

# Evidences for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Vowel Points

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## Division

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## I. Introduction

In modern times, unlike in past centuries,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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: תורה נביאים כתובים*, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. *H KAINH DIAΘHKH*, Beza/Scrivener, 1894. London, England: Tyndale House/Trinitarian Bible Society, 1894/1998) is the *MTR*. This printed text represents “Jacob ben Chayyim’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 Chayyim, 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: תורה נביאים כתובים*, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. *H KAINH DIAΘHKH*, 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 Chajim* 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## 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.”<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> In Matthew 5:18, the “jot” speaks of the smallest Hebrew consonant, the yod (י),<sup>7</sup> and the tittle or *keraiia* (κεραία) refers to the smallest

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<sup>3</sup> For a book length exposition of Scriptural evidences for the inspiration of the Hebrew vowels, see *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. A brief analysis is also found in this work in “Appendix II: A Sampling of the Biblical Evidence for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Vowels.”

<sup>4</sup> 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 *keraiia*, 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.

<sup>5</sup> ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται.

<sup>6</sup> εὐκοπώτερον δὲ ἐστὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν παρελθεῖν, ἢ τοῦ νόμου μίαν κεραίαν πεσεῖν.

<sup>7</sup> 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* ( ). 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 (as . . . . .), the other vowels which are formed of lines, that is, of dots together forming lines (as \_ \_), those that are combinations of dots and lines (as \_ . .), and likewise the accents, many of which are composed of several dots (as ' ' and so also ' ' : ' ' , 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 *keraiā* for single dots and minutia 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 *tittle* of your law, or one single syllable of a decree [κεραΐαν νόμου τινός ἢ ψηφίσματος μίαν μόνην

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character. One notes that in Isaiah 9:6 the word “increase,” לְסֹרֵבָה, has a final *mem* in the middle of the word. The Masorites noted מְסֻמָּה בְּאִמְצַע תִּיבָה, 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.

συλλαβὴν ἐξαλείφειν] . . .”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Plutarch wrote of “quibbling over syllables and *tittles* [ζυγομαχεῖν περὶ συλλαβῶν καὶ κεραία].”<sup>9</sup> 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 *tittle* [ὕπηλλάττετο μεταποιῶν καὶ μετατιθεῖς καὶ στρέφων ἄνω κάτω τὰ γράμματα, κατὰ συλλαβὴν, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ κεραίαν ἐκάστην].”<sup>10</sup> Here the word is used for something less than a letter, such as an accent mark or similar minutia. Hence the standard New Testament Greek lexicon<sup>11</sup> lists the texts above from Philo, Dio Chrysostom, and Plutarch under the category of *keraiia* in the sense of “accents and breathings.” The Liddell-Scott lexicon states that the *keraiia* can refer to a “mark placed over [a] letter to indicate length,”<sup>12</sup> 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 *keraiia* refers to “an apex, a point. Matthew 5:18. μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ . . . 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.”<sup>13</sup> The view that the *tittle* referred to a specific particle is also found in the first centuries of Christian history.<sup>14</sup> There is consequently a reasonable case for seeing the word *keraiia* in Matthew

<sup>8</sup> Dio Chrysostom 31, 86. Compare the English translation in Dewey, A. J. “Quibbling Over Serifs: Observations on Matt 5:18/Luke 16:17.” *Forum* (Jesus Seminar) 5.2 (1989) 109–20, for this and the following two references.

<sup>9</sup> *Moralia* 1100A (vol. 14). The work is easily accessible in the English translation with Greek in parallel columns by Benedict Einarson & Philip H. DeLacy in the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>10</sup> Flaccus, 131.

<sup>11</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Frederick William Danker, ed., 3rd. ed. (BDAG). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> κεραία, in the Supplement, Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Pasor, George, *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum In Novum domini nostri Iesu Christia testamentum, ubi omnium vocabularum Graecorum themata indicantur, & untraque tam themata quam deriuata grammaticae resolvuntur*. London: Apud Iohannem Billium, 1621, trans. cited from pgs. 310-311, *One Tittle Shall In No Wise Pass*, Chester W. Kulus.

<sup>14</sup> 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 *keraiia* (κεραΐα) has, by some,<sup>15</sup> been specifically derived from the Hebrew vowel *chireq* (כְּהִי־קֶ), 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 *keraiia* to be valid, ך must be the equivalent of κ, ך equivalent to ε, ך equivalent to ρ, ך equivalent to α, and ך equivalent to α.

There are several ways in which one could argue for an equation of ך with κ. First, one notes that the letters sound similar. Second, one notes that at times<sup>16</sup> Hebrew words beginning with ך are transliterated in Greek with κ; the city יְרֵכָה, for example, is called κάρρα of by various Greek writers, such as Ptolomy and Hadrian.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Josephus transliterates the word as κάρραν in Antiquities 1:16:1:244. One can compare also קָלָק / Κελεξ (Joshua 17:2), קְהִי־קֶ / Καινη (1 Samuel 23:15-16, 18-19) in the LXX for further examples of a ך/κ interchange. Third, the equivalence of both ך and כ with χ, and of כ with κ, can be used to establish the equivalence of ך and κ.<sup>18</sup>

There are also places where ך is transliterated as ε. For example, in 1 Samuel 14:50 אֶבְנֵי־יָדָי is transliterated as Αβεννηρ. Note also 1 Samuel 26:6, אֶבְנֵי־יָדָי/Αβεσσα, 1

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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.

<sup>15</sup> Pgs. 107-108, *A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points, and Accents*, John Gill. elec. acc. *John Gill Collection*, Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999. Also pgs. 51-54, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D. D.*, by John Rippon (elec. acc. *John Gill Collection, ibid.*). Compare also pgs. 330-339, *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. The argument of this paragraph is significantly dependent upon these sources, although there is some significant independently investigated information.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, κ is not the only letter which ך 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 are 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.

<sup>17</sup> Pg. 51, *Brief Memoir*, John Rippon.

<sup>18</sup> 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, ך (ch) = χ (ch); from step two, כ (k) = χ (ch); and from step three, כ (k) = κ (k); therefore, by two substitutions, ך (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,  $\text{רֹדֵן}$ /Αενδωρ, 1 Chronicles 1:31,  $\text{שִׁנְפִּי}$ /Ναφες. Further arguments can be given to demonstrate the possibility of such a transliteration.<sup>19</sup>

The Hebrew  $\text{ר}$  is usually transliterated as ρ. A few of the many examples of this equivalence are Joshua 13:25,  $\text{הַרְפָּר}$ /Ραββα, Jeremiah 39:3 (46:3, LXX)  $\text{רַב־בְּנֵי}$ /Ραβαμαγ, and Nehemiah 7:50  $\text{הַרְפָּר}$ /Ρααα. The transliteration of  $\text{ר}$  to ρ is self-evident.

At times,  $\text{ר}$  can be equivalent to αι. In 2 Samuel 3:5,  $\text{הַרְפָּר}$  is transliterated Αιγλα, in Joshua 12:12  $\text{הַרְפָּר}$  becomes Αιλαμ, and in Joshua 13:31  $\text{הַרְפָּר}$  becomes Εδραίν.

Finally,  $\text{ר}$  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  $\text{ר}$  at the end of the word to be accounted for: and that and  $\text{ר}$ , in some languages, are used promiscuously: as in *Behek* and *Behah*. Besides, in the *Chaldee* or Syro-Chaldee language, used in Christ's time, and before, the same word, which ends in  $\text{ר}$ ,  $\text{κρ}$ , has the termination of *ky*, *aa*, or *aia*. Thus *araka* is read *araa* in the same verse, Jeremiah 10:11, and then, put all together, and you have the word κερρα or κερραα.<sup>20</sup>

Gill's point is verified in the Aramaic of Jeremiah 10:11, where the words rendered *the earth*,  $\text{רַרְר}$  in the first instance of this English phrase in the verse but  $\text{רַרְר}$  in the second, in both cases in exact parallel to  $\text{רַרְר}$ , 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 Hebrew<sup>21</sup> discusses the interplay in the Hebrew form  $\text{רַרְר}$  and the Aramaic forms  $\text{רַרְר}$  and  $\text{רַרְר}$  in Old, Egyptian, Imperial, Jewish, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic and other cognate tongues.

Based on the connection of κερραα to  $\text{רַרְר}$ , 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.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Kulus, *One Tittle Shall No Wise Pass*, pg. 335.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, trans. & ed. M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000. See the articles on  $\text{רַרְר}$  and  $\text{רַרְר}$ . The lexicon lists a substantial number of further sources for those who wish to pursue the comparison further.



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.<sup>22</sup>

Gill’s argument concerning the vowels could be extended to the accents as well. Thus, an etymological derivation of *κεραία* from קִרְיָה 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,<sup>23</sup> to the direct equation of the words *κεραία* and קִרְיָה, 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 *keraiia* of Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17 refers to the strokes that differentiate Hebrew consonants such as ך and ך possesses certain objections.<sup>24</sup> 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<sup>25</sup> where *keraiia* refers to a complete letter and

<sup>22</sup> 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 *keraiia* and *chireq*, including this specific rendering in Hutter’s Hebrew version of the New Testament. He also poses problems for Capellus’ equation of the *keraiia* with “the corniculated 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.

<sup>23</sup> Representative problems in the derivation include: 1.) The fact that the connections between the letters of *κεραία* and קִרְיָה 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 קִרְיָה in other writings of the time period. 3.) The more apparently natural derivation of *κεραία* from *κέρας*, giving it the significance of “little horn.”

<sup>24</sup> There are other interpretive options given by *TMT* advocates. For example, Günther Schwartz (“ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραία.” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 66 (1975) 268–69) concludes that the *keraiia* is the ך, although he also says, “Was dagegen *κεραία* bedeutet, ist nicht so sicher.”

<sup>25</sup> *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 *keraiā* 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 *keraiā* as part of a letter in the *Koiné*?<sup>26</sup> This fact would support the *IV* view that the references by the Son of God to the *keraiā* would be to the vowels and accents of the Hebrew Bible. The *IV* advocate would affirm that to equate the *keraiā* 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,” ὅς τε τριηκοσίων ἀριθμῶν κεραΐην ἐπὶ πρώτην.

<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, Lampe’s *Patristic Greek Lexicon* lists a significant number of examples to support the definition that the word *keraiā* can refer to “the small projection occurring in strokes of certain Hebrew letters such as differentiates כ from כּ.” 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 אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, while in Psalm 33:1 (Eng. Psalm 34 title) it reads אֲחִימֶלֶךְ, while the LXX reads Αβιμέλεχ 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 אֲבִימֶלֶךְ in 1 Samuel 26:6; 30:7; 2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 24:3, 6; 24:31 writing Αχιμέλεχ. Note also that the Hebrew actually distinguishes between a כּ and a כ, not a כּ and a כ, but the question at hand is not the accuracy of Eusebius’ exegesis, but the sense he gives to the word *keraiā*. With reference to this confusion, *Lampe’s Lexicon* records that Eusebius wrote: παρὰ . . . τὴν ομοιότητα τοῦ στοιχείου τοῦ βῆθ . . . καὶ τοῦ χάφ διαφόρως ἐξεδόθη τοῦνομα: σχεδὸν γὰρ ἓν καὶ ταῦτόν ἐστι τὰ δύο στοιχεῖα, βραχυτάτης κεραΐας νόνης ἐναλλαττούσης. The quotation, with more context, is Καὶ ταῦτα πάντα πέπρακται, διότι ἠλλοίωσε Δαυὶδ τὸν τρόπον αὐτοῦ ἢ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον Ἀβιμέλεχ. Ἡ τῶν Βασιλειῶν Γραφή Ἀχιμέλεχ περιέχει ἐναλλαγῆς στοιχείου γενομένης, οὐδὲν δεῖ κινεῖσθαι παρὰ γὰρ τὴν ομοιότητα τοῦ στοιχείου τοῦ βῆθ παρ’ Ἑβραίοις καλουμένου καὶ τοῦ χάφ διαφόρως ἐξεδόθη τοῦνομα: σχεδὸν γὰρ ἓν καὶ ταῦτόν ἐστι τὰ δύο στοιχεῖα, βραχυτάτης κεραΐας νόνης ἐναλλαττούσης. 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 *Ahimelech*, nothing being necessary to set in motion a disorder of the letters. For by the Hebrews the likeness of the letter *bet* and *kaph* being called [is great], the name being given out differing. For the two letters are almost one, the smallest tittle 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 στοιχείον indicates that Eusebius refers to the differentiation in sound between the two letters in question, rather than to the difference in shape between the letters כּ and כ, since στοιχείον refers fundamentally to the sound of the letter, rather than to the letter itself, especially since the Hebrew text does not contain a כּ, but a כ. 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 στοιχείον would then designate the similarity in sound between the כּ and the כ. 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 *keraiā* in Scripture as a reference to a כּ/כ 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 *keraiā* in this Eusebian sense should be established by evidence from earlier centuries.

To acquire a more definitive view of the *keraiā*, a thorough examination should be made using the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

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.<sup>27</sup>

### 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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 [זָכָר] of Amalek (Deuteronomy 25:19).’”

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<sup>27</sup> 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 κεραία 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.

<sup>28</sup> 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>).

<sup>29</sup> 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 טעמים שכר פיסוק טעמים, notwithstanding he was, by Vow, obliged not to teach the Law for Reward. . . . [T]he [Talmudic tractate] *Massechet 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[‘] . . . טעמי תורה מפני שמראה בה . . . [The Talmudic tractate] *Massechet Chagiga*, upon those words Exodus 24:5 . . . [comments that the word] פרים *Oxen* [does not] . . . have relation to both the preceding Words *Burnt Offerings* and *Peace Offerings* [because] . . . לפיסוק טעמים of the Division of the Sentence, by the Accent (meaning the Athnach) after the Word עלה. (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,’ [זָכָר] but ‘remembrance.’ [זְכוֹר the reading of the MT]”

He said to him, “But I was taught to read, ‘male [זָכָר].’”

Joab then went to his teacher. He said to him, “How did you teach me to recite the verse?”

He said to him, “Male [זָכָר].”

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.<sup>30</sup>

The differences between זָכָר and זְכוֹר have been supplied; the actual Hebrew Talmudic text, at least as currently extant,<sup>31</sup> is unpointed. Thus, the sentences actually read, “What is written is not זָכָר but זְכוֹר. . . . He said to him, ‘But I was taught to read, זְכוֹר. Joab then went to his teacher. He said to him, ‘How did you teach me to recite the verse?’ He said to him, ‘זְכוֹר.’<sup>32</sup> He pulled his sword and proposed to kill him.” It is difficult to see how a statement such as “What is written is not זָכָר but זְכוֹר” makes any sense without vowels. For Joab to threaten to kill his teacher for teaching him to read זְכוֹר instead of זָכָר is sensible, but why he would want to put him to death for teaching him to read זָכָר instead of זְכוֹר 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

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<sup>30</sup> Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 21a-b, English translation and commentary by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson: 2006. elec. acc. AGES Digital Software Library. English translation is slightly adjusted. Compare the translation in *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Bruce Waltke & M. O’Connor, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 1.6.3 (pg. 26).

<sup>31</sup> “[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 זָכָר, but you must be sure to read זְכוֹר, Deuteronomy 25:19. You must not read בְּנִיךְ, but you must read בְּנִיךְ, Isaiah 54:13. You must not read וְשָׁם, but you must read וְשָׁם 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*).

<sup>32</sup> The ambiguity here is evident from the fact that the Neusner translation translates זָכָר here as “remembrance” (זְכוֹר), 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, זָכָר. One who, to defend the *TMT*, affirms that the ambiguity between זָכָר and זְכוֹר 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.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the Talmud records elsewhere, “Said Mar Zutra, “Read the verse [Deuteronomy 31:12] as though the vowels yielded not, that they may learn [לִמַּד in the Qal], but that they may teach [לְמַד in the Piel].’ R. Ashi said, “Certainly it is ‘that they may teach [לְמַד in the Piel],’ for if it should enter your mind that the meaning is ‘that they may learn’ [לִמַּד 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 [לְמַד in the Piel].”<sup>34</sup> Declarations such as: “Read the verse as though the vowels yielded not לִמַּד but לְמַד . . . [c]ertainly it is לְמַד [instead of לִמַּד]. . . for if it should enter your mind that the meaning is לִמַּד [bad consequences would follow] . . . it most certainly is to be read לְמַד” 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<sup>35</sup>—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*<sup>36</sup> reads, “Rab said, [At Mishna Tractate Shabbat 11:2B]<sup>37</sup> one should read not ‘exempt’ [פְּטוּר] but ‘permitted.’ [פְּטוּר] . . . said R. Yohanan, ‘One should read here [At Mishna Tractate Shabbat 11:2K]<sup>38</sup> not “exempt,” [פְּטוּר] but “permitted.” [פְּטוּר].” 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

<sup>33</sup> 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.

<sup>34</sup> *Bavil Tractate Hagigah*, 2aII:3:b-c.

<sup>35</sup> See the examples given on pgs. 78-81 of John Gill’s *A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points, and Accents* (elec. acc. *John Gill Collection*, Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> *Tractate Shabbat 25:68:A:1, B2 (11:2)*. Translation from *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, Jacob Neusner. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008. elec. acc. AGES Digital Software Library.

<sup>37</sup> שְׁתֵּי קַצְוֵצֵךְ <אֹת> זוּ כְּנִגְדָּהּ זוּ בְּרִשׁוֹת הַרְבִּיּוֹת וְהַמְּוֹשִׁיט וְהַזֶּרֶק מֵאֵל לְזוֹ פְּטוּר וּפְטוּר מֵאֵל לְזוֹ פְּטוּר. “Two balconies opposite one another [extending] into the public domain— [H]e who stretches out or throws [an object] from this one to that one is exempt.” (11:2B-C)

<sup>38</sup> הַנּוֹטֵל מִמָּהֵם וְהַנּוֹתֵן עַל גִּבָּם תְּיָיב פְּחוּת מִיָּבֵאן פְּטוּר. “[H]e who takes [something] from that area or who puts something onto that area is liable. [If they were] less than the stated measurements he is exempt. (11:2J-K)

[Ecclesiastes 12:9]. . . He taught them the accent signs [סימני טעמים].”<sup>39</sup> Similarly, 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.”<sup>40</sup> 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 [היו סופרים].” Others say, “To the correct vowels [מסורה].”<sup>41</sup> Along these lines, Elias Levita, the first modern opponent of the *IV* view, noted concerning these texts:

[A]ccording 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*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Bavli Erubin* 2:4A-BI.1:V.18:A-B. The second half of the translation comes from pg. 163, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell.

<sup>40</sup> Jerusalem Targum Meg. 4.74d, translation from pg. 68 Tov, *Textual Criticism*, cf. Neusner, *The Jerusalem Talmud*, “proper articulation.”

<sup>41</sup> *Bavli Nedarim* 4:III:2:J (37B), trans. Neusner. cf. pg. 48, *Jacob Ben Chajim Ibn Adonijah’s Introduction To the Rabbinic Bible, Hebrew & English, With Explanatory Notes*, Christian D. Ginsburg (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1867, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Compare pg. 132, Revell, E. J., trans. & ed., *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin, Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1980.

<sup>42</sup> Pg. 103, *Massoreth 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 *מסורה* 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].’”<sup>43</sup> 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 *סימני תורה*, 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.”<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

Non-*IV* scholarship dates the Tannanite period to 100 B. C. to A. D. 200<sup>46</sup>—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 *אָמַיְתָא*, “Those who hand down”),<sup>47</sup> 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 *תעמיה פסקי* ‘the stops of the *ṭa‘amim*’ which were

<sup>43</sup> *Bavli Hagigah*, 1:2:D:VIII.5:C

<sup>44</sup> pg. 163, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell.

<sup>45</sup> *Bavili Qiddushin*, 30A, trans. Neusner.

<sup>46</sup> Compare the article “Bath Kol,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Merrill C. Tenney & Steven Barabas eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976).

<sup>47</sup> “Talmud,” within the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Tenney & Barabas.

learned as a normal part of learning the text.”<sup>48</sup> “In *Nedarim* 37a it is noted that one can accept pay for teaching the פִּסְוֵי טַעְמִים.”<sup>49</sup> Even theological modernists such as “Hupfeld and Riehm . . . advance [the view that] the Old Testament books were divided into verses, פְּסוּקִים, even before the time [on the *TMT* theory] of the Masoretes . . . the verse bounded by *soph pasuk*, the placing of which harmonizes with the accentuation . . . [is mentioned] in the post-Talmudic tractate *Sofrim*[.]”<sup>50</sup> 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[?]”<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup>

The Jerusalem Talmud also evidences that the existence of final forms of letters (e. g., נָ/ם), and thus word division, was already extant, and affirms that the use of final forms was given to Moses at Sinai.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, word division is found in both the texts in

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<sup>48</sup> *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Bruce K. Waltke & M. O’Connor, sec. 1.6.4.

<sup>49</sup> pg. 163, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin. Trans. & ed. E. J. Revell.

<sup>50</sup> “Introduction to the Psalter,” section “The Strophe-System of the Psalms,” (esp. footnote #20), in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, orig. pub. T & T Clark, Edinburgh, elec. acc. in the *Christian Library Series*, vol. 15: *Classic Commentary Collection*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Chapter 6 (pg. 137-138), *Of The Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture, with Considerations on the Prolegomena and Appendix to the Late “Biblia Polyglotta,”* John Owen. elec. acc. *Christian Library Series* vol. 9, John Owen Collection. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> 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).

<sup>53</sup> “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> מָ, נָ, צָ, פָ, כָ <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.),<sup>54</sup> the Siloam Inscription (c. 700 B. C.), and the Ophel Inscription,<sup>55</sup> 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,”<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> “Paragraphs (based on content 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.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the “pâseq . . . is pre-masoretic and . . . existed long before the Masoretes [lived according to the *TMT*].”<sup>60</sup> The “pisqot seem to have been marked in early (Jewish) manuscripts of the

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mem refers to a word that is stated in the open, the closed one, to one that is kept secret. The bent nun and the straight nun—the faithful, if humble, will be straightened out. . . . The bent pe and the straight pe: an open mouth, a closed mouth. The bent saddi and the straight saddi: the righteous one is bent in this world, the righteous one is straightened up in the next world” (*Bavli Shabbat* 104A).

<sup>54</sup> *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, gen. ed. Edward M. Blaiklock, R. K. Harrison. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983. Elec. acc. OakTree Software, Inc. Article “Chemosh.” See also the articles “Siloam Inscription,” and “Hezekiah’s Tunnel,” and, for the Ophel Inscription, M. Ben Dov, “A Fragment of A Hebrew Inscription from First Temple Times Found on the Ophel,” *Qadmoniot* 17 (1984) 109-111 (Heb.)

<sup>55</sup> Pg. 209, Tov, *Textual Criticism*.

<sup>56</sup> Pg. 632, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Waltke & O’Connor.

<sup>57</sup> Pg. 209, Tov, *Textual Criticism*.

<sup>58</sup> Pgs. 50, 210-11, *ibid*.

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

<sup>60</sup> 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].”<sup>61</sup>

The Talmud clearly speaks of the *Kethiv/Qere* distinction and other textual distinctions considered Masoretic, and traces them to Moses at Sinai.<sup>62</sup>

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)];<sup>63</sup> . . .

“ . . . 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); [בְּנִהַר־פְּרָת : קָרִי, בְּנִהָר, כְּתִיב] “man” in “And the counsel of Ahithophel . . . was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God” (2 Samuel 16:23); [כְּתִיב, וַיִּשְׂאֵל־אֵיִשׁ, קָרִי, וַיִּשְׂאֵל] “come” in the verse, “Behold the days [come] says the Lord that the city shall be built” (Jeremiah 31:38) [כְּתִיב, וַיִּנְמִים בָּאֵיִם, קָרִי, וַיִּנְמִים]; “for it” in the verse, “let there be no escape for it unto me” (Jeremiah 50:29) [כְּתִיב, וַיְהִי־לִּי, קָרִי, וַיְהִי]; “unto me” in the verse, “all that you say unto me I will do” (Ruth 3:5) [כְּתִיב, וַתֵּרַד הַגֶּרְןָּ, קָרִי, וַתֵּרַד אֶלֵּי]; “unto the floor” in the verse, “and she went down unto the floor” (Ruth 3:6) [כְּתִיב, וַתֵּרַד אֶלֵּי, קָרִי, וַתֵּרַד אֶלֵּי]; “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) [כְּתִיב, וַתֵּרַד אֶלֵּי, קָרִי, וַתֵּרַד אֶלֵּי]—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) [cf. 2 Kings 5:18, כְּתִיב, וַיִּסְלַח־נָא, קָרִי, וַיִּסְלַח]; “these” in “Now these are the commandments” (Deuteronomy 6:1) [וַיִּזְאֵת הַמְּצֻנָּה, קָרִי, וַיִּזְאֵת הַמְּצֻנָּה]; “let him bend” in “against him that bends, let

<sup>61</sup> Waltke & O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 38:1b.

<sup>62</sup> 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* נָּ is to be read as נִּ 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*).

<sup>63</sup> That is, that אָרִי has a pausal form of אֲרִי, and that שְׁמִי and מְצֻרִים 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) [וּלְאָ קָרִי, וַיִּרְדֵּף, כְּתִיב]; “five” in “and on the south side for thousand and five hundred” (Ezekiel 48:16) [וּלְאָ קָרִי, חֲמִשָּׁה, כְּתִיב]; “if” in “it is time that if I am your near kinsman” (Ruth 3:12) [קָרִי, אִם, כְּתִיב] וּלְאָ. These are the words that are spelled out but not read.<sup>64</sup>

The Mishna speaks of the verse divisions [פְּסוּקִים] 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 [*parashot*], they read them one by one” (Megilla 4:4).<sup>65</sup> The Mishna even mentions the *puncta extraordinaria* or *Nequodoth*,<sup>66</sup> as do even earlier sources.<sup>67</sup> Commenting on Numbers 9:10, where an unusual dot is found over the letter *he* in the word *far* (רַחֲקָה), 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.’”<sup>68</sup> 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*.”<sup>69</sup> The *Itture Sopherim* are mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (*Nedarim* 37b-38a).<sup>70</sup>

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

<sup>64</sup> *Bavli Nedarim*, 4:III:3:A-E (37B-38A), trans. Neusner.

<sup>65</sup> תְּקוּרָא בְתוֹרָה לֹא יִפְחוּת מִשְׁלוּשָׁה פְּסוּקִים לֹא יִקְרָא לְתוֹרָתוֹ יִתֵּר מִפְּסוּק אֶחָד וּבְנֵבִיא שְׁלוּשָׁה אִם הָיוּ שְׁלֹשָׁתָם שְׁלוּשׁ פְּרָשׁ[וֹת] וְאֵת קוּרִים אֶחָד אֶחָד

<sup>66</sup> Kelley lists a variety of theologically liberal explanations for the *Nequodoth*, then notes that “none of [these explanations] can explain every occurrence . . . [for example] the אָת in Genesis 37:12 defies explanation by any theory” (pg. 33, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). The *Nequodoth* are listed in the halachic commentary *Sifre* 69 to Numbers 9:10, which seems to date to the third century A. D.

<sup>67</sup> “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.)

<sup>68</sup> אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי, לְפִיכָךְ נִקְוֵד עַל ה' לִזְמַר, לֹא מִפְּנֵי שֶׁרַחֲקָה וְדֹא, אֲלֵא מֵאֲסַקְפַת הַעֲזָרָה וְלַחֲוִין

<sup>69</sup> pg. 151, “The Vowel-Points Controversy in the XVI and XVII Centuries,” B. Pick. *Hebraica*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), 8:3-4 (April-June 1892). It is worth noting, concerning the *tiqqune soferim*, that the “titles of the lists in Masoretic documents also vary. Some of the headings have ‘Emendations of the Scribes.’ Others bear the heading ‘Euphemisms of the Scribes.’ This title betrays the belief that the text was never really emended. . . . [In some texts there is] no critical evidence to support that an emendation ever took place” (pg. 39, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Kelley).

<sup>70</sup> Compare pg. 40, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Kelley.

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<sup>71</sup> וְלֹא אָבוּ . . . בְּנֵי־מִן, while the *Qere* states, בני קרי ולא כתיב, that is, that the word בְּנֵי is to be read, though it is not written. Similarly, in 2 Samuel 18:20 the text contains ..עַל־כֵּן, indicating a *Qere* of עַל־כֵּן, while the *Kethiv* simply specifies the עַל. There are a few other passages<sup>72</sup> where the text contains vowels but no consonants. These *K/Q* marginal annotations are specifically referenced in the Talmud,<sup>73</sup> but the notes makes little sense unless the text was pointed at the time the *K/Q* was written.<sup>74</sup> “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.”<sup>75</sup> Similar evidence for the ancient character of the vowels are the very rare instances<sup>76</sup> where the *K/Q* specifies a word that is written but not read (קרי ולא כתיב) because it is not pointed with vowels. A clause such as Ezekiel 48:16’s מֵאֵזוֹת הַמִּשְׁחָה וּפְאֵת־תִּנְּבֹב הַמִּשְׁחָה הַמִּשְׁחָה or 2 Kings 5:18’s יִסְלַח־נָא and their associated textual notes explaining the unvocalized words are easily explicable on the supposition that the

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<sup>71</sup> There are a variety of textual issues in this verse. See the notes in the Ginsburg edition of the *MTR*.

<sup>72</sup> “The word בְּנֵי 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.

<sup>73</sup> Note the discussion of these texts quoted above in the Talmudic tractate *Bavli Nedarim*, 4:III:3:A-E (37B-38A).

<sup>74</sup> “[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).

<sup>75</sup> 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).

<sup>76</sup> *Masorah Magna* 2752 (cited & translated pg. 121, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary*, Kelley, Page H., Mynatt, Daniel S., & Crawford, Timothy G.) states, commenting on Ezekiel 48:16, “The word is one of eight words which are written but not to be read.” Eight instances are specified, 2 Samuel 13:33; 15:21; 2 Kings 5:18; Jeremiah 38:16; 39:12; 51:3; Ezekiel 48:16; Ruth 3:12.

Hebrew vowels were extant during the time, far before the *TMT* theory allows, when these *K/Q* were added.<sup>77</sup> 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*.<sup>78</sup>

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:

וּמִלְכִי־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם גִּיּוּן וְהוּא כֹהֵן לְאֵל עֵלְיוֹן :  
וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בָּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֵלְיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ :  
וּבָרוּךְ אֵל עֵלְיוֹן אֲשֶׁר־מִגֵּן צָרָךְ בְּיַדְךָ וַיִּתֶן־לוֹ מֵעֵשֶׂר מִכֶּל :

Jerome’s Latin transliteration was:<sup>79</sup>

Umalkisedeck melec Salem hosi lehem vaiain vehu Cohen leel elion:  
Vaiebarchehu vaiomar baruch Abram leel elion kone Samaim Vaarez:  
Ubaruch el elion esher migen zarecho bejadecho vaiitenlo 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 אור, which, if they be read אור [אור] signify *fire*, if אור [אור] signify *light*.”<sup>80</sup>

Jerome also specifically speaks of the Hebrew vowels and accents in a variety of his writings.<sup>81</sup> Commenting on the word שְׁבוּעָה 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 שָׁקַר and שִׁקָּר, writing that “the word שָׁקַר in the beginning of Jeremiah, with a change of accent, signifies a *nut* or

<sup>77</sup> 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.

<sup>78</sup> 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).

<sup>79</sup> See pg. 241, *Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, Whitfield.

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

<sup>81</sup> 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.

watching.” 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,<sup>82</sup> 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 הַמִּטָּה, “bed,” rather than “staff,” (הַמַּטֵּה), although both alternatives have the same consonants (הַמִּטָּה), and a cursory examination<sup>83</sup> of Hebrews 11:21 appears to reference and give support for the reading “staff” (ῥάβδου) 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, worshipping at the head of his bed.” Jerome says that the Hebrew of Genesis 47:31 does not read הַמִּטָּה, “staff,” but “quite differently,” as הַמִּטָּה, “bed.” If there were no Hebrew vowels in the text of Genesis, Jerome’s assertion would become that the Hebrew is not read הַמִּטָּה, but “quite differently” הַמִּטָּה, 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,” הַמִּטָּה, 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.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> The quotations of Jerome that follow are reproduced from pgs. 530-531 of *Biblical Theology: The History of Theology from Adam to Christ, or the Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth, in Six Books*, by John Owen (trans. Stephen P. Westcott). Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> 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*.

<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> 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 (לְמַעַרְבָאִי) of a word contained a *pathach*, while the Eastern reading (לְמַזְרְחָאִי) was *chireq*. Numbers 31:49 likewise distinguishes the Western and Eastern use of a *dagesh*, the Eastern reading being רָפִי, that is, without *dagesh*. Similarly, in Deuteronomy 33:5, the Western reading (which was followed in the text) was וַיְהִי, while the Eastern was וַיְהִי, clearly indicating that both texts were pointed, as the consonants for both readings are the identical וַיְהִי. However, “there existed . . . as early as the third century of the Christian era . . . differences

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<sup>85</sup> Masoretic citations below come from the notes in the Hebrew Old Testament published by the Trinitarian Bible Society and edited by Ginsburg. This is an edition of the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*, the Ben Asher text as edited by Jacob ben Chayyim in 1524-1525. Helps for understanding the Masoretic notes and other features of this edition of the Old Testament are available in the *Introduction to the Ginsburg Edition of the Hebrew Old Testament*, Alfred S. Geden & R. Kilgour (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1928). See also *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, Christian D. Ginsburg (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing, 1966 (orig. pub. London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897)). A detailed discussion, which examines many of the Masoretic notations on the accent marks, is found on pgs. 176ff. of *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell.

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 *Miqra’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.”<sup>86</sup> 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 כ in the וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר, choosing to leave the text different from the clearly standard וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר but adding a textual note concerning the situation. Leviticus 22:17 has a Masoretic note stating that the word תִּבְיֵאוֹ 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 (כֵּן כִּירִיחוֹ מִנִּגּוֹן). The note on Exodus 18:10 mentions that the same MS had the accent *revi* (יִרְיָחוֹ . . . רְבִיעֵ). Leviticus 8:13 demonstrates that the Jericho MS had the vowel *shewa*, and Leviticus 10:13; 21:10 that it had the accent *gaya* (בִּירִיחוֹ . . . בְּגַעִיא). Leviticus 25:11 comments on its use of *zaquef qaton* (זָקֵף קָטוֹן). Leviticus 26:21 comments on the sound, musical phrase, or accent in the MS (בִּירִיחוֹ . . . נְגוּנִים). Numbers 4:4 and 10:21 demonstrate that Jericho contained the *hateph qametz*, Genesis 28:3 and Numbers 16:21 the *tseré* (צִירֵי . . . בִּירִיחוֹ), and Numbers 34:28 the *pathach* (פְּתָחָה . . . בִּירִיחוֹ). The note on Deuteronomy 25:7 even indicates that the Jericho MS had the accent *geresh* (גֶּרֶשׁ) on the final syllable of the word rather than on the antepenult (הַשְּׁעָרָה), as in the reading within the text of Scripture itself (מִלְרַע . . . יִרְיָחוֹ). Deuteronomy 30:17 explicitly states that the Jericho MS contained the points (מִנּוּגָן . . . בִּירִיחוֹ).

The note on Exodus 21:37 indicates that יִגְנָב was the vocalization contained in the ancient and now lost Hillel and Zanbuqi MSS (בְּהַלְלֵי וּבְזַנְבוּקֵי). 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,”<sup>87</sup> the Masorah here affirm that the vowels were extant in pre-Christian times. Exodus 30:14 proves that the Hillel MS had the *tseré* (בְּצִירֵי . . . בְּהַלְלֵי), as do Deuteronomy 3:4, 13, 14, while Exodus

<sup>86</sup> pg. 118, *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth*, Elias Levita, trans. C. D. Ginsburg.

<sup>87</sup> הַלְלֵי, pg. 46, *Introduction to the Ginsburg Edition of the Hebrew Old Testament*, Alfred S. Geden & R. Kilgour.



30:21 mentions the *qametz*. Leviticus 5:21 shows the Hillel MS contained the *pathach* (בהללי . . . בפתח), as does Leviticus 7:7. Leviticus 13:57 shows the manuscript had the *dagesh* (בהללי . . . דגש), and Numbers 5:30 that it had the accent *revi* (בהללי ברביע). 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* (בהללי ובזנבוקי . . . בפתח). Exodus 25:6 evidences that Zanbuqi had the vowel *tsere* (בזנבוקי . . . בצרי), as do Exodus 29:7; 25:8; Numbers 22:25. Exodus 29:15 proves Zanbuqi had the *patach* (בהללי ובזנבוקי . . . בפתח), as do Numbers 14:9; 20:21; 22:26. Exodus 35:22 indicates it had *qametz* (בזנבוקי בקמץ), 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 (בסגול . . . בזנבוקי). Leviticus 5:5 mentions a *hateph segol* in the MS, Numbers 11:29 the *hateph pathach*, and Leviticus 13:10 the *dagesh* (בהללי ובזנבוקי . . . דגש).

Exodus 25:19 indicates that the Hillel MS pointed the word הַפְּרָכִים with a *dagesh* in the כּ, while Codex Mugah did not have the *dagesh*, and the reading of Mugah was also that of the *MTR* (בהללי . . . כן מונה . . . דגש). Exodus 25:39 indicates that the Mugah MS had the *qametz* (במוגה . . . קמץ), 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* (במוגה בלא אזלא). Numbers 11:16 mentions a place where the MS lacks a *gaya* (במוגה . . . בלא געיא), while in Deuteronomy 1:41 the Masorites indicate that the manuscript contained *gaya* (במוגה . . . בספר מוגה). Numbers 34:28 evidences that Mugah contained the *mappiq* (במוגה . . . מפיק), 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 וְנִזְרְעָה, while Hillel read וְנִזְרְעָה and the Jericho manuscript וְנִזְרְעָה. Genesis 30:38 mentions that the ancient and now lost Jerusalem manuscript contained *shewa* and *patach* (בירושלמי שבא ופתח).<sup>88</sup> 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,

<sup>88</sup> 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,<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup>

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 *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 *TMT* registered on that basis. While the *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,”<sup>91</sup> 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”<sup>92</sup> is mentioned and

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<sup>89</sup> 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.

<sup>90</sup> Pgs. 51-52, *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 *TM* took already extant textual annotations and put them in order, with their own additions, around the “sixth century A. D.”

<sup>91</sup> Pg. 55, *ibid.* Many writers today place the work of the *TM* 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 Massorettes . . . but who they were or at what time they lived is uncertain” (pg. 49, *ibid.*).

<sup>92</sup> pg. 49, *ibid.*

documented,<sup>93</sup> 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<sup>94</sup> have referenced Deuteronomy 27:8, where the Lord commanded Moses, “Thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly,”<sup>95</sup> 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” (כְּתוּב הַזֶּה וּבְאָר עַל-הַלְהוֹת לְמַעַן יִרְוֶן קוֹרֵא בּוֹ ; ) (וַיַּעֲנֵנִי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר

<sup>93</sup> *Pirque Aboth* I, 1. is cited: “Moses received the Law from Sinai, and delivered it (וּמִסְרָהּ, *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* . . . [t]he *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 פְּרָשׁוֹת, the *Parashas*, or greater Divisions, the פְּסָקִים, *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*).

<sup>94</sup> 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 the Scriptures, 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 שְׁלֹמֹה means *wherefore, retribution, Solomon, garment, or perfect?*” (*Sepher Ha-Semadar*, cited pg. 122-123, *Massoreth Ha Massoreth*, Levita, trans. Ginsburg).

<sup>95</sup> וּכְתַבְתָּ עַל-הָאֲבָנִים אֶת-כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּאֵר הַיִּטָּב : Compare the LXX: καὶ γράψετε 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 (חֶלֶב) or fat (חֵלֶב), for example (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21), since, without vowels, the two words are exactly the same (חֶלֶב), 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 [חקיק, Peal passive participle, “being engraven”] and explained well [מפרש, Pael passive participle, “being specified” + יאות, “rightly, properly”], so as to be read [מתקרא, Ithpeel participle from קרי, thus, “to call by name”] and translated into seventy languages” (כל פתגמי אוריתה הדה כתיב חקיק ומפרש ומתקרא ומתרגם בשבעים לשון): (ותכתבון על אבנייה ית). If the Torah was to be “engraven” 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” (לישנין ית כל פיתגמי אורייתא חדא כתב חקיק ומפרש מתקרי בחד לישן ומיתרגם בשיבעין אבניא (ותיכתובון על אבניא). Here again the Targumic wording supports a vocalized text being engraved on the tablets. Compare also Targum Yerushalmi II, where Fragment Targum Paris reads: הודא כתב חקיק ומפרש טבא מתקרי בחד לישן ומתורגם בשבעין לישן: ית כל מילי אורייתא ותכתבון על אבניא ית כל מילי שבה אורייתא ית כל מילי אורייתא הודא כתב חקיק ומפרש טבית מתקרי ומתורגם בשובעין לישן: ותיכתבון על אבניא. The very early MS AA discovered in the Cairo Geniza read: ית כל מלי אורייתא הודא כתב חקיק ומפרש יאות מתקרי בחד לשן ומתרגם בשובעין לישן: ותכתבון על אבניה (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.”<sup>96</sup> Consequently, Ibn Ezra declared, “You should not listen to, or agree with, any interpretation which is not consistent with the accentuation.”<sup>97</sup> 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.”<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup>

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

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<sup>96</sup> Ibn Ezra, *Purity*, cited pg. 125, *Massoreth Ha Massoreth*, Levita, trans. Ginsburg. The quotation requires the existence in Ezra’s day of (at the very least) the *athnach* and associated accents, with which are associated the vowel changes involved in pausal forms.

<sup>97</sup> Pg. 633 (38:1c), *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Waltke & O’Connor, citing Israel Yevin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, ed. & trans. E. J. Ravell (Masoretic Studies 5; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980), pg. 218.

<sup>98</sup> Pg. 267, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, Whitfield.

<sup>99</sup> Pg. 26, Moncrieff, John, *An Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, London, England: Whittaker, Treacher, and Arnot, 1833.

reconstructions.<sup>100</sup> Further, there are numerous individual patterns of deviation within the MT which reflect ancient phonological and morphological features of Hebrew known from other sources;<sup>101</sup> 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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<sup>100</sup> 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 *kəmoš*, in agreement with the bulk of extrabiblical (mostly onomastic) evidence from the Iron Age, but the *Kethiv* of Jer 48:7 has *kmyš* for *kəmiš*, apparently agreeing with the Ebla texts, which know this god as Kamish (dka3-mi-is); see Pettinato, *Archives of Ebla*, 245, 291–92."

<sup>101</sup> Here Waltke & O'Connor footnote the following: "Compare the views of Bo Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangehendem wš* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979) 23."

cautious confidence.<sup>102</sup> It must be shown rather than assumed to be in error; the burden of proof rests on the critic.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, “modern grammatical studies . . . show that the complexities of Masoretic study could not be the result of later reconstruction.”<sup>104</sup> Is it not more reasonable to think that the Hebrew the vowels and accents were there in the first place, rather than to conclude

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<sup>102</sup> Indeed, Tov writes, “[My] preceding analysis has surmised that [the Masoretic text], too, contains occasional errors. . . . It is not easy [however] to provide convincing proof of such errors . . . [t]he assumption of corruptions in the biblical text pervades many of the examples in this book” (pg. 9-10, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*). Thus, in line with the presuppositions of modernistic lower criticism, error in the *MTR* is assumed as a presupposition, although such errors cannot be proven. Thus, despite the lack of proof, “All text critics agree that the MT contains errors in all its composite layers” (Waltke & O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 1.6.2). One apparently cannot be a text critic without believing that the *MTR* was composed in composite layers, and that all of these layers contain errors.

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 by tradition to Aquila (based on R; ca. 120 C.E.), Symmachus (ca. 180 C.E.), and Theodotus (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 12:6-7; Isaiah 59:21) correctly recognize that the single scroll that was the prototype of the *MTR* was the infallible and inerrant autographical text itself.

<sup>103</sup> 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 vowels 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 (7i), *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*).

<sup>104</sup> 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,”<sup>105</sup> 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,”<sup>106</sup> 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.”<sup>107</sup> 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” (סֹפֵר) 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.”<sup>108</sup> Indeed, there were among

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<sup>105</sup> Pg. 211-212, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Roland K. Harrison. Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1969 (5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1999).

<sup>106</sup> Avot 3:13, מְסוֹרֶת סִיג לַתּוֹרָה,

<sup>107</sup> Avot 1:1:

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי, וּמְסָרָהּ לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים מְסָרֶיהָ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים, הָיוּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְהֵעֲמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה

<sup>108</sup> 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: הַרְגוּלָה: כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה. i. e. We have this Word *Masoreth* from the Men of the Great Synagogue. . . . 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 . . . הַתּוֹרָה סִיג *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 (2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. E.) which corresponds almost exactly with the accents of the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>109</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

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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*).

<sup>109</sup> Pg. 29, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Bruce K. Waltke & M. O’Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990, referencing Revell, “The Oldest Evidence for the Hebrew Accent System,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 54 (1971-1972) 214-222.

These facts have important implications for the history both of the reading traditions and of the interpretation of the Bible.<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, “we have definite proof, in . . . the Greek translation of the Twelve Prophets published by Barthélemy<sup>111</sup> . . . 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.”<sup>112</sup> 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”<sup>113</sup>—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,<sup>114</sup> rather stating that “there is no historical account of the date of th[e] vocalization of the O. T. text.”<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, “Jewish history . . .

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<sup>110</sup> Pgs. 182, 197-198, Revell, E. J., “Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period.” *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 7:2, 181-198.

<sup>111</sup> 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 *RB* 60 (1953), p. 18-29, and published by him in *Les dévancières d’ Aquila (=VTS X, Leiden 1963)*. A few more fragments of the MS were published by B. Lifshitz in *Yediot* 26 (1962) p. 183-190.”

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

<sup>113</sup> Pg. 39, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary*, Page H. Kelly, Daniel S. Mynatt, & Timothy G. Crawford. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

<sup>114</sup> 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, *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).

<sup>115</sup> Pg. 38 (7h), *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.”<sup>116</sup> 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.”<sup>117</sup> The only name of any kind that seems to have been given by anyone in the relatively recent past<sup>118</sup> is “Mocha of Tiberias, or Palestine,” who the nineteenth-century *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*<sup>119</sup> states was “a noted rabbi, who flourished shortly after the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 interlineary 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 *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 (מִלָּא וְהִסֵּר), the affixing of certain accents (נְגוּנוֹת), accented syllables, *Dagesh* and *Raphe*, rare forms; archaic words; homonyms, etc.” All that such work truly evidences is that the vowels

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<sup>116</sup> Pg. 169, “The Vowel-Point Controversy in the XVI and XVII Centuries,” Pick.

<sup>117</sup> Pg. 137, *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.

<sup>118</sup> 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 Chiug . . . 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, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*). These speculations were abandoned such a long time ago that the *Cyclopedia* that suggests Mocha as the inventor of the points does not even mention them.

<sup>119</sup> “Mocha of Tiberias, or Palestine,” in the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, John McClintock & James Strong. Elec. acc. *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 Mocha's day, rather than that he authored them.<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup>

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.<sup>122</sup> As with the fact that historical evidence that any particular person

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<sup>120</sup> 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.

<sup>121</sup> Pg. 84-85, Moncrieff, *Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel Points*.

<sup>122</sup> 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, יוֹמַיִם, not יוֹמִים, 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

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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.”<sup>123</sup> 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.”<sup>124</sup>

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.<sup>125</sup> This would support the position that the Hebrew vowels were already extant in Origen’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*.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>123</sup> δῆλον δ’ ἐστὶν ἔργῳ πῶς ἡμεῖς πρόσμιεν τοῖς ἰδίῳις γράμμασι τοσοῦτου γὰρ αἰῶνος ἤδη παρωχηκότος οὔτε προσθεῖναι τις οὐδὲν οὔτε ἀφελεῖν αὐτῶν οὔτε μεταθεῖναι τετόλμηκεν πᾶσι δὲ σύμφυτόν ἐστιν εὐθὺς ἐκ πρώτης γενέσεως Ἰουδαίοις τὸ νομίζειν αὐτὰ θεοῦ δόγματα καὶ τούτοις ἐμμένειν καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν εἰ δέοι θνήσκεν ἡδέως

<sup>124</sup> 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.

<sup>125</sup> 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*).

<sup>126</sup> 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 שׁוֹפְרָא וְתִקְעוּ בְּשׁוֹפְרָא the *Kethiv* and שׁוֹפְרָא וְתִקְעוּ בְּשׁוֹפְרָא 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 (שׁוֹפְרָא וְתִקְעוּ בְּשׁוֹפְרָא) and the Septuagint (εἶπατε 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 (אֵי כִּי־אֵם) if he were Ezra the Scribe.”<sup>127</sup>

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.”<sup>128</sup>

11.) “[I]n *Bereshit Rabba* [the accent אַ, 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 fragment containing a ‘Qaraite list of terms’ written . . . in the eighth century[.] . . . Mar Semah ben Hayyin Ga’on (883-896) mentions נִקּוּד וּמְשׁוּרְתוֹת וּפְסָקֵי טַעְמִים, ‘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 fragments 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.”<sup>129</sup>

12.) Both “the medieval rabbinical interpreters and the ancient versions generally understood the [Old Testament] text in a way consistent with the accents.”<sup>130</sup> 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 עֹזַבִּי is to be read as זַבִּי. 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*.

<sup>127</sup> See pgs. 249-257, Whitfield, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, for these and other texts discussed and explained.

<sup>128</sup> Pg. 160, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell.

<sup>129</sup> Pg. 164, 166, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell.

<sup>130</sup> Pg. 633 (38:1c), *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Waltke & O’Connor.

composed in the second century A. D. by Shimon bar Yochai,<sup>131</sup> then the work provides definitive evidence for the antiquity of the Hebrew vowels, as they are regularly mentioned within it.<sup>132</sup> The traditional view was “maintained not only by Jews for centuries, but even by such distinguished Christian scholars as Lightfoot, Gill, Bartolucci, Pfeffer, Knorr von Rosenroth, Molitor, Franck, and Etheridge.”<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup> 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,<sup>135</sup> 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,”<sup>136</sup> which, it is alleged, are a late product of the Tiberian Masorites. However,

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<sup>131</sup> “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>.)

<sup>132</sup> 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. I., 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*.

<sup>133</sup> “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.

<sup>134</sup> 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).

<sup>135</sup> “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.

<sup>136</sup> “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<sup>137</sup> 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.

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<sup>137</sup> 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, *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, *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 Levita 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, *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.”<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup> 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.<sup>140</sup>

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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<sup>138</sup> Pg. 207, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Emmanuel Tov. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.

<sup>139</sup> “[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*).

<sup>140</sup> Pg. 274, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, Whitfield.

persuasion of them all (Elias only excepted) that they are of a divine extract;<sup>141</sup> 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 Masorettes 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 Masorettes;” 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.<sup>142</sup>

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*.<sup>143</sup> Emmanuel Tov wrote, “The late origin of the vocalization [of the *MTR*] is evident from its absence in the texts from the Judean Desert.”<sup>144</sup> Indeed, Tov’s work, the “authoritative reference work for all those engaged in the study of the text of the Hebrew Bible,”<sup>145</sup> gives no other

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<sup>141</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

<sup>142</sup> Pgs. 136-137, *Of The Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture*, John Owen, elec. acc. AGES Digital Software. Compare also pgs. 267-283, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, Whitfield.

<sup>143</sup> 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*.

<sup>144</sup> Pg. 40, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*.

<sup>145</sup> 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.”<sup>146</sup> 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.<sup>147</sup> 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 unpointed<sup>148</sup> (although Hebrew grammar books teach people to read and write the

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<sup>146</sup> 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.

<sup>147</sup> 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.

<sup>148</sup> 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. לָטַל can be read *qāṭal*, *qāṭāl*, *qāṭōl*, *q’ṭōl*, *qōṭēl*, *qiṭṭēl*, *qaṭṭēl*, *quṭṭal*, *qēṭel*, 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).

language with books employing the vowel points),<sup>149</sup> an archeologist of the future studying the fragmented ruins of a modern Israeli city would be very likely to discover no

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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 dropt 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 Masorettes, 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 קרי 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 *matres lectionis* in the MSS. they consulted and read? We have Jerome’s authority that in his time and long before it, the Hebrew noun דבר which signifies a word, though invariably pronounced *Dabar*, was not written דאבאר, but in three letters דבר. . . . [One notes also that, for example,] דבר 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] [w]hen 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 noted 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., ם is a shorter *o* vowel than ם׃, and ם׃ is a shorter sound than ם׃׃. . . Certainly acrostic poems like Psalm 119 treat the letters used as *matres* as consonants.

<sup>149</sup> “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.<sup>150</sup>

## V. Conclusion

The evidence for the *IV* position, and against the *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

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*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 *MTR*. Indeed, no patristic writer says a syllable in any of their writings about the allegedly unpointed nature of the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>150</sup> 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 *MTR*, the documents would automatically be assigned dates that fit within the parameters of the *TM* hypothesis. If, as advocates of the *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 *TM*, and so the *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 *TMT* could always be affirmed to have had its vowels added by a later hand.

The vowels of the Tetragrammaton יהוה, that is, *Yehowah* or *Jehovah* (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4)<sup>151</sup> are not a late addition, but represent the original and true pronunciation of the profoundly significant<sup>152</sup> Divine Name.<sup>153</sup> The commonly

<sup>151</sup> The *MTR* fully points the Tetragrammaton as *Yehowah* (יהוה), while the Hebrew critical text based on the Leningrad MS (codex L) omits the *cholem* (ה), 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 Naphtali) 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: תורה נביאים כהובים*, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. *H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, Beza/Scrivener, 1894. London, England: Tyndale House/Trinitarian Bible Society, 1894/1998) while the critical Hebrew 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 תִּשִׁי 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 יהוה כוונה בקריא כוונה, יוד זעיר ולית בקריא כוונה, יוד זעיר ולית בקריא כוונה ( *Wayyiqra Rabba* 23:13, ed. Margoliouth, p. 548, cf. *Bemidbar Rabba* 9:1). This midrash states that תִּשִׁי in Dt 32:18 has a small *yod*, and bases a homily on this fact. Not only this, but the text states in characteristic masoretic terminology that this small *yod* is unique (i. e. it includes enumeration) . . . [H]owever . . . [in codices] such as A and L, this *yod* 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 יהוה is a result of considering of the Tetragram as a *qere perpetuum* that possesses the vowels of the Aramaic שְׁמֵיָא, “the Name.” It is noteworthy that the actual vowels of the word *Lord*, אֲדֹנָי, 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 (שְׁמֵיָא, *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).

<sup>152</sup> Wilhemus á Brakel expressed the common classical view of the significance of יהוה:  
 [I]t 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 יהוה or *Jehovah*, it being abbreviated as יה or *Jah*. The name which is indicative of the trinity of Persons is אֱלֹהִים or *Elohim*. Often there is a coalescence of these two words resulting in יהוה or *Jehovi*. 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,<sup>154</sup> 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,”<sup>155</sup> 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<sup>156</sup> as *YeHoWaH*. Were, as the common modern notion<sup>157</sup> affirms, the vowels of the Divine Name simply lifted from  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , *Adonai*, the ׀ of the Tetragram would have a *hateph*

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*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  $\text{יְהוָה}$  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 *kametz* 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)

<sup>153</sup> 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).

<sup>154</sup> The 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. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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*.’”

<sup>155</sup> Pg. 144, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux. It should be noted that  $\text{יְהוָה}$  is not by any means uniformly found in the Aleppo Codex; the form in the Leningrad Codex,  $\text{יהוה}$ , is found with significantly greater frequency. However, even the Leningrad Codex does have a small number of  $\text{יְהוָה}$  forms, in, e. g., Psalm 15:1.

<sup>156</sup> Pgs. 147ff., 214ff., *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux.

<sup>157</sup> 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).



*pathach* underneath it, not a *shewa*.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, all the names in Scripture that begin with portions of the Tetragrammaton possess the vowels of *Jehovah*, not of *Yahweh*.<sup>159</sup> If one wanted to maintain that the vocalization of God’s Name had been corrupted in Scripture, contrary to His declarations that nothing of the kind would happen (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 5:18), one would also need to maintain that every name in the Bible that begins with part of the Tetragrammaton has also been corrupted. Consider the following table.<sup>160</sup>

<b>Jehoadah</b> (1 Chron 8:36)	יְהוֹעֲדָה	<i>Jehovah has adorned</i>
<b>Jehoaddan</b> (2 Chron 25:1)	יְהוֹעֲדָן	<i>Jehovah delights</i>
<b>Jehoahaz</b> (2 Kings 10:35)	יְהוֹאָחָז	<i>Jehovah has grasped</i>
<b>Jehoash</b> (2 Kings 11:21)	יְהוֹאָשׁ	<i>Jehovah is strong</i>

<sup>158</sup> Note pgs. 218-219 in Whitfield, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, for an explanation of the vocalization when *Eloheim* is employed in connection with *Jehovah* and is appropriately rendered in the English Bible as Lord GOD. The vocalization as יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (2 Samuel 7:18, etc. *MTR*) for this combination undermines the idea that the simple presence of the *yod* in יְהוָה explains presence of *hateph pathach* instead of *shewa*, since יְהוָה retains all the vowels of אֱלֹהֵינוּ. However, the Leningrad Codex does read יְהוָה in certain texts (Deuteronomy 3:24) and יְהוָה in others (Genesis 15:2).

Benjamin Davidson in his *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), although approaching the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton on *TMT* presuppositions, still writes, “The punctuators seem to intimate the originality of the vowels of יְהוָה by not pointing *Yod* with *Chateph-Pattah* (יְהוָה) to indicate the reading of אֱלֹהֵינוּ just as they point it with *Chateph-Segol* to indicate the reading of אֱלֹהֵינוּ. We could, moreover, not account for the abbreviated forms יְהוּ, יוּ prefixed to so many proper names, unless we consider the vowels of יְהוָה original.”

<sup>159</sup> “[A]ccording to the Masoretic text, theophoric names, which have a part of the Tetragram integrated at the beginning of the name, were, at that time, all pronounced YeHÔ-, *without exception*. Consequently, because the Tetragram is the theophoric name par excellence (arguing otherwise would be absurd), and since it is spelled YHW-H, its reading must be YeHÔ-aH in order to conform to all other theophoric names” (pg. 215, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux).

<sup>160</sup> Compare the excellent article “Jehovah,” by Scott Jones, which includes a similar table, and is available at <http://www.lambliion.net/Articles/ScottJones/jehovah1.htm>. Only a single verse reference for each of the *Jehovah* names listed above is included, but the list above is intended to include every *Jeho*-name in Scripture. Most of the names listed above also have shorter forms with the ה omitted (e. g., יְהוֹאָחָז, 2 Kings 14:1; יְהוֹאָשׁ, Judges 6:1; יְהוֹאָבָד, 1 Chronicles 12:20) to avoid an accidental or improper use of the Divine Name. “There are . . . a number of compound names in the Bible into the composition of which three out of the four letters of the Incommunicable Name have entered. Moreover, these letters which begin the names in question are actually pointed יְהוּ, *Jeho*, as the Tetragrammaton itself and hence in a pause at the reading of the first part of the name it sounded as if the reader was pronouncing the Ineffable Name. To guard against [this] . . . the letter *He* ה [was omitted] so that the first part of the names in question [was] altered from *Jeho* (יְהוּ) into *Jo* (יּוּ)” (pg. 369, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, Christian D. Ginsburg. New York, NY: Ktav Publishing, 1966 (orig. pub. 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>.

<b>Jehohanan</b> (1 Chron 26:3)	יְהוֹחָנָן	<i>Jehovah has been gracious</i>
<b>Jehoiachin</b> (2 Kings 24:6)	יְהוֹיָכִין	<i>Jehovah appoints</i>
<b>Jehoiada</b> (2 Samuel 8:18)	יְהוֹיָדָע	<i>Jehovah knows</i>
<b>Jehoiakim</b> (2 Kings 23:34)	יְהוֹיָקִים	<i>Jehovah raises up</i>
<b>Jehoiarib</b> (1 Chron 9:10)	יְהוֹיָרִיב	<i>Jehovah contends</i>
<b>Jehonadab</b> (2 Kings 10:15)	יְהוֹנָדָב	<i>Jehovah is noble</i>
<b>Jehonathan</b> (1 Chron 27:25)	יְהוֹנָתָן	<i>Jehovah has given</i>
<b>Jehoram</b> (1 Kings 22:50)	יְהוֹרָם	<i>Jehovah is exalted</i>
<b>Jehoseph</b> (Psalm 81:5/6)	יְהוֹסֵף	<i>Jehovah has increased</i>
<b>Jehoshabeath</b> (2 Chr 22:11)	יְהוֹשָׁבֵעַת	<i>Jehovah is an oath</i>
<b>Jehoshaphat</b> (2 Sam 8:16)	יְהוֹשָׁפָט	<i>Jehovah has judged</i>
<b>Jehosheba</b> (2 Kings 11:2)	יְהוֹשֶׁבַע	<i>Jehovah has sworn</i>
<b>Jehoshua</b> (Num 13:16) <sup>161</sup>	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	<i>Jehovah is salvation</i>
<b>Jehozabad</b> (2 Kings 12:21)	יְהוֹזָבָד	<i>Jehovah hath bestowed</i>
<b>Jehozadak</b> (1 Chron 6:14)	יְהוֹזָדָק	<i>Jehovah is righteous</i>

Thus, it is very evident that the first section of the Divine Name is pronounced as it is written, *Jehovah*, not *Yahweh*.<sup>162</sup>

Names of people and places that end with the Divine Name likewise evidence that *Jehovah* is correct, rather than *Yahweh*. Consider the following examples:<sup>163</sup>

<sup>161</sup> *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 יְהוֹשָׁפָט, found in Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59; the names Aliah (עֲלִיָּה) in 1 Chronicles 1:51 and Beriah (בְּרִיָּעָה) 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 (הוֹשֵׁעַ, 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*, יוֹסֵף (Genesis 30:24; cf. Genesis 22:2, מוֹרְיָה). However, it is true that *Joshua/Jehoshua* is the first theophoric name which contains the unabbreviated *Jeho-*, which is not found in יְהוֹשָׁפָט or יוֹסֵף. Note that *Jehoshua/Joshua* can be written as יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Exodus 17:9) as well as יְהוֹשֻׁעַ.

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

<sup>163</sup> 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 יָהּ (*iah*) 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 יָהּ, but because the ך 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 יָהּ. Furthermore, it should be noted that very many of the *iah* names also have forms ending in יָהּ. For example, equivalents to the first three names (אֲבִיָּה, אֲחִיָּה, אֲמִיָּה) are found in 2 Chronicles 13:20 (אֲבִיָּה), 1 Kings 14:4 (אֲחִיָּה), and 2 Kings 14:1 (אֲמִיָּה).

Abiah (1 Samuel 8:2)	אָבִיָּהּ	<i>Jehovah is (my) father</i>
Ahiah (1 Samuel 14:3)	אָחִיָּהּ	<i>brother of Jehovah</i>
Amaziah (2 Kings 12:21)	אֲמָצִיָּהּ	<i>Jehovah is mighty</i>
Athaliah (2 Kings 11:3)	עַתְלִיָּהּ	<i>afflicted of Jehovah</i>
Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1)	חֲזַקְיָהּ	<i>Jehovah is my strength</i>
Hilkiah (2 Kings 18:37)	חֶלְקִיָּהּ	<i>My portion is Jehovah</i>
Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:25)	יְדִידְיָהּ	<i>beloved of Jehovah</i>
Jesaiah (1 Chron 3:21)	יִשְׁעִיָּהּ	<i>Jehovah has saved</i>
Jeremiah (Jeremiah 27:1)	יְרֻמָּהּ	<i>Jehovah has founded</i>
Josiah (1 Kings 13:2)	יֵאֲשִׁיָּהּ	<i>whom Jehovah heals</i>
Micaiah (2 Kings 22:12)	מִיכָיָהּ	<i>Who is like Jehovah?</i>
Moriah (Genesis 22:2)	מִרְיָהּ	<i>chosen by Jehovah</i>
Obadiah (1 Chron 3:21)	עֹבַדְיָהּ	<i>servant of Jehovah</i>
Pekahiah (2 Kings 15:22)	פֶּקַחְיָהּ	<i>Jehovah sees</i>
Seraiah (2 Samuel 8:17)	שֶׁרְיָהּ	<i>Jehovah is ruler</i>
Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22)	שְׁמַעִיָּהּ	<i>heard by Jehovah</i>
Uriah (2 Samuel 11:3)	אוּרִיָּהּ	<i>Jehovah is my light</i>
Uzziah (2 Kings 12:21)	אֲמָצִיָּהּ	<i>Jehovah is mighty</i>
Zachariah (2 Kings 14:29)	זַכְרִיָּהּ	<i>Jehovah remembers</i>
Zedekiah (1 Kings 22:11)	צְדַקְיָהּ	<i>Jehovah is righteous</i>

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, יהִי),<sup>164</sup> which combines the first letter of the Name (י) with the הִי at the end, validating that *ah*, not *eh* or some other vocalization, properly ends the Tetragram.<sup>165</sup> 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

<sup>164</sup> Note the use of *Jah* and *Jehovah* together in Isaiah 12:2; 26:4.

<sup>165</sup> The advocate of the pronunciation *Yahweh* could argue that יהִי does not combine the beginning and ending of the longer יהוהי, 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 Tetragram read as *Yeho* not as *Yah* makes this idea unlikely. Furthermore, the *mappiq* in יהִי is expected only if the הִי is a final consonant, which also suggests that the הִי represents the concluding portion of the Tetragrammaton. Note that certain theophoric names, such as 2 Samuel 12:25's יהוהידידי, 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 הִי of *Jehovah*, is combined with the initial consonant י.

104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48; יהוה/יהוה/יהוה/יהוה) and the Greek *Alleluia* (Revelation 19:1-6; ἁλληλουῖα) validate the *ah* at the end of the Divine Name.

Furthermore, the Mishna states that the Name was pronounced as it was written, that is, as יהוה, *Jehovah*.<sup>166</sup> This pronunciation is also consistent with Talmudic evidence.<sup>167</sup> 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 Ιαβε” as the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, although “the former distinguish[es] it as the

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<sup>166</sup> 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: וּבְמִדְבָּרָא בְּכַנּוּיָא, וּבְמִדְבָּרָא בְּכַתְּבָא, אֶת הַשֵּׁם כְּכַתְּבוֹ, בְּמִקְדָּשׁ (בְּמִקְדָּשׁ). 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: בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים). 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<sup>rd</sup> 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 the 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.

<sup>167</sup> The declaration of *Sotah* 10b, 36b, that the name *Judah*, יהודה, 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 יהודה; *Yahweh* does not have any of the vowels of יהוה.

pronunciation of the Samaritans.”<sup>168</sup> These statements constitute the most substantive and strongest argument in favor of the pronunciation *Yahweh*.<sup>169</sup> 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”<sup>170</sup> contain invocations that sound like the word *Yahweh*.<sup>171</sup> To use the

<sup>168</sup> “Jehovah,” *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. The article also mentions that others writers speculated that the pronunciation was Ιαω, Ιεω, Ιαου, or Ιαουε. (The pronunciation Ιαουε, which is in some manuscripts of 2 and 3 Clement, and is also somewhat close to *Yahweh*, has as a textual variant Ιαου, so it is not certain that Ιαουε 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 יהוה 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.”

<sup>169</sup> 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 Ephiphanius and Theodoret and a textually suspect reading of Clement of Alexandria (cf. the previous footnote), omitting the fact that Theodoret said that Ιαβε was a Samaritan pronunciation rejected by the Jews and the textual problems in Clement’s alleged Ιαουε. 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*.

<sup>170</sup> Pg. 323-324, Deismann, *Bible Studies*.

<sup>171</sup> 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; ιαωα; ια; ιαωα; ιαη (which Deismann admits occurs in the midst of “other meaningless permutations of . . . vowels,” pg. 325); αη; αία; ιαωτ; ιαωθ; ιαουε; ιαωουηε; ιηουοει; ιαωουηε; ιαωουηε; ιεουαηω; εηουιαω; ιαβε; ιαβοε; ιαβα; ιαβαωθ; ιαβαζ. 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<sup>172</sup>—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.<sup>173</sup> *Jehovah* has not allowed the pronunciation of His Name to be lost.<sup>174</sup>

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conjectures. . . . [O]ther [names] again appear to have no special meaning, for . . . magical formulae are formed from the seven vowels  $\alpha\epsilon\eta\iota\upsilon\omega$  and their permutations and combinations . . . in all probability there were magic formulae formed from the consonants also, now Hebraising, now Egyptianising, now Graecising, and without any definite meaning. . . . The value of the vocalic transcriptions . . . for the determination of [the Tetragrammaton's] true pronunciation appears to us, by reason of the diffuse and capricious usage of the vowels which we find throughout the Magic Literature, to be at most very small. The very great uncertainty of the traditional texts must also be urged as an objection to [these papyri] being so employed. Nowhere could copyists' errors be more easily made, nowhere are errors in reading by editors more possible, than in these texts. Let any one but attempt to copy half a page of such magic formulae for himself: the eye will be continually losing its way because there is no fixed point amidst the confusion of meaningless vowels by which it can right itself" (pg. 329-330, *Bible Studies*). To take the fact that a word that sounds like *Yahweh* is found within lists of meaningless jabber and countless permutations of vowels and consonants designed to assist one in performing pagan magic is about as valid a method of determining the vocalization of the Tetragrammaton as concluding that whatever sounds pop into one's head after asking Merlin the Wizard for help and saying *Abra Cadabra* provide evidence for the proper pronunciation of God's holy Name.

<sup>172</sup> Theodoret affirmed that the Jews said  $\text{ΑΙΩ}$ , 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  $\text{ΙΩ}$  (see pg. 326, Deismann, *Bible Studies*), which, since it sounds like the actual Biblical designation *Jah* ( $\text{יְהוָה}$ ), is quite likely what his actual affirmation was.

<sup>173</sup> Deismann records that "J. M. Gesner . . . believed that he had discovered the Divine name *Jehovah* in the vowel series [found in Greek texts of]  $\text{ΙΕΗΩΥΑ}$ " (pg. 328, *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity*, G. Adolf Deismann, trans. Alexander Grieve, (3rd ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1923, orig. pub. 1901, citing *De laude dei per septem vocales* in the *Commentationes Soc. Reg. Scient. Götting.*, i. (1751), p. 245 ff.), a noteworthy fact, although Deismann did not agree with Gesner. Smith also dissents from Gesner in "Jehovah," *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. One would need to exercise great care to verify the correctness of Gesner's thesis before employing it as legitimate evidence.

<sup>174</sup> 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<sup>175</sup> 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.<sup>176</sup> 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" (אֲנִי אֲנִי . . . אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי) 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 אֲנִי a gnomic significance expressing the true God's self-existence and eternity. "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 ὢν . . . ὁ ὢν. Note also Revelation 1:4, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ 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 אֲנִי signify "I AM," as does אֲנִי אֲנִי. 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 *hayah* in the sense of 'existing,' for the verb *hayah* 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.).

<sup>175</sup> 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.

<sup>176</sup> A book length exposition of the Biblical doctrine of preservation is *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture*, ed. Kent Brandenburg. El Sobrante, CA: Pillar and Ground Publishing, 2003. Cf. also "Transmission of the Text in Church History," Paul Ferguson (unpub. paper; contents generally replicated in certain issues of *The Burning Bush*, the theological journal of the Far Eastern Bible College).

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, plenary 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.<sup>177</sup> For example, Deuteronomy 33:27 promises: “The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms” (אֱלֹהֵי קְדָמָה וּמִתְחַת זְרֻעֹת עוֹלָם) (מְעַנָּה). 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” (וְאֶת-הָעֲרָבִים צִוִּיתִי לְכַלֵּלְךָ שָׁם), revocalization could change the “ravens” into “Arabians” (עֲרָבִים), or even into “people of the city Orbo” or “of the rock Oreb.”<sup>178</sup> God promises His Son, the Messiah, “Thou shalt break them [the

<sup>177</sup> 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.

<sup>178</sup> “[T]he word rendered ravens (*Orebim*, עֲרָבִים) 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” (הָרַעַם בְּשֹׁבֵט בַּרְזֶל, Psalm 2:9). Changing the vowels leads to the translation in the *New International Version*, “You will rule” (תִּרְעֹם) instead of “break” (הִרְעַם). Psalm 7:11, instead of reading “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיק וְאֵל זֵעִם בְּכָל-יּוֹם;) can be revocalized to read “God . . . is not angry every day.”<sup>179</sup> Proverbs 23:7, instead of stating: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (כִּי אִם-שָׁעַר בְּנַפְשׁוֹ כִּן-הוּא) can read “for like a hair in the throat,” so is he,<sup>180</sup> by changing the vowels of שָׁעַר to שֵׁעַר, and considering נֶפֶשׁ as “throat” based on Ugaritic and Akkadian cognates. In numerous verses, one could not tell whether commands or statements involve “milk” (חֲלָב) or “fat” (חֵלֶב)—Moses, three times, commands Israel not to boil a kid in its mother’s חֵלֶב (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 רַבַּר, 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*.”<sup>181</sup> 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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and flesh to the Prophet twice a day? It is as perfectly open to any one who chooses to say that ‘Arabians,’ or ‘Orbites,’ or ‘merchants,’ or ‘people of the rock Oreb’ fed Elijah, as to say that the ‘ravens’ did so” (Chapter 34, “Elijah, 1 Kings 17:1-7,” in *The Pulpit Commentary*, 1 Kings, by Frederick W. Farrar. Elec. acc. *Christian Library Series*, vol. 3: *Expositor’s Bible*. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software Library, 2006).

<sup>179</sup> “[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: אֵל, with the vowel point *tseré*, signifies GOD: אֵל, 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).

<sup>180</sup> As in the *New Revised Standard Version*.

<sup>181</sup> Pg. 122, *A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points, and Accents*, John Gill. Elec. acc. *John Gill Collection*, Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999.

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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<sup>182</sup> A variety of the older books in the Bibliography are accessible at <http://books.google.com>. John Gill's *A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points, and Accents* is available online at <http://www.onlinebible.net/topics6.html>, and Christian D. Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* is available at <http://www.archive.org/details/introductionofma00ginsuoft>.

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