THE MASSORETIC TEXT AND THE QUMRAN SCROLLS:
A STUDY IN ORTHOGRAPHY

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I

Some years ago, Frank M. Cross and I made a systematic study of the orthography of representative inscriptions in the different North-West Semitic dialects. These could be dated by epigraphic and other means to the period between the 10th and 6th centuries B.C.E., and thus provided a pattern for comparison with Hebrew inscriptions of the same period. The object of the investigation was to determine the basic principles governing orthographic practice and to trace the course of development and refinement in alphabetic spelling of these dialects and of Hebrew in particular. One result of the study\(^1\) was the establishment of a relative chronology, and with the help of related disciplines, especially that of palaeography, an absolute chronology could also be fixed within limits. Thus it was possible not only to determine the general pattern of orthographic development, and to distinguish its principal phases, but also to date these approximately. Our conclusions may be summarized as follows:

1. The Phoenician phase of consonantal orthography, down to the end of the 10th century B.C.E. This was a purely consonantal spelling, without indication of vowel sounds at all, and is the oldest form of alphabetic writing. It is characteristic of the Proto-Canaanite inscriptions found at Sinai and in Palestine. Ugaritic spelling, with different *aleph* signs to indicate various vowels accompanying the *aleph*, is a special phenomenon arising from the peculiar linguistic situation at Ugarit, and has no echoes in later alphabetic spelling. Phoenician inscriptions, from the earliest to the latest times are written in typically consonantal orthography: in fact they define the nature and details of the system. The earliest Hebrew inscriptions (*e.g.*, the Gezer calendar) exhibit the same characteristics, and clearly belong to this pattern of spelling.

2. The Aramaic phase, from the 9th century, involving the use of *matres lectionis* to represent certain vowel sounds. Two further subdivisions can be distinguished:

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a) The introduction of the vowel letters, *he*, *waw*, and *yodh* to represent long vowels in the final position: *i.e.*, *he* for *ā*, *ē*, *ē*, *waw* for *ū*, and *yodh* for *ī*. We find this pattern in Aramaic inscriptions from the 9th century on, in the Mesha’ Inscription (also 9th century), and in Hebrew inscriptive material from this period (chiefly 8th century on). In short there was a clear shift in Hebrew spelling practice, which may be dated to the 9th century.

b) The gradual introduction of vowel letters, *waw* and *yodh*, in the medial position, to represent *ū* and *ī*. The first examples are found in Aramaic inscriptions from the late 8th century (*e.g.*, *Aṣṣur* spelled with *waw* for *ū*), and now also in Hebrew from approximately the same period, the end of the 8th century (in the so-called Shebna inscription, with the word ‘ārūr, using *waw* for the *ū* vowel). Such usage, however, remains rare and sporadic in Hebrew until the end of the pre-Exilic period. Thus there are only a few examples in the whole of the Lachish correspondence.

II

While some questions could not be decided because of lack of evidence, and others remain obscure, the general pattern, established by inductive analysis from hundreds of examples, has not been seriously undermined by critics, but has been confirmed by subsequent discoveries. On the assumption that some parts at least of the Old Testament were originally written down in the pre-Exilic period, an effort was made to test the usefulness of our studies in early Hebrew orthography for the investigation of the biblical text. For this purpose a series of studies were made of some of the poems, which on other grounds might be regarded as among the oldest compositions in the O.T. Professor W. F. Albright pioneered with his important paper on the Oracles of Balaam, followed by studies on Habakkuk iii; Psalm lviii, and most recently, Deut. xxxii. Cross and I, continuing a long Johns Hopkins concern with this early poetry, as attested by the articles of Albright and before him of Paul Haupt, have published papers on Deuteronomy xxxii; Psalm lviii = 2 Samuel xxii, and Exodus xv, and have others as yet unpublished. It is our considered judgment that these papers have generally vindicated the applic-

ation of orthographic analysis to selected biblical passages. That they have proved useful in text-criticism and in the clarification of difficult passages can hardly be denied. Used circumspectly they may be helpful in fixing an original date of written composition. Thus, if any of these poems were written down in the age of David and Solomon, we would expect them to have been written in the prevailing orthographic style, i.e., Phoenician consonantal orthography. While the present Hebrew text of the O.T. naturally reflects much later spelling techniques, the presence of examples of archaic spelling ("mistakes" from the point of view of later practice, but quite correct according to earlier usage) would be evidence in support of such an hypothesis. We would not wish to press the case beyond this point, since the evidence is limited, and the conclusions depend to some degree on the presuppositions adopted and the method employed in interpreting the data.

The orthographic approach has proved useful not only in identifying the features of the earliest Hebrew spelling, but also in distinguishing orthographically the dialects of northern and southern Palestine (i.e. Israelite and Judahite). A basic difference lies in the pronunciation and spelling of the proto-Semitic diphthongs aw and ay, which were contracted in the North to ð and ê respectively while they were preserved uncontracted in the South. Israelite followed Phoenician and Ugaritic in this respect, while Judahite agrees with Aramaic and Arabic. The difference in pronunciation is reflected in the spelling: thus in the North the words for "house" and "death" would be written bt and mt (pronounced bêt and môt), while in the South they would be written byt and mwît (pronounced bayt and mawît). Comparison of Psalm xviii and 2 Samuel xxii indicated the existence of two recensions of this poem, one written in the standard Judahite spelling characteristic of MT in general, the other in northern orthography.9 While there has been considerable contamination of the text in the course of transmission, sufficient evidence for the "contracted" orthography survives in the 2 Samuel recension to support substantially the "northern" hypothesis. A further possibility in this direction may be mentioned. The date and provenience of the Book of Job have occasioned much debate among scholars, and it cannot be said that any hypothesis has won general approval as yet. Recently the proposal has been advanced that the book is a product of the northern diaspora, i.e. that it comes from the community of Israelites exiled from Palestine after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.E.10 A number of arguments have been adduced in support of this view, but quite apart from these, a provisional examination of the orthography of the Book

of Job shows a surprisingly high incidence of peculiar and even unique spellings which are characteristically northern in character. That is, they reflect contraction of the diphthongs aw and ay in spelling (and presumably therefore in pronunciation), e.g., the particle ‘ōdh is repeatedly spelled ‘d instead of normal Judahite and biblical ‘wd'. The survival in the book of numerous spellings of this sort can hardly be accidental, and may point to a “northern” recension of the Book of Job.

III

In an important sense, however, these studies have been preliminary. The main problem from the beginning has been to determine the place of the MT as a whole (and not simply isolated passages and archaic survivals) in the history of Hebrew orthography, i.e., in what phase of the evolution of Hebrew spelling does the distinctive and characteristic orthography of the MT belong? While the MT is by no means homogeneous, and there is considerable variation not only between the main divisions (e.g., the orthography of the Torah is more conservative than that of the Kethubim, particularly Chronicles) and from book to book, but also on the same page or even in the same verse, there is nevertheless a discernible pattern in the use of matres lectionis, though this has not been clearly analysed or described scientifically. One reason for this is the superimposition of Massoretic vocalization on Massoretic spelling in the ordinary printed text of the O.T. For the purpose of clarity in the discussion which follows, let us make the following distinction between spelling and vocalization: by “spelling” we mean the Hebrew letters used to indicate the consonants and certain vowels, i.e. the unpointed text. This is sometimes called the consonantal text, but the term is misleading, since some of the letters represent vowels and not consonants. By “Massoretic vocalization” we mean the full system of vowel indication introduced in the latter half of the 1st millennium C.E., which, while combining with the system of vowel letters, nevertheless superseded and distorted the earlier pattern. There is ample evidence to show that the two systems diverge at many points and reflect different periods in the evolution of Hebrew phonology. Thus the vocalization, while preserving older traditions, is nevertheless considerably later than the pronunciation implied in the spelling of the MT.

A cursory examination of MT shows that its spelling does not fit into any phase of pre-Exilic spelling, which even in the latest materials shows only sporadic use of internal matres lectionis. On the contrary, MT exhibits consist-

11. Job i, 18, ii, 3, 9, viii, 12, 21.
ent use of internal *matres lectionis* for ₪ and ₫ and the contracted diphthongs aw and ay (ø and ɐ respectively). The representation of ø varies considerably (*i.e.*, sometimes the waw is used, sometimes not), while ₪ and ₫ are not represented by vowel letters. There is no indication of short vowels.

If Massoretic spelling was clearly post-Exilic—and since the written composition or compilation of any complete book or part of the Old Testament could hardly be attributed to an earlier date, this was only to be expected—it was not at all clear where in the post-Exilic period the orthography of the Massoretic Text properly fits. The *terminus ad quem* was fixed by the adoption of the Massoretic Text with its particular orthography as the official Bible of the Jewish community toward the end of the 1st century C.E. This view has been fully confirmed by the manuscript discoveries in the Murabba'at caves: the biblical MSS, which date from the Second Revolt, *i.e.* before 135 C.E., are Massoretic both in text and spelling. The origins of Massoretic spelling and its emergence as a definable system must be placed much earlier, of course. The discoveries at Qumran in addition to the previously known Nash Papyrus (and to a lesser extent the evidence of Jewish coins of the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E.) have enabled us to trace a specifically Massoretic type of spelling back to the latter part of the 2nd century B.C.E., or roughly 100 B.C.E.

For the *terminus a quo* there was in the first place the Exile. In view of critical theories concerning the compilation of the principal parts of the O.T., and in particular of the Torah and Former Prophets, it seemed reasonable to date the emergence of a canonical text to the century after the Exile. When we take into consideration the considerable divergences between the latest pre-Exilic orthography and Massoretic spelling, the 5th century would appear to be the earliest possible occasion for the appearance of Massoretic spelling, while the 4th would be a more reasonable supposition. On general considerations therefore, the emergence of Massoretic spelling could be narrowed to the period between the 5th-4th and the 2nd centuries B.C.E., since by the latter date distinctively Massoretic spelling appears in biblical MSS alongside other more elaborate spelling systems. Greater precision in narrowing the limits could hardly be undertaken because of the deplorable lack of Hebrew inscriptive evidence for the period in question. We are dependent chiefly on seals and stamps, with personal and place names, and these add little to our knowledge of the orthographic practice of the period.

12. Of these, the well-known yahud stamps and the five-letter Jerusalem insignia (*yrmh*) may be mentioned. The yahud stamps are sometimes spelled with the waw for ₪, sometimes without; the former reflects current practice in the 4th (or possibly late 5th) century, while the latter spelling attests the survival of an even older practice. The Jerusalem insignia likewise reflects the persistence of a traditional design and custom of spelling.
IV

While the Qumran scrolls have provided more than ample materials—in fact an overwhelming and embarrassing quantity—for the orthographic practice, or rather confusion of the period from the 2nd century B.C.E. through the 1st century C.E., they could hardly have been expected to supply data for the crucial earlier period in which the origins of Massoretic spelling lie. The Qumran community itself does not antedate the latter half of the 2nd century B.C.E., and the bulk of the manuscript materials necessarily belongs to the period following the settlement there. That some of the MSS, especially of biblical books, might be of an earlier date was a possibility to be considered: thus the great Isaiah scroll could be dated by experts to the latter part of the 2nd century B.C.E., and a fragment of Ecclesiastes to about the middle of the same century. With the refinement of palaeographical analysis in the last few years, and the examination of hundreds and hundreds of documents from this period, a sequence dating of Qumran MSS has proved feasible. Substantial agreement in procedures and results has been achieved by the principal workers in this field, chief of whom is Professor Cross. His provisional study in JBL\textsuperscript{13} fixed the order and dates of a wide selection of Qumran MSS within relatively narrow limits. It has now been superseded by his definitive analysis of all presently available Qumran material (in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. G. E. Wright, 1961).

With the vast amount of material now available, and with absolute control provided by dated documents interspersed through the latter part of the period, the dating of the Qumran MSS is virtually certain throughout: we may allow a maximum variation of 50 years in the dating of particular MSS. As was to be expected, the large majority of documents from Qumran date from the period of Essene occupation (*i.e.*, from the late 2nd century B.C.E. to the late 1st century C.E.). Nevertheless, Cross has identified several MSS of an earlier date, some from the early and middle 2nd century B.C.E., and a few fragments even older than these. They may have been brought to Qumran by the first settlers, or procured from other sources. In any case, there are now three biblical MSS which belong, according to Cross's analysis, to the period from *ca.* 275–175 B.C.E., and may reasonably be regarded as the oldest surviving fragments of the Bible. These MSS, only one of which has been published in part (*4QSam(b)*),\textsuperscript{14} now offer us data concerning Hebrew orthographic practice in the 3rd and early 2nd century B.C.E., thus enabling us to close partially the gap in the history of post-Exilic spelling; the situation in the

\textsuperscript{13} “The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran”, JBL 74 (1955), 147-72.
\textsuperscript{14} *Ibid.*, 165-72.
5th–4th centuries remains obscure. In view of the fact that complete publication of these MSS is some years off, and because of their critical importance for the study of Hebrew orthography in the post-Exilic period, and particularly for the origins of Massoretic spelling, Cross has made the necessary transcriptions available to me for a provisional orthographic analysis.\textsuperscript{15}

Cross classifies the documents as follows:
1. The oldest MS is apparently 4QExod(f), containing Exodus xl, 8–27 and dating from \textit{ca.} 275–225 B.C.E. or roughly 250.
2. 4QSam(b) contains I Sam. xvi, 1–11; xix, 10–17; xx, 26–xxi, 6; xxiii, 9–17, and is to be dated \textit{ca.} 250–200 B.C.E., or about 225.
3. The last is 4QJer(a), containing Jer. xii, 17–xiii, 6 and xvii, 10–25, and is to be dated between 225 and 175 B.C.E., or about 200.

There is no need to press for a precise dating of the MSS in question at this time, and since the science of Hebrew palaeography has not yet achieved the exactitude or the prestige of Greek epigraphy, we can allow considerable leeway without debate. We intend therefore to treat the documents as roughly contemporaneous and as coming from the latter half of the 3rd century or, at the latest, the early part of the 2nd. The fragments comprise a random selection of sufficient length to secure representative orthographic data, though some characteristic forms are lacking for the reconstruction of a complete picture of the manuscripts' orthography. Our concern is especially with the use of vowel letters in the orthography of the documents, and more particularly with the representation of the medial vowels, since the indication of final vowels had long since been regularized, and the pattern of use remained relatively unchanged from the 9th or 8th century on. There is a significant exception to the general rule: in pre-Exilic inscriptions the 3rd masculine singular suffix attached to nouns in the singular is regularly represented by the letter \textit{he}, whereas in these documents, as in MT commonly, \textit{waw} is used. The vowel in question was presumably \textit{ē}, though this is not certain for pre-Massoretic vocalization (\textit{i.e.}, we are dependent upon Massoretic vocalization for this pronunciation: it may have been \textit{uh} in pre-Exilic times and possibly \textit{aw} later, contracted to \textit{ē} in post-Exilic times). Thus the significance of the shift from \textit{he} to \textit{aw} is not altogether clear, though the use of \textit{waw} in this situation is sufficient to demonstrate that our documents belong to a definitely post-Exilic stratum of Hebrew orthography. A second modification of pre-Exilic spelling relates to the 3rd masculine singular suffix with plural nouns (Massoretic –\textit{āw}) which is represented in pre-Exilic inscriptions simply by the letter \textit{aw}, while in the present documents,

\textsuperscript{15} I have consulted with Cross, at various stages in the study, and wish to express my appreciation for many helpful suggestions. I must bear responsibility for the conclusions, such as they are.
as in MT generally, by –yw. There is some difficulty in explaining the appearance of the pre-Exilic form in the southern dialect, though it seems to derive ultimately from –ayhu. The post-Exilic form –yw is incompatible with Massoretic vocalization –aw, and reflects rather the vocalization –ayw from ayhū with syncope of the he as very often in spoken Hebrew (so Siloam rēʾēw for MT rēʾēhū, cf. Jer. vi,21 יְדוֹ, which is wrongly vocalized.\textsuperscript{16} Once again we have a characteristically post-Exilic form both in our 3rd century documents and MT.

To sum up: the use of vowel letters in the final position in the documents under consideration is identical with prevailing practice in MT. Thus he is used to represent final ā, ē, and ə, e.g., ṇ (kō) in 4QJer(a). Waw is used for final ā and ə (derived from aw—the question of the contraction of the diphthong must be considered further), and yodh for final ī and ē (derived from ay). So far as the final vowel letters are concerned, it is clear that the general system which goes back to the 9th century B.C.E. underwent specific changes in the post-Exilic period, and that by the 3rd century at the latest they were firmly incorporated into standard orthographic practice. The unanimity of our 3rd century sources, and their identity with Massoretic practice, suggest that the pattern must actually have originated earlier, perhaps in the 4th or even 5th century.

\textsuperscript{16} Early Hebrew Orthography, p. 50, no. 26, and no. 28.
in effect a vowel indicator, and by the evidence of Massoretic vocalization, which indicates that the diphthong was contracted in certain instances, *e.g.* the construct state of nouns like *bêt* and *mot*, and preserved in others, *e.g.* in the artificial forms like *bayit* and *mawet*. If contraction had taken place we would then expect examples of two concomitant phenomena: 1. the occasional loss of originally diphthongal *waw* and *yodh*, since the sounds would fall together with vocalic *ơ* and *ē*, which are not always or even regularly represented by the corresponding vowel letters. 2. Extension of the use of *waw* and *yodh* to cases of *ơ* and *ē*, which did not originate from the corresponding diphthongs *aw* and *ay*. In other words, we would expect similarity in orthographic treatment of sounds which fell together, or at least some overlapping. It is too much to expect that the Hebrew scribes could have maintained a formal, *i.e.* orthographic distinction for any length of time or with consistency when the phonemic support for the distinction had been lost. Even in modern times with our massive scientific knowledge of linguistics, of etymologies, and the principles governing historical spelling, we continually make mistakes in attempting to preserve and reconstruct older forms, and the mistakes fall into the pattern of contamination described above. It can be safely asserted that once different sounds have fallen together, orthographic distinction between them on the basis of historical practice or etymology cannot be long maintained consistently. In MT, the system of vocalization reflects extensive contraction of the diphthongs *aw* and *ay*, and the resulting vowels *ơ* and *ē* are assigned the same value as the *ơ* and *ē* which derive from the original vowels *ā* (or *ū*), and *i* (*i.e.* *ḥōlem* and *šēre*); there are undoubtedly distinctions in quantity, and we should reckon with instances of short *ḥōlem* and *šēre*, but the system used does not indicate these, while it does indicate an identity in vowel quality. Massoretic spelling, as distinct from vocalization, is less clear on this point. On the one hand it carefully preserves the distinction between *ē* derived from *ay*, which is consistently represented by *yodh*, and *ē* which is derived from *i*, which is rarely if ever so indicated. This regularity can hardly be explained as a survival of historical spelling, but is rather rooted in a difference in pronunciation. It may be explained in either of two ways, or a combination of them: either the diphthong had actually been preserved and not contracted, or the *šēre* is a short vowel as distinct from the contracted diphthong which is long, and is therefore not represented in the orthography. Whether the second explanation can be used to cover all cases of the shift *i* > *ē* is debatable, however. On the other hand, the Massoretic treatment of the *ơ* vowel (*ḥōlem*) involves extensive representation of vocalic *ơ*, derived from *ā* (rather than *ū*, which is not indicated by a vowel letter, thus implying that the vowel is short) as well as diphthongal *ơ*, derived from *aw*. This can be taken to mean that the
\( \delta \) sounds have fallen together, and thus that contraction of the diphthong has taken place. On the whole it would appear that Massoretic spelling and vocalization point in the direction of diphthongal contraction: that the contracted diphthongs \( \delta \) and \( \epsilon \) are represented by \( \text{waw} \) and \( \text{yodh} \), that the vowel \( \delta \) derived from \( \text{i} \) is similarly represented by \( \text{waw} \), although not consistently, while \( \epsilon \) derived from \( \text{i} \) and \( \sigma \) derived from \( \text{u} \) are not represented in the orthography because they remained short vowels.

VI

When we turn to the new documents from the 3rd century, we find that two of them, Exod(\( f \)) and Jer(\( a \)), conform closely to the orthographic pattern of MT, while Sam(\( b \)) diverges. The latter makes no use of \( \text{waw} \) to represent the vowel \( \delta \) (\( \text{h} \)olem), but distinguishes carefully between the diphthong which is always represented by \( \text{waw} \) and the vowel which is not. This implies strongly that the \( \delta \) vowel was not represented orthographically, and that the contraction of the diphthong had not yet taken place. Since all three MSS come from approximately the same period, it would appear that this was a time of transition, with Sam(\( b \)) preserving an older orthographic tradition and the other MSS belonging to the newer pattern. We also seem to have reached the point of origin of Massoretic spelling as such.

The only significant distinctions in spelling practice among the MSS, and between them and MT, concern the use of \( \text{waw} \) as a medial vowel letter for \( \delta \) (derived from \( \text{i} \) ). There are other differences, but these are minor and may be mentioned in passing. Thus there are a few instances in which Massoretic vocalization indicates an \( \text{i} \) vowel, where the MSS do not have \( \text{yodh} \) to represent the vowel. Sam(\( b \)) spells the name “David” \( \text{dwd} \) regularly, as often in MT, even though the second vowel is apparently long, as the spelling (with \( \text{yodh} \)) elsewhere in MT, and in many places in the Qumran scrolls, shows. In Sam(\( b \)) (as MT here), we undoubtedly have a case of historical spelling, the survival of the older, pre-Exilic spelling (which we would expect in the case of names particularly) alongside the development of the more “correct” fuller spelling. In Exod(\( f \)) at xl, 18, we havebrew for MT \( \text{dwd} \) which is more regular. This may also be the survival of an older spelling (cf. Jon. ii, 7 \( \text{dwd} \)) or more likely a scribal slip reflecting the current slurring of the vowel (which is unaccented) in ordinary pronunciation. There are two similar cases in Jer(\( a \)) for MT \( \text{dwd} \) (xvii, 14) and \( \text{baw} \) (MT same, xiii, 1), where the expected \( \text{yodh} \) is omitted, probably as a reflection of current pronunciation of the unaccented pretonic syllable (i.e., the vowel was not heard distinctly or regarded as long). Other explanations are possible; in any case such exceptions do not undermine the general pattern, but only prove that scribes are human.
We may now turn to the evidence for the spelling of š in our documents:

1. For Sam(b) we have the following—š is never indicated in the orthography, with the possible exception of four words:
   a) לָמֹד, le mō’ēd (1 Sam xx,35, as in MT). Here the waw is etymologic, i.e. derived from the diphthong aw: *maw’id > mō’ēd.
   b) יִנְדָּן, yōnātān (MT הִנְדָּן, but elsewhere הַנְדָּן). Here again the waw is etymologic, deriving from an original diphthong. MT spelling is archaizing or hypercorrect, since intervocalic he was lost early in ordinary pronunciation (MT vocalization is an artificial backformation from yōnātān). Thus: *yawna-tən > *yawntān > yōnātān.
   c) יבֹר, hayyōm (xx, 27, 34, as MT). Again the waw is to be considered etymologic: i.e. *yawm > yōm. A second root, ym, is reflected in the plural yāmīm, as also in the curious (but repeated) form ym for “day” in pre-Exilic Judahite materials. We must reckon with a more complex dialectic situation in Judah in which bi-forms of the type yawm/yam, qawl/qal, etc., existed side by side.
   d) מָקָה, māqām, (xx,27,37; xx,3 as MT). This is the most difficult form, since it is usually derived from *maqām (root qm). If this derivation is correct then it would be the only case of the use of waw for vocalic š (from š) in Sam(b). The consistency of usage with this word (all three cases), and the complete absence of any other examples of such use of waw (though there are numerous instances of š from š in the materials and an impressive number in which MT has waw but where Sam(b) omits), indicates that another explanation is implied if not required. On the analogy of Arabic and Syriac formations from the same root17, we suggest that māqām derives from *maqawm rather than *maqām, and that the waw is etymologic here also. The bi-form maqām > māqām may also have existed, since MT preserves a number of cases in which the waw is omitted (though only in combining forms with preposition or suffix, where a possible change in pronunciation may be involved). The plural form (mēqāmōt) may likewise be derived from the simple form *maqāmāt rather than one with the diphthong, thus conforming to the pattern suggested in (c) above.

As another illustration of metaplastic formations we may suggest the different spellings of the word Jerusalem. MT spelling of the last syllable is simply –lm, implying a pronunciation –lēm, while the vocalization (a permanent Qere) –ayim points to an original diphthong –aym. We know now that this vocalization is not artificial but derives from a tradition going back at least to the 2nd century B.C.E. as shown by numerous examples in the Qumran scrolls.

17. Cf. Syriac qawmā, qawmēthā and Arabic قَوْمٍ.
in which the yodh appears in the last syllable (−lym). This can only signify the diphthongal form ̄aym, as yodh is not used to represent either seghōl or šēre.

The principal difference between Sam(b) and MT is in the representation of the ̄ā vowel (derived from ̄ā), as the following table indicates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4Q Sam(b)</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>M.T.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>בָּבָמָה</td>
<td>xvi,6</td>
<td>בָּבָמָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>קָמִית</td>
<td>xvi,7</td>
<td>קָמִית</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>שָׁלֹל</td>
<td>xix,12</td>
<td>שָׁלֹל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>שָׁמַר</td>
<td>xx,26</td>
<td>שָׁמַר</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אֹסי</td>
<td>xxi,10</td>
<td>אֹסי</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. 2, the word qōmātō is apparently derived from *gāmat rather than *gawmat, although we have argued that māqōm derives from *maqawm rather than *maqām. Our point is that both basic forms existed in the language, that any given substantive may be derived from either root, and that we may expect considerable mixture in the use of forms.

From the evidence presented it is clear that Sam(b) not only uses waw as a mater lectionis less frequently than MT, but follows a consistent pattern, which is no longer the case with MT: it distinguishes between diphthongal ̄ā and vocalic ̄ā, thus implying that there was a difference in the pronunciation of these sounds, i.e. the diphthong had not yet been contracted. We must in view of these data assign orthographic priority to Sam(b). It reflects a phase of Hebrew spelling earlier than that of MT. Cross drew this conclusion on general grounds along with the important observation that Sam(b) also preserves a text of Samuel which is demonstrably older than that of MT, and apparently even of the Vorlage of the LXX. We are dealing therefore with an archaic MS which preserves a tradition, both textually and orthographically, considerably older than the date of the MS itself. As a conservative estimate we suggest the 4th century or even late 5th for the pattern, both textual and orthographic, preserved in Sam(b).

VII

The evidence for the use of waw for ̄ā in Ex(f), which must now be regarded as the oldest known MS of the Bible, is as follows: the usage is not consistent, though a general pattern emerges—there is extensive use of waw, contrary

to the practice of Sam(b) and closer to what we find in MT. It is to be noted however that the orthography of the MS as a whole is somewhat irregular, unlike Sam(b), which is a model of consistency, and it must therefore be used with caution. The following cases are clear examples of the use of waw for ā (from ă):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4Q Ex(f)</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>M.T.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ḥath</td>
<td>xl, 9, 13</td>
<td>Ḥath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12, 14, 15, 16</td>
<td>Ḥōm</td>
<td>Ḥōm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but Ḥōm</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ḥōm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ăluw</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>šēlām</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ădōrām</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>šēlām</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ăārām</td>
<td>20 (3 times), 21</td>
<td>ăārām</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ăṣmā̄m</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ăṣmā̄m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are apparently all cases of ā derived from ă; waw commonly appears when the ā occurs under the accent but not always, *cf.* לדרוה וב. There are notable differences in detail between Ex(f) and MT, though elsewhere MT spells these words as does Ex(f). However the spelling of the nota accusativi before suffixes with waw is very rare in MT, though common in Ex(f) and in many later Qumran texts. It is clear that by the 3rd century and possibly earlier, waw was already being used to represent medial ā. If we are right in supposing that this usage developed as an extension of the use of waw for the contracted diphthong aw > ā, then it would mean that the diphthong aw had contracted by the 3rd century at the latest. Since the evidence of Sam(b) points in the other direction, *viz.* that contraction had not yet taken place, and the MSS are roughly contemporary (in fact in Cross’s opinion Ex(f) is somewhat older than Sam(b)), we must look for some other explanation of the use of waw for ā (*i.e.*, it may be independent of the use in connection with the diphthong) or suppose that the two MSS reflect a linguistic transition, in which the archaic Sam(b) preserves an older pattern of pronunciation and orthography, while Ex(f) reflects a later, contemporary usage. The orthographic pattern represented by Ex(f) cannot be later than the early 3rd century, and may be as old as the 4th. That of Sam(b) must be correspondingly older, though in view of the date of the MS itself it can hardly ascend beyond the early 4th century, or possibly the late 5th.

There are additional cases in Ex(f) where waw is not used although the corresponding word in MT is vocalized with ḥōlem (and in one case spelled with waw in MT):
In some cases the omission of the *waw* may be due to carelessness, in others to the survival of historical spelling, and in still others to a difference in pronunciation or interpretation of the word in question. Thus Nos. 1 and 3 are proper names where we would expect historical spelling, as in MT. No. 2 may have been understood as a singular form, especially as MT also omits the expected *waw* marking the plural. Nos. 5 and 6 may involve a difference in pronunciation especially as MT regularly spells without *waw* (the original vowel behind the *hōlem* may have been *u* rather than *â*; and in these MSS as in MT *ō* from *u* is not represented in the orthography). No. 4 is the only clear case of omission, and this is doubtless a survival of older spelling practice in *Ex(f)* (the spelling without *waw* occurs elsewhere in MT).

MT and *Ex(f)* are closer to each other in the matter of the use of *waw* for *ō* than either is to Sam(b). At the same time there are important differences between them; particularly as regards the spelling of ’*ōt*’, *Ex(f)* goes beyond MT generally in the direction of the fuller spelling of the later Qumran MSS.

**VIII**

The evidence for the use of *waw* for *ō* for the third MS, Jer(a), is as follows: the pattern is very similar to that of *Ex(f)*, and also to that of MT. The following cases illustrate this point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4Q Jer(a)</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>M.T.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. נָחַשָׁו</td>
<td>xii,17</td>
<td>נָחַשׁ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. אָרוֹר</td>
<td>xiii,1,2,4</td>
<td>אָרוֹר</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. יִמָּלֶת</td>
<td>xvii,11</td>
<td>יִמָּלֶת</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. וָּשָׁנָה</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>וָּשָׁנָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. כַּלָּמִים</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>כַּלָּמִים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. מָעָרָו</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>מָעָרָו</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. נְּבָה</td>
<td>17,18, etc.</td>
<td>נְּבָה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear that there is widespread use of waw for ֒א, comparable to what we find in MT, though more extensive in Jer(a) than MT for this passage. Waw is used for the contracted diphthong: Nos. 4, 6, 7 and possibly 3 (which is peculiar); waw for ֒א from ֒א in the tone position is common: Nos. 1, 2, 9, 12, 13. Nos. 5 and 8 involve difficulties in interpretation of the form, though MT usually omits the waw. No. 10 is a case of metathesis in Jer(a) where MT ḫבֶר is the correct reading. No. 11 shows the waw used in an unaccented position, though the form may involve a secondary accent: ’ābōtēkem. There are in addition a number of cases in which waw is omitted although MT vocalizes with hōlem.

The principal examples involve the Qal active participle, both singular and plural, where in agreement with regular MT practice waw is not used. The careful orthographic distinction in a MS not otherwise noted in this fashion suggests that the pronunciation differed, perhaps due to the position of the accent. The ֒א of Massoretic vocalization is confirmed however by later Qumran scrolls (as well as linguistic analysis). The only other instance of omission in Jer(a) is No. 3, where MT also omits the waw.

The orthography of these three early scrolls from Cave IV of Qumran is the same in all essentials except for the use of waw to represent ֒א <א; ֒א <aw
is regularly represented by waw, while \( \ddot{o} < u \) is never so represented. Sam (b) apparently does not represent \( \ddot{o} \) (from \( \dddot{a} \)) at all, while Ex(f) and Jer(a) generally do, though with exceptions (discussed above), which arise either as a result of historical spelling or differences in contemporary pronunciation (as distinguished from Massoretic vocalization); these in turn depend upon the position of the accent and the length of the vowel in question. There is also the possibility of scribal error. None of the MSS is identical with MT in spelling practice in the passages under consideration, and there are general as well as detailed differences. Nevertheless all three exhibit features which can be matched in MT taken as a whole, and MT could be reconstructed from the evidence of the three MSS under consideration.

The earliest or most conservative spelling is that of Sam(b), which probably reflects normative Israelite spelling of the 4th century B.C.E. There are numerous significant differences from 6th century practice to suggest an upper limit for Sam(b)'s orthography in the 5th century. The other two MSS exhibit freer use of waw as a mater lectionis, but may also be based upon usage going back to the 4th century—not earlier in our judgment since it would then be difficult to explain the survival of the older tradition in a 3rd century MS like Sam(b). In addition, the irregularity in the practice of these MSS suggests that the extended use of waw was of recent origin, and that these MSS reflect a period of transition both in spelling and pronunciation.

It may be premature to draw general conclusions about MT on the basis of the material now available, but certain points may be made now. MT shares with all three early MSS the same orthographic practice with regard to final and medial vowel letters, with the single exception of the use of waw for \( \ddot{o} \) (< \( \dddot{a} \)), which varies between Sam(b) and the other documents. This alone argues for a long stable orthographic tradition stemming from scribal schools of the early post-Exilic period. Massoretic practice with regard to the use of waw for \( \ddot{o} \) might well be described as a compromise between the defective spelling of Sam(b) and the extended orthography of Ex(f), and is in fact very close to that of Jer(a). It may be further argued that Massoretic spelling was deliberately designed to combine the best features of the different orthographies current in the 4th–3rd centuries, preserving continuity with the older conservative tradition of Sam(b), and at the same time incorporating the helpful features of the newer spelling exhibited in Ex(f) and Jer(a). We may place the origins of Massoretic spelling as a definite orthographic system in the late 3rd or early 2nd century, and describe it as a learned recension based upon the best practice of the preceding period. Apparently with official support, it gained primacy during the next two centuries, and was ultimately successful as the official biblical spelling, sweeping the field of all rivals.