieoun, so it is not certain that Ieoue exists at all as a patristic pronunciation. See the table in Deismann, Bible Studies, pg. 317.) The dictionary concludes, “even if these writers were entitled to speak with authority, their evidence only tends to show in how many different ways the four letters of the word Πσευδ could be represented in Greek characters, and throws no light either upon its real pronunciation or its punctuation. . . . In the absence, therefore, of anything satisfactory from these sources, there is plainly left a wide field for conjecture.”

169 The (ed. Karen Van Der Toorn; article “Yahweh,” pgs. 910-919, note 910-924) provides no other arguments in its extensive article in favor of the Yahweh pronunciation than the references by Ephiphanus and Theodoret and a textually suspect reading of Clement of Alexandria (cf. the previous footnote), omitting the fact that Theodoret said that Ieou was a Samaritan pronunciation rejected by the Jews and the textual problems in Clement’s alleged Ieoue. The evidence in favor of the pronunciation Jehovah is likewise entirely omitted. While omitting all the evidence in favor of Jehovah and omitting the problems with the pronunciation Yahweh, the Dictionary had plenty of room for detailed descriptions of the most ridiculous and blasphemous modernistic speculations on the origin and development of the worship of Jehovah in Israel.

Other arguments in favor of the form Yahweh are certainly made at times; the examination below is not comprehensive, and, in light of the tremendous amount of speculation and discussion about the pronunciation of the Name, exhaustive analysis would be beyond the scope of this sketch. Let it be sufficient that other arguments against Jehovah and in favor of Yahweh, such as that the latter pronunciation “was common to religions other than Israel’s . . . having been found in Babylonian inscriptions[,] and Ammonite, Arabic and Egyptian names appear . . . to contain it” (“God, Names of,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr, gen. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939, elec. acc. Online Bible for Mac), are not especially convincing to one with Christian presuppositions, and the conclusions advanced by the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia given above are disputed (cf. “Yahweh,” Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible). Uncertain evidence that pagan religions worshipped a god called Yahweh certainly does not prove that the one God of Israel would receive such a name. For a history of the discussion of the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (albeit with certain unbiblical biases—note the anti-Trinitarianism on pgs. 218-222), see The Name of God YeHoWaH, which is Pronounced as it is Written, I_Eh_oU_Ah: Its Story, Gérard Gertoux. Other treatises on the pronunciation of the Tetragram are mentioned by Smith and others, and an extensive bibliography is found in the Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible.

170 Pg. 323-324, Deismann, Bible Studies.

Deismann (Bible Studies, pg. 324ff.) records the following forms (among others) that he thinks could possibly sound like the Tetragrammaton, all of which are invoked in these pagan papyri: ιαω; ιαιων; ια; ιαιων; ιασ (which Deismann admits occurs in the midst of “other meaningless permutations of . . . vowels,” pg. 325); ια; ιασ; ιαιωσ; ιαιωσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ; ιαιωνεσ. Discussing some of these forms, he writes, “We must first of all investigate whether the said forms do not belong to the manifold permutations of the seven vowels, which are all but universally considered to be capricious and meaningless, mocking every possible attempt at explanation, and which can therefore, now less than ever, yield a basis for etymological
speculations of two patristic writers—one of whom even specifies that Yahweh was a Samaritan pronunciation, and that the Jews used something else\textsuperscript{172}—to overthrow the vocalization of the Name in the MTR, Jehovah, is entirely unjustifiable. To use a name found in some pagan papyri that are invoking numberless idols and demons to reject Jehovah is even worse. The evidence for the pronunciation Yahweh is very poor, and totally insufficient to overthrow the powerful and numerous evidences in favor of the pronunciation Jehovah.

Thus, it is evident that Jehovah is the correct pronunciation of the Name of God\textsuperscript{173}. Jehovah has not allowed the pronunciation of His Name to be lost.\textsuperscript{174}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{172} Theodoret affirmed that the Jews said Atz, according to the article “Jehovah,” Dictionary of the Bible, William Smith, rev. \& ed. H. B. Hackett—but other MSS of Theodoret affirm he said the Jews call God Iz (see pg. 326, Deismann, Bible Studies), which, since it sounds like the actual Biblical designation Jah (71\textsuperscript{v}), is quite likely what his actual affirmation was.


\textsuperscript{174} If the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton had been lost, then the promise, “this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exodus 3:15) has failed. This idea also runs contrary to many other verses, such as: “And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psalm 9:10); “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10); “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32); “The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee . . . Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psalm 20:1, 7); “Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. . . . Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name’s sake” (Psalm 79:6, 9); “And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of
VII. Appendix II: A Sampling of the Biblical Evidence for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Vowels

Advocates of the IV typically, and correctly, affirm that the self-testimony of the only true God, infallibly appearing in the Bible, is incomparably more certain than the best attested historical evidences, and, consequently, that the Bible’s own affirmations are decisive in the question of the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels. The following sampling of texts summarize some of the evidence from Scripture itself that requires the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels.

Generally, Scripture presents certain presuppositions that those who bow to God’s authority must recognize as they come to the question of the preservation of its text. First, God revealed the Scriptures so men could know His will both in the time of the

the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth” (Micah 5:4). The Messiah receives the name Jehovah as well (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Consistency would seem to require that one who affirmed that the Tetragrammaton never be pronounced also abstain from employing words such as Hallelujah, since both the unabridged Jehovah and the shortened form Jah, found in Hallelujah, are considered the Name (Psalm 68:4; 83:18).

One notes as well that the inspired explanation of the significance of the Tetragrammaton is “I AM THAT I AM” and “I AM” (יָהּ הָיָהוֹן) as in the Authorized Version in Exodus 3:14. “I will be what I will be” or some other future significance, is inferior to the view that gives the imperfect verb יָהּ a gnomic significance expressing the true God’s self-existence and eternality. “I AM” is supported by the Lord Jesus’ declaration that He is the very “I AM” (ἐγώ εἰμι, John 8:58) and by the LXX rendition of Exodus 3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν . . . ὁ ὄν. Note also Revelation 1:4, ὁ ὄν και ὁ ἄν και ὁ ἐρχόμενος. The idea that Exodus 3 specifies the Name as a Hiphil form possessing the idea of “causing to be” is invalid, since “the causative form of the verb ‘to become, to be’ does not exist in Hebrew and it has never existed” (pg. 211, The Name of God YeHoWah, Gertoux). Nor does ἐγώ signify “I AM,” as does יָהּ. In the words of the Moses Maimonides, “God taught Moses how to teach them and how to establish amongst them the belief in the existence of Himself, namely, by saying Ehyeh asher Ehyeh, a name derived from the verb Ḥayah in the sense of ‘existing,’ for the verb Ḥayah denotes ‘to be,’ and in Hebrew no difference is made between the verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to exist.’ The principle point in this phrase is that the same word which denotes ‘existence’ is repeated as an attribute. . . . This is, therefore, the expression of the idea that God exists, but not in the ordinary sense of the term; or in other words, He is ‘the existing being which is the existing Being,’ that is to say, the Being whose existence is absolute” (The Guide for the Perplexed, Moses Maimonides, trans. M. Friedlaender (London: George Routledge, 1956) pgs. 94-5. Cited pgs. 50-51, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 3: The Divine Essence and Attributes, Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.).

As indicated earlier, a book-length discussion of this topic is found in One Tittle Shall in No Wise Pass: Destroying the Scholarly Myth that God did not Inspire the Vowels of the Old Testament, Chester W. Kulus. Cleveland, GA: Old Paths Publications, 2009.

giving of the Old and New Testaments and in subsequent eras (Deuteronomy 31:9-13, 24-29; 1 John 1:1-4, 2:1-17; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:12-15). Certainly the Bible makes clear that no Scripture was intended for only the original recipient (Romans 15:4, 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 10:11). God intended for those writings to be recognized and received by the churches as a whole (e.g., Colossians 4:16; Revelation 1:3-4). God’s inspired words were to be guarded (1 Timothy 6:20-21) as a “form (pattern) of sound words” for the church (2 Timothy 1:13-14) and to be used to instruct the future churches (2 Timothy 2:2). Second, the Bible promises that God will preserve every one of His Words forever down to the very jot and tittle, the smallest letters of every word (Psalm 12:6-7, 33:11, 119:152, 160; Isaiah 30:8, 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Matthew 5:18, 24:35). Third, the Bible promises that God’s Words are perfect and pure (Psalm 12:6-7; Proverbs 30:5-6). Fourth, the Bible promises that God would make His Words generally available to every generation of believers (Deuteronomy 29:29; 30:11-14; Isaiah 34:16, 59:21; Matthew 4:4; 5:18-19; 2 Peter 3:2; Jude 17). Fifth, the Bible promises there will be certainty as to the Words of God (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19; 2 Peter 1:19; Luke 1:4; Proverbs 1:23, 22:20-21; Daniel 12:9-10; 1 John 2:20). Sixth, the Bible promises that God would lead His saints into all truth, and that the Word, all of His Words, are truth (John 16:13, 17:8, 17). Believers are not to set themselves above the Word but receive it with the faith of a little child, rejecting secular and worldly “wisdom” (Matthew 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 3:18-20). Seventh, God states that the Bible will be settled to the extent that someone could not add or take away from His Words and effectually corrupt them (Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 12:32). Eighth, The Bible shows that Israel in the Old Testament and true churches in the New Testament would receive and guard these Words (Nehemiah 9:13-14; Psalm 78:5-7; 147:19; Ezekiel 20:11; Matthew 28:19-20; John 17:8; Acts 8:14, 11:1, 17:11; Romans 3:2; 9:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Timothy 3:15). Ninth, the Bible presents as a pattern that believers would receive these Words from other believers (Deuteronomy 17:18; 29:29; 1 Kings 2:3; Proverbs 25:1; Acts 7:38; Philippians 4:9; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 7:11). Tenth, the Bible teaches that Scriptural promises may appear to contradict science and reason, such as when Genesis 2 presents a newly created world that would appear old on uniformitarian presuppositions. However, the Scriptures declare: “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Psalm 118:8). Eleventh, Christ implied the preservation of His very Words by making them the standard of future judgment (John 12:48). He also warned of the vanity of ignoring His actual words (Matthew 7:26). Christ emphatically declared, “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). In Matthew 22:29 Jesus rebuked, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.”
If the Scriptures were only accessible in long-lost original autographs, the Lord would not chide people for being ignorant of Words that were not available. Believers are commanded to contend for the faith (Jude 3) and this faith is based upon the word of God (Romans 10:17). Finally, in summary, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17; Habakkuk 2:4) and believers must “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Scripture, and faith in the promises of God, must be the “glasses” through which Christians evaluate historical data about the preservation of the Bible. Scripture teaches the verbal, plenary preservation of the verbally, plenarily inspired autographa (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35); that the preserved Words would be perpetually available to God’s people (Isaiah 59:21); that Israel was the guardian of Scripture in the Old Testament (Romans 3:1-2), and the church the guardian of Scripture in the dispensation of grace in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:15). The Holy Spirit would lead the saints to accept the words the Father gave to the Son to give His people (John 16:13; 17:8). Believers can know where the canonical words of God are, because they are to live by every one of them (Matthew 4:4; Revelation 22:18-19) and are going to be judged by them at the last day (John 12:48).

Based on those truths, the fact that God inspired words in the Old Testament, not consonants alone, and He promised that His people could have certainty about those words, and required them to treasure and live by every one of them, requires that the Old Testament text contained vowels as well as consonants when it was dictated by the Holy Spirit through human penmen. There are many texts where a solely consonantal Hebrew Bible is ambiguous. For example, Deuteronomy 33:27 promises: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה דָּבָק וּנְחָת בַּעֲלָם אֶחָד שָׁלוֹם כָּלָה). The English Standard Version notes: “Revocalization of verse 27 yields He subdues the ancient gods, and shatters the forces of old.” In 1 Kings 17:4, instead of God telling Elijah to stay by the brook Cherith, since “I [the LORD] have commanded the ravens to feed thee there” (אֵלֹהִים יְהוָה מָצָא לָךְ אֶת־אֲדָמֹתְךָ), revocalization could change the “ravens” into “Arabians” (אֲדָמֹתְךָ), or even into “people of the city Orbo” or “of the rock Oreb.”

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177 Kulus, on pgs. 189-244 of *One Tittle Shall In No Wise Pass*, provides over 100 examples of ambiguity, out of many more that could be listed.

178 “[T]he word rendered ravens (Orebim, מָצָא לָךְ) only has that meaning if it be written with the vowel points. But the vowel points are confessedly not ‘inspired’ in any sense, but are a late Masoretic invention. Without the change of a letter the word may equally well mean people of the city Orbo, or of the rock Oreb . . . or ‘merchants,’ . . . or Arabians. No doubt difficulties might be suggested about any of these interpretations; but which would be most reasonable, the acceptance of such small difficulties, or the literal acceptance of a stupendous miracle . . . by which we are to believe on the isolated authority of a nameless and long subsequent writer, that, for months or weeks together, voracious and unclean birds brought bread
heathen] with a rod of iron” (עַרְיֹא, Psalm 2:9). Changing the vowels leads to the translation in the *New International Version*, “You will rule” (נָרְיֹא) instead of “break” (רְיֹא). Psalm 7:11, instead of reading “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day” (נָרְיֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם נָרְיֹא אֲנָא נָרְיֹא לְרַיָּא מַיְיָא), can be revocalized to read “God . . . is not angry every day.” Proverbs 23:7, instead of stating: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he” (נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹא נָרְיֹa) can read “for like a hair in the throat,” so is he, by changing the vowels of נָרְיֹא to נָרְיֹא, and considering נָרְיֹא as “throat” based on Ugaritic and Akkadian cognates. In numerous verses, one could not tell whether commands or statements involve “milk” (בָּדַל) or “fat” (בָּדַל)—Moses, three times, commands Israel not to boil a kid in its mother’s blood (Exodus 23:19; 39:26; Deuteronomy 14:21; note also the ambiguity in Genesis 45:18; Job 10:10; 21:24; Psalm 63:5; Ezekiel 34:3), but there would be no way of knowing what God actually commanded and what He forbade without the vowels, although He repeated His statement three times. Many more specific instances of ambiguity could be given. “The nature and genius of the Hebrew language require points; without these the difference can’t be discerned between nouns and verbs, in some instances, as רָדֵב, with many others; between verbs active, and verbs passive, between some conjugations, moods, senses, and persons, Kal, Piel, Pual; imperatives and infinitives, are proofs hereof; nor can the Vau conversive of senses be observed, which yet is used frequently throughout the Bible, and without which, the formation of some of the tenses by letters would be useless. . . . [W]ithout the points a grammar cannot be written . . . for example, describe the conjugation Kal without points, and immediately you’ll be at a stand, and much more in Piel.” Biblical promises that believers can have certainty about the text of the Bible require the inspiration of the Hebrew vowel points.

One cannot respond that the true vowels were preserved by oral tradition from the time that Scripture was originally given by inspiration until the time the vowels were

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179 “[T]he evidence on one side amounts to a positive *affirmation*, ‘God IS angry every day;’ and, on the other side, to as positive a *negation*, ‘He is NOT angry every day.’ . . . The true sense may be restored thus: נָרְיֹא, with the vowel point tsere, signifies GOD: נָרְיֹא, the same letters, with the point pathach, signifies not . . . [thus meaning] . . . ‘God judgeth the righteous, and is NOT angry every day.’ . . . [conveying] the ideas of *patience* and *longsuffering*” (Note on Psalm 7:11, Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible, 1832. Elec. acc. The Online Bible for Mac, Ken Hamel, version 3.0).

180 As in the New Revised Standard Version.

invented on the *TMT* because it is impossible that oral tradition could preserve every jot and tittle of the entire Bible correctly for thousands of years—which is what God promised—and the Baptist and Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is the revealed truth (2 Timothy 3:16, etc.), not the doctrine of Catholicism and of the Pharisees that authority is shared by both Scripture and tradition (cf. Mark 7:13; Colossians 2:8). Jewish oral traditions are of no value whatsoever for the interpretation of the Bible. Believers are commanded to “not giv[e] heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth” (Titus 1:14; cf. 1 Peter 1:18). The true reading of Scripture has not been preserved by unregenerate Jews who are under the curse of God for rejecting the Messiah and are experiencing a “famine . . . of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11-14), as the *TMT* requires (if its advocates argue that one can determine the true reading at all). Advocates of the *TMT*, if they wished to attempt to accept the truth that God promised certainty about the text of Scripture, would really have to affirm that anti-Christ, unregenerate, and unknown Tiberian Masorites had the Holy Spirit move upon them and re-inspire Scripture, so that the correct vowels were in every case recorded, but God has promised perfect preservation, not re-inspiration.

Furthermore, were the points not inspired, adding them would be a grievous sin: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2). “Every word of God *is* pure: *he is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:5-6). “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19). One would have no way of knowing whether the vowels added on *TMT* assumptions represented the correct words in instances of ambiguity or not, and, because of the quantity of uncertain passages, the science of probability would make it morally certain that the added vowels would, in various places, represent the wrong words. All those who loved, printed, preached, taught, reproduced, defended, supported in any way, or did not heartily loathe and detest as corrupt a Hebrew text with vowel points would be under a dreadful Divine curse. Indeed, in verses where the text was ambiguous, it would be impossible to know whether or not one was preaching or teaching what God intended or corrupting Scripture, making disobedience to commands not to add or take away from the words and commandments of God impossible to obey.
Furthermore, in the many texts where individuals or groups were commanded to “to keep all the words of this law and these statutes [every single commandment given to the original human penmen by inspiration], to do them” (Deuteronomy 17:18-20; cf. 11:18; 28:15, 58; 8:3 & Matthew 4:4; Joshua 1:8; Leviticus 26:14; etc.), promising incredible blessings for obedience and fearful curses for disobedience, the blessings would be entirely impossible to obtain, and curses would be certain to descend, since there would be no way of knowing what exactly one was supposed to obey. Sincere believers would have to despair of Divine blessing, expecting instead certain awful judgments upon them. Similar commands, such as the command to “read” all that Moses “wrote” so that one might “observe to do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:9-13) would be impossible to obey, as one would not know if one was reading all the words God and Moses intended to record or other words with different vowels; the fact that Joshua, after writing out the Pentateuch, read to Israel “all the words of the law . . . [t]here was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not” (Joshua 8:31-35) requires a text with vowels; otherwise Joshua would not have read every single word correctly. Nor could Baruch have read every single word of the book of Jeremiah correctly (Jeremiah 36:2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16-18, 32, 45:1). For that matter, God has covenanted that all of His inspired words would be “preserved . . . forever” (Psalm 12:6-7) and in the mouths of every generation of His people: “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever” (Isaiah 59:21). Without infallibly revealing the Bible anew to every single believer—which would not be preservation, but re-inspiration—the promise that the saints would have every single word correct cannot be fulfilled without a text that includes the vowel points.

Both the Biblical doctrine of preservation in general and many specific passages of Scripture require that the Hebrew vowels were given by inspiration and recorded by the human penmen of Scripture along with the consonants. The sampling above of the many testimonies of God Himself about the preservation of His Word render absolutely certain what can also be strongly defended with historical evidence—not the Hebrew consonants of the Old Testament alone, but the vowels also, were given and recorded by inspiration.
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Accordance Bible software, OakTree Software, Inc., Palm Springs Drive, Suite 100, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701. Tools used included:

- *Apocrypha, King James Version, Revised English Bible, & Revised Standard Version.*
- *Apocryphal Gospels, The,* Greek text prepared by Craig A. Evans, English Translation
  Craig A. Evans.
- *Dictionary of Early Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A. D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies,* ed. Henry Wace.
- *Easton’s Bible Dictionary,* M.G. Easton
- *King James Version of the Bible.*
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